"Initiative on capitalising on endogenous capacities for conflict prevention and governance"

Conakry (Guinea), 9-11 March 2005

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"INITIATIVE ON CAPITALISING ON ENDOGENOUS CAPACITIES FOR CONFLICT PREVENTION AND GOVERNANCE"

LAUNCHING WORKSHOP

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1.1 « Kinship of pleasantry: historical origin, preventative and regulatory role in West Africa » (Djibril Tamsir Niane)
[*Original french*]

The euphoria and wind of hope produced by independence was short-lived. The mirage faded and the future did not prove as bright as promised. Disillusion was complete. The recent history of the continent has been a long list of apocalyptical famines and bloody conflict between ethnic groups, villages and States. Just the mention of the name of some countries conjures up horror, cruelty and suffering of all kinds: Angola, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Liberia have made the headlines, giving Africa a very sad image. The horror is not over as today we are experiencing the drama of Sudan where thousands of displaced persons offer TV viewers the sorry sight of starving children hanging onto the dry breasts of their skeletal mothers. Even Côte d'Ivoire, once the symbol of the continent's economic success and modern progress, sees its ethnic groups tearing each other to pieces. The country is split before our very eyes. When one place of horror is calm, the cries of children and women tear through the air in the neighbouring country where machetes and kalachnikovs come into action. This reversal of circumstances, this unexpected nightmare has chased away the hopes of happiness promised by independence: surprised poor populations in some countries look back with nostalgia to the "colonial peace" and wonder what purpose independence has served. Was the aim to kill each other? The situation is serious as, for the best part of two decades, conflict and misery have become endemic. What curse has struck the continent!

According to specialists, in the 1980s, conflict has caused over 3 million deaths with over 160 million Africans living in countries torn apart by war. In 1994, Rwanda offered the spectacle of genocide accompanied by unimaginable atrocities. The end of the twentieth century coincided with the darkest years for the continent.

But why do these conflicts and civil wars spread through sub-Saharan Africa? The essential challenge facing the continent involves putting an end to these conflicts and establishing good governance.

Knowing the causes of conflict is important if we want to find the right remedies. But solutions brought from outside are ineffective, as highlighted by a report from the UNDP: "Conceptual understanding of the origins and momentum behind African conflicts is a prerequisite for drawing up and applying realistic and relevant concepts and strategies to prevent, manage or regulate conflicts."[1]

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[1] See "Le défi de l'ethnicité et des conflits en Afrique. Nécessité d'un nouveau modèle Division des interventions d'urgence", by Sam. G. Amoo, UNDP New York, 1997, page 2.

But we have to admit from the outset that the search for causes of conflict in black Africa has often led to absurd conclusions. Often, experts assigned to this task have worked on the basis of preconceived models: "African realities" have often been "deformed… to adapt them to theories that have no foundations"[2].

The most frequent explanation for the causes of conflict is based on the principle that "the African multi-ethnic State is fundamentally confrontational, stability therefore requires transcendence of tribalism by modernity"[3]. This expert viewpoint has had serious consequences as it has done nothing less than condemn African ethnic groups. A wall has been built between African traditions and modernity. We should immediately point to the danger of demonising ethnicity and making it the root cause of all our evils. In reality, the causes of conflict are found elsewhere; the confrontation between ethnic groups is an effect, that of a policy. The cause of conflict is mainly due to poor governance and injustice that hits certain categories of society. These frustrations and this denial of justice are the roots of most conflict. To this should be added the hidden hand of foreign interference. Each case requires specific explanations. The wealth of some countries has often been a source of problems (Sierra Leone and its diamonds, the Democratic Republic of Congo and its mining resources).

However, the problem is to know whether Africa is able to develop a culture of peace, and whether it has the resources to establish a culture of peace as set out in the Manifesto 2000 for a culture of peace and non-violence launched by the United Nations and upheld by UNESCO. This boils down to the same as wondering whether conflict is congenital to the existence of ethnic groups, as some specialists claim. Is there a dynamic of peace in Africa? What is the African experience in conflict prevention and management? Here are the two issues that we need to address.

Although international organisations like UNESCO, UNICEF and various NGOs have constantly analysed the peace issue in Africa, it is fair to say that Africans themselves have stood idly by: States, the African Union and numerous organisations are now working to avert problems.

Remarkably, on the ground, often in the heat of the action itself, the solutions that have appeared are purely African, endogenous solutions. We shall cite a few examples.

At the peak of the civil wars that tore apart Liberia and Sierra Leone and threatened to spill into Guinea, with stateless rebel groups, a group of women held hands across the borders of the three countries: Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. They asked to be heard by the various Presidents of the Republics. They succeeded in setting off the process that leads to dialogue; incredible though it may sound, women without an official mandate managed to open the way to negotiations that materialised in Rabat with the three Heads of State exchanging peace-saving handshakes. ECOWAS and the AU finalised agreements that put a stop to war in this sub-region. These women set up the Mano River Women's Peace Network.

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[2] Sam. G. Amoro page 2.
[3] Sam. G. Amoro page 2.

How did these women, without an official mandate, succeed where the frantic diplomatic manoeuvres of Foreign Affairs Ministers had failed? Quite simply, a fundamental African asset came into play when the women came onto the scene: <u>the near-religious respect that Africans have for women, for mothers that give life</u>. Although ethnologists and political specialists may not like it, women and mothers in particular play a central role in African society. If the Heads of State were unable to resist and agreed to meet these women, it was in deference to tradition that demands that the chief should listen to a tearful mother or wife. These women implored peace, demanded it on behalf of all mothers who lose a son to war every day, on behalf of wives whose husbands die or are threatened with death. These women also talked on behalf of the thousands of orphans wandering in the bush, fleeing the burning cities. Understanding the Heads of State's benevolent attention is only possible through reference to African tradition. The work these women did in 2001 was remarkable; their NGO now explores all traditional conflict management options; they base their action on African values. They are currently working on setting a vast up organisation of traditional communicators to prevent conflict in the sub-region.

There are many examples of initiatives inspired from African traditions to bring about peace. I will mention the activities of the Senegalese Cultural Association, "Aguene Diamboye" (ACAD), which created a <u>festival of origins</u>, and which set itself the task of "refocusing Africans away from the limbo of different horizons towards themselves through the integration of certain age-old African traditions; encouraging them to find inner resources and drive with which to deal with the situation"[4]. We should above all note that the Aguene Diamboye cultural association wants to prove that the plurality of the ethnic entity is not a disadvantage, as "strong and subtle mechanisms traverse ethnic groups and are integrated together with the warmth of conviviality and the succulence of humour". The association is very ambitious as it seeks to "offer a socio-cultural and socio-historical base to regional structures such as the WAEMU, the CILSS and ECOWAS" to promote a culture of peace through kinship of pleasantry capable of federating a vast set of ethnic groups. Members of the association have discovered the relevant virtues of kinship of pleasantry and believe that it is capable of bringing tribes, families, ethnic groups and even States and peoples together!

With the deterioration of the social situation in southern Senegal, the association has sought to set up alliances between Peuls and Serere, between Serere and Diola. Members have organised meetings between these groups and rapidly restored traditional conviviality. They now argue in favour of extending the experiment to other tribes and ethnic groups.

Kinship of pleasantry! It is something that is practised all day long, in the streets, in offices, in fields, in homes, etc. Why mention it with respect to issues as serious as conflict and civil war? It may seem surprising to the man in the street that so much time and resources are deployed to talk about kinship of pleasantry.

But today, Africa looks to itself to find solutions to its many problems and sees that certain values, certain continental African cultural traditions carry within them the seed of the solution to our problems, the solution to conflicts. Among these cultural traditions is the <u>kinship of pleasantry</u>, cousinhood of pleasantry or <u>pleasant kinship</u> to use the beautiful expression coined by

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[4] Raphael Ndiaye: Pluralité ethnique, convergences culturelles et citoyenneté en Afrique de l'Ouest. Enda Tiers-Monde 2004.

Raphaël Ndiaye, the specialist in the issue, who will help us to define the concept as "a set of friendly, preferential bonds established by the Ancestor, in a renewed, personal approach that works on the basis of humour and polite derision".[5]

In other words, jokes and mockery are allowed between certain categories of people. For example, one says the other is greedy, a liar, a thief, lazy. Even rather spicy and sometimes vulgar comments can be made without this triggering off any anger or irritation. As Siriman Kouyaté wrote, "throughout the day, whether in the streets or in public transport, "*gentiles*" provocative scenes can be seen between people who often do not even know each other". Yes, sometimes hearing a patronym, Camara or Diop for example, is enough to start an attack, and for conversation to start and the atmosphere to relax.

Kinship of pleasantry can be found in almost all sub-Saharan regions of Africa, with specific local features. But everywhere the aim is to establish peace and conviviality in families. Social groups like to recognise the pacific virtues of kinship of pleasantry.

Kinship of pleasantry has the same characteristics in Senegal, Niger, Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso, whatever the ethnic group. It is satisfying to see that Africans are beginning to look to their history and culture and are discovering treasures where they find solutions to modern-day problems. They must be congratulated.

Our aim is precisely to analyse this essential value with respect to the bitter issue of conflict that tear States and ethnic groups apart. As a significant cultural reality, kinship of pleasantry informs the inner self. It is at the centre of relations between tribes through the intermediary of patronyms. It informs relations between ethnic groups and even between peoples. Called <u>Sanakouya</u> by the Mandingo, <u>Dendiragu</u> or <u>Dendiragal</u> by the Peuls, <u>Mangu</u> by the Dogon, <u>Maasir</u> by the Serere, it is the same practice of mockery and conviviality that establishes peace.

In the past, kinship of pleasantry between tribes has prevented conflict. History tells us of several cases where kings, princes and other leaders of this world laid down their arms when the kinship of pleasantry issue was raised. It is still applicable today. Here is an eloquent example: a fratricide war opposed Mali and Burkina Faso in the 1970s. President Sékou Touré invited Presidents Moussa Traoré and Sangoulé Lamizana to a conference in Conakry. The illustrious griot Sory Kandia Kouyaté, in a wonderful reference to the past, recalled the friendship pact between Samogo and Bambara, the tribes of Presidents Lamizana and Moussa Traoré. This reminder of the ancestral pact calmed the warlike wrath of the two chiefs who embraced before the dumbfounded crowd. Thus the hatchet was buried.

We have mentioned the efforts of the Senegalese cultural association Aguene Diamboye, which strives to federate tribes and ethnic groups in Senegal. In Mali too, the political and traditional authorities have set themselves the task of quelling the conflict in the North through cultural traditions. The results are quite decisive. The State is even currently drafting a text to institutionalise the practice on the national level. In Burkina Faso, things are moving fast: they have already set up a "National Kinship of Pleasantry Day". Every year, on that day, several cultural events are organised to create conviviality and joyfulness. In Côte d'Ivoire, an initiative to bring together ethnic groups

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5   Raphael Ndiaye ditto page 29.

was set up called "<u>Soixante ethnies égalent une ethnie</u>" (sixty ethnic groups equal one ethnic group". Unfortunately, civil war broke out before the initiative was properly established. In Mali and Burkina Faso, conferences are organised in schools to explain relations between tribes and ethnic groups. In Guinea, a poet, Nènè Moussa Camara, wrote a long poem called "<u>La Guinée est une famille</u>" (Guinea is a family) where he showed the intimate relationships between names or anthroponyms through the four natural regions of Guinea.

We should also highlight the laudable efforts of ENDA Tiers-Monde which tirelessly organises meetings and workshops to reveal the many facets of kinship of pleasantry. In 1997, Bamako hosted a workshop on the meaning and origins of patronyms and on the legends of the origins of peoples, providing an insight into the origins of kinship of pleasantry. Generally speaking, the study and analysis of cultural traditions are increasingly included on the agenda.

Before moving on, we should ask ourselves when kinship of pleasantry was born. When was this practice, which covers most of sub-Saharan Africa, established? It is a practice that forms a fine weave in delicate but strong threads over ethnic groups, binding them to each other. After all is said and done, pleasant kinship, as Raphaël Ndiaye tells us, "<u>distinguishes itself inside the kinship system by interlinking crossed cousin parallels and matrimonial allies, etc., horizontally, and generational scales, age groups, grandparents and grandchildren, vertically</u>". For the time being, it is only possible to make assumptions about the origins of kinship of pleasantry. How was this system of alliances born, what sphere did it embrace? What were the various expressions of this alliance? Answers to these questions are difficult, studies and research on them is just beginning.

Investigations started barely a decade ago. We may however assume that in our sub-region, an open country dominated by plains, the intense circulation of people and immigration encouraged contacts between human groups. This would explain the tendency to coexist and tolerate each other and even establish conviviality between groups. These contacts and other exchanges were probably developed during the Soniné Empire or Empire of Ghana between the third and eleventh centuries.

The Soninké kingdom was the first State formation that organised and grouped together several ethnic groups under the same authority: Soninkés, Peuls, Maures, Wolofs, Malinkés and Songhoys lived for centuries under the authority of the Kaya Maghans whilst maintaining their ethnic identity and cultivating their specific characteristics. It is impossible to trace back the invention of kinship of pleasantry specifically to any of the peoples mentioned. Each of them, through myths and legends, explains how the pact between such and such tribe, between such and such family was sealed. Long distance trade, between the savannah Sahel area and the forest, was driven forward by the Mandé group (Soninké and Malinké) which has always shown a propensity to travel over the centuries. The Peul migrations started from the times of Ancient Ghana. The origins of kinship or cousinhood of pleasantry may therefore be traced to Ancient Ghana, resulting from the will to establish a common way of life between village and ethnic communities.

The birth of the Empire of Mali in the thirteenth century, under the aegis of the Mandingue conqueror, Soundiata Keïta, was a turning point for the structuring of this alliance. After his resounding victory at Kirina over the armies of Soumaoro Kanté, the victor convened the great Assembly of the People at Kouroukan Fouga in 1236. At this Assembly, Soundiata, his companions and allies, drafted the articles of the so-called Mandé Charter of Kouroukan Fouga. The clear intention of the victors was to prevent needless conflict and establish the rules of government that

would protect people from arbitrary rule. An analysis of this charter will be necessary at a later stage. For the time being, let us just say that it made the following principles law: <u>the free circulation of people and goods, the respect for the ways and customs of each people, the institution of a council headed by a chief</u>. As far as our subject is concerned, at Kouroukan Fouga, the Assembly of the People institutionalised kinship of pleasantry and its various expressions which led to the establishment of a real pact. All the peoples of the Empire were represented at this Assembly.

I hasten to say here that not all kinships of pleasantry date back to the era of Soundiata. The concept and its practice developed between peoples over time, throughout the country.

Kinship of pleasantry has various expressions. There is pleasantry between tribes (Traoré and Condé, Camara and Kourouma, Camara and Sylla, Diop and N'Diaye), etc. Cousinhood of pleasantry also exists in the family between brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, between grandfathers and grandsons. Within the family, this familiar mockery is a powerful tension-easing factor; it creates a warm and reassuring friendly atmosphere. There is also cousinhood of pleasantry between peoples or ethnic groups. The same goes between Peuls and Soussous. The most illustrious Peuls will be called little Peuls or "fouledi" by any Soussou; there is an alliance resulting from the long cohabitation between between Malinké and Peuls. Although remaining distrustful, living together is possible by maintaining proper esteem for each other. The malicious intelligence of the Peuls is called treachery by the Malinké whom the Peuls consider to be peasants. The Peuls fear the brutal frankness of the Malinké while appreciating their uprightness. The Malinké have tremendous admiration for the sense of honour of the Peuls, they admire the religious respect the Peuls have for their parents-in-law. They therefore do not look daggers at each other and are capable of recognising the qualities of others while mocking their foibles and faults.

The "pleasantry" relationship between Peuls and Mandingoes has become established in time, firstly in the Mandé where Peul infiltration occurred during the reign of Soundiata and led to the creation by shepherds of the Wassulu province in the fifteenth century. A second period of contact between Peuls and Mandingoes occurred in the fifteenth to seventeenth century, through the infiltration of shepherds in the Dialonkadougou which became Futa Jallon in the eighteenth century. This was when patronymic equivalences were established between Bah (Peul) and Sylla (Djalonké); between Diallo (Peul) and Camara (Djalonké). Another wave of violent conflict occurred in Gabou with the Peul victory after the bloody battle of Kansala or Tourouban Kelo (the battle of extermination). The Peuls sang their brilliant victory whereas the Mandingoes sang their glorious defeat. As time went by, a modus vivendi brought back peace and harmony through the Islam religion imposed by the Peuls. The Peuls, constantly on the move with their herds in ancient times, made contact with several ethnic groups or peoples. To the north, their oldest neighbours were surely the Serere on the banks of Senegal river Cousinhood between these two peoples has just been magnificently illustrated by Thierno Monénembo in his beautiful historical novel called: Peuls. It is the story of the Peul people told by the cousin of pleasantry, the Serere, who never misses an opportunity to mock the Peul. (This book is essential reading, may I add in passing.) To the south in Guinea, besides the Soussou, the Diakanké is the cousin of pleasantry of the Peuls. For the Peuls, the Diakanké are the most cowardly of men. They bolt whenever they see the flash of a blade. The Diakanké consider the Peuls to be the most skilful thieves in the world. To the east, the Peuls are neighbours with the Songhoy, the Mossi and the Dogon. Cousinhood of pleasantry was established with them after many confrontational contacts.

Rights and Duties between cousins of pleasantry

This cousinhood does not only consist of mockery and jibing. Hurting a cousin of pleasantry or spilling his blood, even injecting him, is forbidden. A cousin of pleasantry is owed help and protection. This way, an exchange of good services is implied.

There are restrictions between ethnic groups. Sometimes marriage is not allowed between specific groups; relationships vary greatly. For example, Peuls and Blacksmiths owe each other support but marriage is not allowed. All this is explained by the legends of origin which need to be known to allow positive action. There is much to be said about cousinhood and its implications. Research, I repeat, is in its infancy. The following debates may certainly help researchers. They want to know more about taboos, or "Tanamagnogoya" in Mandingo. Knowing about ancestral pacts is a good thing[6].

Relations between Ethnic groups and Equivalences

Tribes and ethnic groups are linked by a veritablechain. According to a study by Bory Traoré and Gouré Dial[7], the Peuls established cousinhood relations with a large number of ethnic groups, through their migrations. These included the Bobo, the Bozo, the Malinkés, the Bambara, the Serere, the Gourmantchés, the Sossos, the Baoulés, the Téminés, the Sonofo, the Minianka, etc. In Mali, the Peuls had contacts with most ethnic groups. Remember that the Peuls stretch out from Mauritania to Cameroon and Nigeria.

There are equivalences between patronyms, based on the same logic as kinship of pleasantry. The determination of the constituents of Kouroukan Fouga to bring people together and create bonds as strong as blood is spectacularly expressed. Equivalences between patronyms of the Mandé and of Senegambia were established at Kouroukan Fouga: Ndiaye became the homonym of Diarra, Diata and Condé, Diop of Traoré and Dembelé, Gueye of Cissoko and Doumbouya; Fall became the homonym of Koulibaly, etc. The equivalence between Sané and Mané in Casamance and Traoré also goes back to Tiramaghan Traoré, the general of Soundiata and Conqueror of Senegambia. He is said to have married Niantcho women: the children of this marriage, according to local custom, took their mother's names, Mané and Sané. This established the equivalence between the Malinké patronym Traoré and the Baïnouk patronym, Mané and Sané.

To the east, an equivalence was created in the Mossi country between the patronym Ouedraogo and Traoré because the hunter that married princess Mossi Yenenga came from the Traoré tribe. On the subject of equivalences, I will just say that among the Peuls, an equivalence was established between Kane-Ka- Diallo; the Bah clans have the homonyms of Baldé and Mballo, etc. With migration and trade contacts, the equivalence system spilled over from the savannah Sahel region to penetrate into the forest area. Equivalences were therefore established between forest patronyms: in Guinea with the Kissiens, the Loma, the Kpélé, and Mano and the Mandingoes. In the forest of Côte d'Ivoire, Malinké traders called Dioulas established equivalences between their names and those of the forest to promote the cola trade. Siriman Kouyaté, in his book on cousinhood of pleasantry, gives a long,

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[6]   Siriman Kouyaté. Le cousinage à plaisanterie. Edition Ganndal Conakry 2003, pp. 11 to 16.
[7]   Raphael Ndiaye, pp. 23-29.

non-exhaustive list of anthroponomical equivalences between peoples of the savannah Sahel and the Forest. It is known that people of the savannah rarely declare war on the people of the forest. A Malinké saying has it that "when you declare war on the king of the forest, you deprive yourself of palm oil".

The case of Niger

We should take the edifying case of Niger where ethnic integration is effective, according to Kélétigui Mariko, a veterinarian from the colonial age who travelled throughout the Sudan-Sahel area, and is perfectly cognisant with inter-ethnic relations. He wrote that "the traditional education and oral tradition of Sahelian populations are full of adages, sayings, proverbs and maxims teaching young people and everyone hospitality, tolerance, the right to difference, respect for others, for strangers". (Mariko: La parenté à plaisanterie comme facteur d'intégration sociale en Afrique Occidentale…)

West African integration through kinship of pleasantry

Through a series of ministerial conferences and Heads of State summit meetings, Africa is striving to achieve integration, but to be effective, this modern machine needs to take into account the heritage and experience of peoples who have been taught the foundations of unity and have experienced them through cultural traditions, and thus have them embedded in their conscious and subconscious. It is not a coincidence that integration has made remarkable progress in ECOWAS. An ECOWAS passport with a simple identity card now enables carriers to travel through the 15 community States. Before this official situation, Peul, Sarakolé and Malinké traders had three or four passports; a Camara, a Sylla, a Diallo, a Bah, a Dramé could claim to come from Mali, Senegal, Guinea or Burkina Faso. ECOWAS citizenship is in the process of becoming reality; the national area is too cramped, it hinders our populations that have circulated for centuries, communicated and traded all year long. Bear in mind that, in the past, traders in their caravans took six months to travel from Djenné to Banjul or eight months to travel from Djenné to Accra. West Africa is an historic-geographical entity that has known great empires where circulation was free.

Citizenship in our sub-region may only be established by federating ethnic groups and peoples over a background of good governance.

Conclusion

Better knowledge of Africa requires a thorough understanding of myths, legends and cosmogonies. The much talked-about African values are derived from these myths and legends. But our system is two-tiered: socially we follow tradition, we practice kinship of pleasantry, our marriages and christenings follow ancestral tradition, we speak our languages; politically, we want to be "modern", "trendy" and often, in our stances and attitudes, we condemn tradition. Any ambiguity needs to be removed. We need to come to terms with ourselves. Perhaps this issue will be covered in debates. An unbridled focus on the economy may well prevent Africans from being too self-obsessed. They have their eyes fixed on others and are fascinated by science and technology. Studying tradition seems to be considered a waste of time for many an African leader.

I think it is fair to say that we need to stop considering modernity as an imported product. Modernity should be a potential of African tradition. That is to say, modernity should bind itself to our inner self, our culture, or it will not exist at all.

We have become marginalised, as African issue experts state everyday in reviews and newspapers. A political specialist wrote in February 2005: "Away from major international economic trends, outside places of knowledge, outside centres of wealth, sub-Saharan Africa strives to emerge from a post-colonial situation. Pushed to the fringes of development, it offers a spectacle of violence and corruption" (Études-revue de culture contemporaine, February 2005 14, Rue d'Assas Paris 75006). The author worries about the capacity of sub-Saharan Africa to regain its stability and "one day, catch up with the global economy".

We must not give into Afro-pessimism. We should release forces of invention and creativity and base our actions on the genius of our peoples. I am convinced that if we find the meaning of progress within ourselves, we will overcome the prejudices that hinder the continent's progress towards the future.

Here are a few kinship of pleasantry expressions:

1- What the Bambara think about the Peuls

Bean, …
White river in the middle of black waters
Black river in the middle of white waters
Enigmatic black people
What capricious whirlwinds from the East
Have dumped upon the black country
Like ants that destroy ripe fruit
Who move in without permission
And move out without saying goodbye
A breed of noisy acrobats
Always coming and going
To find new waterholes and meadows!

2- What the Peuls think about the Bambara

What is a Bambara?
A man that God carved hastily
In a trunk of ordinary wood
With just a few blows of his hatchet
Here is the Bambara man who comes out of the workshop
With a head as flat as a
Tipped over harvest basket
A nose squashed like a trodden sandwich
Condemned to carry bundles of wood on his head
The Bambara lives
Between the fetid henhouse and the smelly termite's nest
Rough moustache, the hair of the Bambara
Is yellowed by cigarettes and smoking
His pockets are stuffed with fetishist objects
His bag full of rags
The spirit of the pure blooded Bambara
Is more to be found in his face rather than his brain
Son of Nia and Niélé
Eater of rotten néré seeds

3- What the Bozo think about the Peuls

"His mother is dead, he did not cry;
his father is dead, he did not cry;
when he lost a tiny calf,
He cried: yoooyooo, I'm finished
And the village and brush are destroyed!"

1.2 The "Maat" kinship of pleasantry or the reign of the original model for social harmony (Babacar Sedikh Diouf)

[Original French]

"The kinship of pleasantry: its historical origins and its conflict prevention and regulatory functions in Senegambia" is a subject which merits serious discussion. To facilitate such discussion, the phrase "kinship of pleasantry" needs to be placed in the context of the system from which it emerged, establishing a definition of its aims and the way in which it operates, prior to examining its origins and application in practice. But to ensure the greatest clarity, it is essential that there is general agreement on the meaning of certain terms.

Problems of definition

Phrases other than "kinship of pleasantry" have been used to translate this concept. Use of the word "pleasantry" is questionable, for example, where it is seen to imply "mockery or a practical joke", which seems to render this concept unworthy of serious consideration – mistakenly, given the effect that the application of this ethical code has in everyday life.

President L.S. Senghor, for example, spoke of the Pulaar as his "**cousins**" and, later, Abdou Diouf used the term "**code of cousinhood**". Raphael Ndiaye, on the other hand, preferred to speak of "kinship of pleasantry", which seems to me to portray the reality of this concept more accurately.

This difficulty in translating such a concept from an African language into a foreign language illustrates the complexity and singularity of the subject under discussion.

Cousins exist the world over, yet the nature of their relationships is not the object of much scrutiny. In contrast, each of the Sahelian languages has a term to define this special relationship between two individuals, or certain communities, which facilitates human and social relationships and maintains them in perfect and sustainable harmony: *Sinanku tlo* (Bambara); *Dendiraagal* (Pulaar); *Kal* (Wolof); *Maasir* and *Kalir* (Serer).

In explaining the etymology of the term *Maasir*, for example, Raphael Ndiaye defines it as "the establishment of a reciprocal relationship between two partners, based on the absence of animosity or aggressiveness, or on the ability to eliminate such bad feelings". However, in his analysis of the term, Raphael does not take sufficient account of the dual meaning of the "maas" root, which introduces the concept of age into this spirit of camaraderie, implying social equalisation by age as much as by hierarchy. This is encapsulated in the Serer saying *Maag o massir of o cungin moïjun*: "To be older than one's cousin is pointless, it is worth waiting for him to catch up."

The kinship of pleasantry, therefore, brings together but does not blur the distinctions between concepts such as identity with partners, social equalisation by age and hierarchy, the ethics of sharing and respect for the dignity of others, and a clear choice of social harmony through law and truth by retaining a sense of moderation and, where conflict is anticipated, confession, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Context from which the kinship of pleasantry emerges

All available documentation suggests that the Ancient Egyptians lived in a society in which cohesion of the group was nurtured through the esteem for the individual: even a wayward individual could be rescued and reintegrated into society without being humiliated. Erik Hornung, a German Egyptologist, shed light on this in his allegory of *Maat*, whom some in polytheist Egypt considered to be a goddess:

"Briefly, *Maat* is order, the exact measure of things, upon which the world is supported; it is the perfect state for which we should strive, and which is in harmony with the institutions of God the creator. This state is continually being disrupted and constant effort is required to recreate it in its original purity[1]."

The Ancient Egyptian term *Maat* is still in use in the Serer language, meaning transparent good governance as well as the State itself. It is this concept that President Senghor attempted to render in the expression "responsible participation" as a mode of government of all, by all and for all.

Pre-colonial African society was itself built upon this foundation of harmony and justice, as described by Ibn Battouta on a visit to Black Africa in the middle of the XIVth century, who remarked upon

> "The small number of acts of injustices which one observes here because, of all peoples, the Blacks abhor injustice the most. Their sultan gives no pardon whatsoever to those who are guilty of injustice.
> The complete safety which prevails throughout the country. The traveller has no more to fear from bandits, thieves or kidnappers than one who remains at home[2]."

Another observer, Lambert, quoted by Olawale Elias in *La nature du droit africain*[3], gives further insight into how such prevailing peace had been achieved. "The indigenous way is to repair the social instability which arises on occasions, thus restoring peace and the wellbeing of all and re-establishing harmony between adversaries."

This primacy of the group over the individual may be explained by Africa's tendency to matrilineage, a variation of matriarchy, whereby inheritance is handed down from the uncle to the nephew. In anticipation of the conflict that might arise from the application of this rule of succession, or rather from the difficulties that arose as the law came into force, the code of cousinhood gradually emerged, a process which is difficult to comprehend without some analysis of the system.

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[1] *Les Dieux de l'Egypte, l'Un et le Multiple*, Paris, Flammarion, 1992, p. 195.
[2] In La découverte/Poche, Voyages III, pp. 426-428.
[3] Présence Africaine, 1961, p. 283.

The familial origins of the kinship of pleasantry

For ease of explanation, the community must be described in its simplest form, i.e., a family consisting of two parents and two children – a brother and sister. The sister, when she marries, receives a dowry of one heifer, which she gives to her brother as she moves into the marital home. The children of the sister know that this heifer belongs to their mother and is their own property, which they must look after well.

The brother who remained at home in turn marries and children are born into the household. These children also understand that their father is only the caretaker of this animal and that this heifer and any offspring will go to their cousins if their father dies. Nevertheless, being good shepherds, they will look after the heifer as well as they are able.

In modern parlance, the sister's children are the owners of the capital (the heifer) and the brother's children, the shepherds, are the "workers" who add value to the investment. While waiting to inherit upon the death of their uncle, the sister's children, in order to protect their interests, solicit "ritual gifts" from their cousins, presenting themselves not as arrogant and demanding "bosses" but as humble supplicants, using jokes and amusing words to garner the favour of their benefactors. This exchange of ritual gifts for humour creates the conditions for a smooth succession upon the death of the uncle, whereupon his children, now impoverished, remain within the family circle with dignity and good relations intact. However large the family, it is this principle which preserves its cohesion, and which goes by the name "kinship of pleasantry".

What can be learned from this model of family life?

- ✓ Firstly, capital is concentrated in the hands of the women, under the *Lamanat* land tenure system. Men retain only the felling rights which, under patrilineage, are handed down to their children. It is noticeable that conflict over the management of assets and eligibility to inherit are avoided or resolved in the interests of family harmony and, in every case, with minimum argument.
- ✓ We may conclude that the kinship of pleasantry reduces violence, keeps aggression under control and obviates the compulsion to lie, even in fun, by avoiding any ill will.

Extension of the kinship of pleasantry beyond the family unit

The success of this method of managing relations between cousins within the family means that the technique can be applied in other sections of the group. The husband has joked with his sisters-in-law just as his wife has teased her brothers-in-law about the *lévirat*. Grandparents joked with their grandchildren in the interests of their education. Peace is thus maintained within the family due to the humour that is generated by each member.

Moving beyond the immediate family, the code of cousinhood is also indicated by names, initially within a particular community, then beyond, as connections are forged with families from other societies with other names. Throughout Senegambia, for example, the Ndiaye and the Diop have exchanged pleasantries since the dawn of time, but each have managed to establish a long list of

correspondent families across West Africa: Ndiaye corresponds to Diatta (Joola), to Diarra (Bambara), to Kondé (Maninka), to Koné (Bambara) and to Konaté (Bambara). During the same period, Diop has become Traoré (Bambara), Ouédraogo (Mossi), Diabaté (Maninka), Dembélé (Soninka), etc[4].

Before becoming established in neighbouring countries, the kinship of pleasantry first had to spread among the villages, between which friendly relations were engendered by the myths and legends of how their communities came into being. The same goes with matrilineages in the context of exogamous marriages and marriages between ethnic groups whose historical relationships have created strong links in coexistence, and even sometimes cultural and biological intermingling (Serer-Fulani, Serer-Diola).

One might presume that this expansion of the "kinship of pleasantry" happened gradually as populations moved about. But there were bound to be moments when human intervention had to steer people's destiny through lasting and efficient institutions.

Politico-diplomatic exploitation of the "kinship of pleasantry"

Soundiata Keïta is among those men who have made history. He is certainly not responsible for inventing the code of cousinhood, but he did make historic use of it. He constitutionalised it to the benefit of the Mali Empire in 1235, after those who joined forces against Soumangourou Kanté achieved their victory in a clearing at Kouroukan-Fouga, near the village of Kangaba. Marcel Mahawa Diouf describes this in *Lances mâles*[5], citing Djibril Tamsir Niane's *Soundiata ou l'épopée mandingue* [Soundiata or the Mandingo Epic].

"I forge forever an alliance between the Kamara of Sibi and the Mandingo Keïta. May these two peoples remain brothers henceforward, and henceforward Kamara property shall also be Keïta property. May falsehood never again exist between a Kamara and a Keïta." Similarly, the Djallonké and the Mandingo were to become allies: the Tounkara and the Cissé were declared the kin of pleasantry of the Keïta. No populations were forgotten. Then all the peoples separated in friendship and in newly restored peace. Soundiata had given peace to the world. Since that moment, "his respected words became law, the rule for all peoples. And in this new peace villages prospered".

But researchers concur in their assertion that, since the Tékrur epoch, long before Mali existed, relationships between populations here were very close. Among these scholars is   Fr. H. Gravrand, who writes in "Pangool" (p.10):

> "The Cassan Serer in Tékrur were related to almost all the ethnic groups (Lébou, Fulani, Toucouleur, Wolof…) and all these groups spoke the same language, a mother tongue, an archaic Serer language."

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[4]   Taken from Raphael Ndiaye's table in "Environnement africain, ENDA 1992 no. 31.82 / 97 to 127.
[5]   Celtho, Niamey, 1996 p.36.

Thus, from the Atlantic to lake Chad, relations between the Serer are mentioned even by the Zarma of Niger in their ancient myth related in *Lances males* by Marcel M. Diouf, who in turn cites Fatoumata Mounkaïla (*Mythe et histoire dans la geste de Zarbacane* [Myth and History in the Epic Poem of Zarbacane], Niamey, Celtha 1989): "The myth of the migration of the Zarma from Mallé or Mali, in their current habitat of Niger, would seem to implicate, according to the version in question, the Tuareg, the Fulani and the Serer, who forced the Zarma into exile through the actions of their hero Mali Béro."

As in Soundiata's Mali, the code of cousinhood informs government and politics in Senegal. Cultural diversity is constitutionalised here, so that all mother tongues identified are given the status of national languages.

Indeed, this kinship of pleasantry plays a fundamental and defining role in the relationships between ethnic groups. To use an example of the cousinhood between Joola and Serer, I have personally led several delegations here, which were received by all the local political and administrative authorities, after meetings with traditional and religious leaders had taken place, both to express condolences from Serer cousins following the sinking of the Joola ship, and to appeal to forces from the Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance (M.F.D.C) to agree to lay down their arms.

For the time being the guns seem to be silent and peace talks are under way at Foundiougne in Serer territory, benevolently supported by the "Saltigi" (the dievin). The choice of Foundiougne was a natural one given the Joola-Serer, Serer-Fulani and Serer-Mandingo counsinhood, placing delegations in surroundings conducive to the easing of tensions.

It would appear that modern diplomacy may have something to learn from this kinship of pleasantry. Terms such as cooperation, partnership and twinning, for example, are too devoid of human sentiment and too narrow in their objectives to perform their function adequately. They do not embody the communion with another individual which is necessary to ensure that the solidarity and the cohesion of a group will endure.

<u>Does the kinship of pleasantry have a place in economics?</u>

To return to the familial origins of the kinship of pleasantry, on closer analysis it becomes clear that its true origins are economic ones.

Everything revolves around the dowry given to women on the occasion of their marriage and managed by their brothers to ensure the appreciation of the capital.

To cope with the eventual conflict over asset management and in preparation for the nephew to inherit from the uncle if he died, cousinhood came about as a form of humour, harmony and family cohesion being prized above in the natural acceptance that the group values the individual and that, in time, that individual dies while the community lives on.

Identical problems can be found within modern businesses. The 'employers' are the equivalent of the sister's children, while the brother's children, engaged in the shepherding and managing, are the 'workers' or 'employees'. How, then, can this practice of kinship translate to the relationship between management and employees within a modern company?

In the code of cousinhood, the African work ethics and candour confer upon the privately wealthy the status of a chained "slave" who must be fed but does nothing, while the productive worker is the "master" who feeds this prisoner and is ennobled by his freedom as the creator of wealth. It is in this spirit that the cousins humorously call each other "master" (the brother's children, the shepherds) and "slave" (the sister's children, fed by the labours of others).

Promoting the cohesion of the group in question would seem to be merely a case of finding the right balance. If one group chooses material or financial wealth, they must accept, without rancour, that it is upon others that honours will be bestowed, however symbolic these honours may be.

The modern day company would benefit from applying this model of sharing to minimize the causes of frustration. If the employee, who is after all a human being, feels impoverished and humiliated, he cannot help but adopt a resentful attitude towards the author of his misfortune. However, if the relationship between employer and employees becomes more humane, tension within the company abates, crises are averted and conflict gives way effortlessly to acceptable solutions. This is the essence of the kinship of pleasantry.

In conclusion, it would not be utopian to envisage that this code of cousinhood, even beyond Senegambia's borders, would in future have many and varied applications, restoring a sense of stable equilibrium to the world. Man could thus avoid the misery of violence and monopolisation which lead to anger and instability in whatever form.

Maat would once again reign upon the earth, and cousins would respect the dignity of others and laugh along with one another for evermore in the social harmony brought about by good governance, justice and truth.

Session 2. « Endogenous culture, strategies and mechanisms of mediation »

2.1 African diplomacy and mediation culture in Africa (Seydina Oumar Sy)

[Original French]

First of all, I would like to thank the Sahel and West Africa Club/OECD for the honour bestowed on me by giving me the opportunity to present my views on one of the topics proposed in this workshop, i.e. "to what extent has African diplomacy incorporated the endogenous culture of mediation. How can this legacy be utilised?"

The first question that can be asked is: what is diplomacy? And is there such a thing as an African diplomacy?

There are a number of definitions for diplomacy. For instance, according to Pradier-Fodéré, diplomacy "evokes the idea of managing international affairs, handling external relations, administering the national interests of peoples and their governments in the process of either their peaceful or hostile material contact". The origin of diplomacy can be traced back to the dawn of time. The moment two human groups are in each other's presence, problems of cohabitation do arise, and are settled either through forcible or peaceful means. One might say that diplomacy was born when, for the first time, a tribal chief sent an envoy to another tribal chief in order to settle a problem or when the chiefs of two different tribes met to discuss their common problems peacefully.

We should retain two concepts that are already evident and are a constant in diplomacy all through the history of mankind – i.e. the concepts of negotiation and emissaries, the cornerstones of diplomacy. Negotiation is an art that has to combine the power relationship and balance, mediation and compromise. Whence the need for particular care to be taken in choosing the emissary to conduct the negotiations. It means that diplomacy, everywhere and in all ages, has used the services of emissaries and the negotiation channel to settle disputes between States or Communities. To paraphrase Bismarck, diplomacy can defuse any crisis and change any situation, except geography. Does this mean that it has no specifically African character? If it does, what is it and how can it be harnessed to solve the conflicts on our continent today? This is precisely what I would like to deal with in my presentation, by bringing into focus the essential features of the culture of mediation in the Africa. In this part, I will be talking about different forms of the culture of peace and dialogue in Africa, based on examples. In the second part, I propose to analyse present day conflicts and point out why they endure, in my opinion.

Part One: African Philosophy

In the West, a well-known maxim says: the best way to ensure peace is to prepare for war. Consequently, as Raoul Girardet underlines, "for Europe, the 19th century was the century of nationalisms and also imperialisms. It is through war and in war that new nationalities were forged; and it is through war that they envisaged how to satisfy their unfulfilled ambitions". End of quote.

On the other hand, in Negro-African thought in Africa, in the words of the philosopher Eboussi Boulaga, there seems to be an obsession for the quest of life in peace. In the greetings that we exchange when two persons meet, the governing word is peace. The greeting is "diame ngame", and the response is "diame rek"; "diame niali-diama tann"; "assalamou aleykoum" and the response is "aleyna wa aleykoum" or "aleykoum salam"; "ibédi/mbé héréla" or "héré doron". Such examples can be cited endlessly throughout Africa. The Late President Léopold Sédar Senghor was absolutely right when he said that the spirit of the Negro-African civilisation, with its roots deep in the land and the hearts of Blacks, reaches out towards the world of "Beings and Things" in order to understand it, bring it together and manifest it. Understanding one another, speaking the same language and demonstrating this understanding through alliances, games, kinship through pleasantries, respecting the other and peaceful coexistence – that is the African philosophy in a nutshell. To achieve these results, several mechanisms are used, which can work both at the community level or even the inter-State level.

In most African societies based on ethnic groups, alliances play a major role in maintaining social cohesion. Marriages create blood relationships that considerably reduce risks of conflict.

Relations created through pleasantries, referred to "Kal" in Senegal or "Samankoya" in Mali, are quite widespread in West Africa and create artificial "kinships" that lighten the mood – each time the Diop or the Ndiaye meet, for instance. Finally, when the Senegalese Prime Minister visited Podor recently, the "Mâbos" welcomed him with a bowl of pearl millet and beans. It was a way of telling him that even the Sall, who are considered big eaters by the "Mâbos", would find sufficient rest and food in their tribe. Sometimes, secret societies can also intervene. In the case of the Casamance conflict that began in 1983, the governments inevitably tried to settle the dispute through classical methods, but in vain. But from the moment the women went took out a procession clamouring for peace, in which the Casamance cadres finally got involved, but above all when the guardians of the sacred woods declared that peace had to prevail, the chances of ending this fratricidal war became a reality for the near future. These two examples demonstrate that the African method involves all sections of the society.

Mediation begins when direct contact mechanisms fail. It takes place through the good offices of a neutral third party to bring about conciliation and reconciliation between the parties to the dispute. The key role played by mediation is seen in abundance in the oral tradition, where sages incarnated as old men intervene. The function of a mediator in traditional African society calls for notable qualities of wisdom, neutrality and level-headedness, a profound knowledge of customs and traditions and, above all, a great talent for oration and communication. The mediator has to be a master of dialectics and clever at "palaver" (discussions) or dialogue. According to Thierno bah, in his study on "the traditional mechanisms of conflict prevention and resolution in Black Africa", and I quote, "without any doubt, these long discussions, far from the demeaning interpretation given to them (with the term 'palaver') in the colonial context, constitute a fundamental attribute of African

societies and the most obvious expression of the vitality of the culture of peace. Throughout Black Africa, we come across the same concept of discussions, with minor variations. It is considered to be a holistic phenomenon in which sacredness, authority and knowledge are inseparable", end of quote. In a way, discussion ("palaver") is a logotherapy that calls for patience and perseverance. This is perhaps what made Westerners call such discussions "palaver" – never-ending, issueless discussions – because the language needed and the proverbs and parables that form an integral part of these discussions have an esoteric meaning unknown to the non-initiated.

The logotherapeutic value of these discussions was demonstrated once again in the national conferences, when the process of democratisation of our States (which had a single party system) had to be initiated. It is from that time onwards (in the 1990s) that African civil society turned into a moralising reformist of political life in our countries, through the stands it took. In this context, the crucial role played by the private press in our nations, despite the risks and harassment it faced from governments, must be underlined.

The architects of independence often used mediation to settle differences between Heads of States or to settle disputes.

For instance, on 25 March 1976 in Conakry, President Sékou Touré organised the renewal of ties between General Eyadema and Colonel Kérékou. The reopening of the borders between Togo and Benin sealed their reconciliation.

Similarly, at the OAU summit in 1978, General Eyadema would deploy all his persuasive powers to reconcile Kérékou and Bongo, then mortal enemies over the issue of a failed *coup d'État* said to have been sponsored by Libreville. It was the same Eyadema who effected a reconciliation between Presidents Bongo and Houphouët Boigny with General Gowon at the OCAM summit in Lomé (Biafra Affair).

It was again through the mediation of Togo, Niger, Guinea and Senegal that the territorial dispute between Mali and Upper Volta (now known as Burkina Faso) was settled.

And once again, it was through the same mediation process at the 1978 OAU summit in Monrovia that Sékou Touré extended the hand of friendship to Senghor and Houphouët Boigny. These presidents – Houphouët Boigny, Senghor, Eyadema, Kounda, Nyerere and Bongo – are known and recognised for the role they played in bringing peace or settling conflicts. Indeed, very recently, a proposal for finding a solution in the Central African Great Lakes Region was drafted by President Nelson Mandela, a historic figure symbolising Africa, and the late President Nyerere, who had both left their posts but whose achievements remain intact. We can also quote the mediation of the current President of Mali, Amadou Toumani Touré, in the Central African Republic.

But it must be admitted that in spite of the successes mentioned above, the mediation mechanism did not always succeed in establishing peace – be it in Côte d'Ivoire, in DRC or in Darfur. We shall deal with this issue in Part Two, by attempting to analyse the factors that impeded a negotiated solution.

Part Two: Limitations of mediation – Examples of Côte d'Ivoire, the DRC and Darfur

Despite all the efforts made by sub-regional organisations, the African Union and the International Community, Africa still remains a conflict-ridden continent. The main feature of these conflicts is that they are intra-State and therefore confined within the same State. They are often characterised by extreme violence along with acts of savagery and genocide, as seen in Rwanda, Liberia and Sierra Leone, which cannot be tolerated. These open, latent or endemic conflicts are the main source of instability and poverty in Africa. Therefore, it is imperative that we put an end to these conflicts as soon as possible. If we analyse the reasons for these conflicts, we always find a problem of governance and the denial of the most fundamental of human and social rights. This is what happened in Côte d'Ivoire, a case we are going to review in order to find out why all attempts at mediation have failed so far.

Let us briefly recall the events that occurred. In December 1999, a delegation of the Côte d'Ivoire army met President Bédié and was bluntly dismissed. On their return to the barracks, they decided to take over the government and install General Guei as the Head of State. But even before this, tensions were running high in the country for a law had been voted targeting a specific person, to prevent him from standing for the presidential elections, on grounds of doubts about his citizenship. But Côte d'Ivoire managed to survive this crisis and held elections that brought Laurent Gbagbo to power. Two years later, in 2002, they learnt that armed forces from the North were advancing upon Abidjan. Were it not for the intervention of French troops, this armed force opposed to the duly elected government would have succeeded in its *coup d'État*. The mediation process undertaken by ECOWAS (the Economic Community of West African States) succeeded in imposing a ceasefire that President Gbagbo hastened to sign as, by his own admission, the loyalist forces were left with the capacity for just few hours of resistance due to the lack of adequate arms and ammunitions. Then a series of mediations began, conducted by Senegal, then the sitting president of ECOWAS, then by President Eyadema, who passed away recently, followed by Ghana's President John Kuofor, and now replaced by President Tabo Mbéki of South Africa, though without any conclusive results so far.

Yet, all of Côte d'Ivoire's political and social players had agreed upon the Linas Marcoussis proposal in France on a framework to defuse the crisis. Why then do we still find ourselves at an impasse? If we go by what the different protagonists have said, we can guess the reasons behind the impasse. Let us see what President Gbagbo had to say.

During the events in 2002, President Gbagbo was on a state visit to Italy. On his return, instead of appealing for calm and unity, he said: "I have come to join the battle." When party and civil society representatives signed the Marcoussis agreement, President Gbagbo, when asked to give his comments said: "What can I do, I did not win the war." In another statement, he reaffirmed his desire to provide the Côte d'Ivoire army with the means to crush the rebels and to turn Côte d'Ivoire into a regional military power.

Neither were Guillaume Sors' words any more conciliatory. His oft-reiterated ambition was to overthrow Gbagbo. For him, the Côte d'Ivoire President was the main impediment to peace. His conduct on the whole was a challenge to President Gbagbo's authority. The other political groups joined either of the bandwagons – to crush the rebellion in the case of the FPI and to send Gbagbo packing in the case of other. But I am far from saying that African mediation did not bear fruit.

The cease-fire still holds good. Apart from the monumental error committed by the Côte d'Ivoire air force in bombarding French positions with consequences that we all know very well, the basic text that Marcoussis wanted revised is in the process of being voted upon.

Thus, President Gbagbo is quite right when he says that he is applying the roadmap. But the problem, as South Africa's Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs said so bluntly, is: "The problem with Côte d'Ivoire is that nobody believes Gbagbo any longer."

In fact, there can be no agreement in the absence of even a minimum of trust between the protagonists. There can be no agreement if hearts are not soothed and inclined to reach a compromise. Côte d'Ivoire is in dire need of a "peace and reconciliation" conference based on the South African model to overcome the present difficulties, because the Ivorians alone can bring about peace for themselves.

Perhaps a headlong collision and irreconcilable confrontation between the fraternal enemies can be avoided through African mediation and vest the Prime Minister chosen by consensus, as recommended in the Marcoussis agreement, with real powers to help him bring together the warring groups and build what Senghor called 'dynamic compromises', capable of bringing peace to this great country, which was a growth centre not long ago – an island of stability and the pride of all of Africa.

Will President Gbagbo consent to delegate a part of his constitutional powers to the Prime Minister? Will the others be satisfied with this? That is the problem of Côte d'Ivoire and the reason why all mediations undertaken till now have failed.

The situation in DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo) is of a different kind. Here, mediation by President Nelson Mandela helped to reach a compromise that has held in abeyance the upsurge of violence that is seen from time to time. Congo has been undergoing an endemic crisis since the fall of Mobutu. Here, the problem is one of leadership. The extraordinary wealth of this nation, which has been called a geological scandal, has given rise to a lot of greed and spawned a number of warlords. People would rather be the boss of their region than Number Two in Kinshasa. The presence of the UN's blue helmets has helped in stabilizing the situation and constraining the players to search for a compromise. Nevertheless, the region is a simmering powder keg with threats of war being made sometimes by Rwanda or Uganda, not to forget the recurrent turmoil faced by Burundi.

African mediation cannot be entirely successful due to the enormous interests at stake. It is therefore necessary that mediation here be done under the auspices of the UN and the International Community, as is the case elsewhere. In fact, it is under the aegis of the UN that the present agreements have been finalised. With patience and perseverance, we could ensure the peace and unity of DRC.

As for Darfur, it is in a situation of war. The Sudanese troops are faced with a rebellion. The African Union, acting in concert with the UNO and the international community, is attempting to contain the situation. But the central government's dickering calls for a firm handling of the situation by the AU and the UNO. However, they will have to make the rebels listen to reason, perhaps based on the recent agreement reached between the Central Government and the rebels from the South, and hope

to achieve the same result. Beyond Sudan, the geopolitics of the entire sub-region is at issue, because the subsoil is rich in oil. In this context, African mediation is likely to go against the interests of foreign powers.

As can clearly be seen by these examples, African diplomacy employs mechanisms, strategies and methods drawn from endogenous cultures of mediation. The success of such mediation is limited when bad governance creates a divided society, and in the absence of what Senghor defines as the very basis of a nation – a "common resolve for a common life". It has a limited effect when the stakes extend beyond the borders of the country or countries concerned and involve foreign powers that set a premium on their own interests. That is why the African Union President, Alpha Oumar Konaré, was quite right when he said: "One day, historians will be forced to study the sad fate of our continent and its peoples, and ascribe responsibility for it – a responsibility that is incumbent first on Africans themselves, but also on actors outside of the African tragedy. The responsibility of the African leadership is already involved. It is, above all, through them that the winds of hope will blow in Africa and resolve the several conflicts seen today."

2.2 Conflict Prevention and Mediation Experiences and Mechanisms in Forest Guinea (Tolo Beavogui)

[Original French]

"Any local crisis, any long-lasting regional crisis acts like a magnet for the powerful of the world who seek all possible opportunities to play their power games. At some point, any lasting local or regional crisis inevitably goes out of the hands of its protagonists, to the benefit of those more powerful than them."
François Mitterrand before the Knesset on 4 March 1982, quoted in *Verbattim* by Jacques Attali (Fayard 1993).

"How many conflicts, which lead to costly and ineffective legal actions today, could be easily and amicably settled by adopting traditional ways, if we called upon those who knew them well and were able to implement them?"
Hampaté Bâ, quoted in "Besoin d'Afrique" by Eric Fottorino, Christophe Guillemin and Erik Orsenna, Fayard 1992.

Introduction

Forest Guinea is the southern region of the Republic of Guinea and shares a border with the Republics of Liberia and Sierra Leone as well as Côte d'Ivoire. It covers the current administrative regions of N'zerekore, as well as Kissidougou prefecture in the Governorate of Faranah and Kerouane prefecture in the Governorate of Kankan.

The people or linguistic communities found there include the Kpele, Loma, Kissi, Manon, Konon and Konianke (Toma-Manian in Macenta).[1] We prefer the term 'people' or 'linguistic community' to that of ethnic group. As we shall see further on, there is such an intermingling of populations that it is sometimes difficult to identify the communities to which people belong.

The same people or linguistic communities can be found in Liberia and Sierra Leone. In fact, Liberia has a larger number of Kpele, Loma, Manon and Konon people than Guinea.[2] And Liberia's and Sierra Leone's Kissi communities taken together are more numerous than the Kissi in Guinea. In Liberia, the Loma-Mandingos have a Kingdom (canton) in LoLa County, called Koadu-Boni, bordering Macenta prefecture (Daro sub-prefecture, Oremai and Macenta town council).

Several Malinke colonies settled and prospered in the Nimba and Bong Counties and Sierra Leone's diamond-rich areas a long time ago. The Malinke population grew before and after Guinea's independence due to the harshness and atrocities of the colonial regime on both sides, as well as through collective work and enrolment in theatre groups from 1960 onwards, but especially after the abolition of private trade in 1964.

The same reasons hold true for the Loma, Kissi, Kpele, Manon and Konon, to which were added the mistakes made during the demystification campaigns that led to the prohibition of the *Poro* (or Sacred Forest).

My presentation will focus on:

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I. **Geographic realities**

Briefly, we know that as its name indicates, Forest Guinea is an area of forests and mountains, although its forest cover may only be limited to a few islets and classified forests today.

My job as an "Inspecteur d'Académie" (chief education officer) enabled me to travel all over the area from 1967 to 1969, sometimes two or three times, while "hunting" for the remotest schools in order to inspect them and observe their functioning.

Its climate and vegetation made it a rice producing area, along with tubers and oil palms. Since Denise Paulme, the Kissi have been known as rice-growing specialists.[3] The shallow waters were turned into intensive cultivation areas. Coffee and cocoa also gradually took root.

The area also has a diamond, gold and iron rich sub-soil (with mining taking place in the Liberian part of Mount Nimba), particularly in the Macenta and Kerouane prefectures. The dense forests and topography made the region's inhabitants essentially sedentary, rarely travelling outside the area. It took colonisation and the need for labour to make them migrate elsewhere.

II. **Historical realities**

Forest Guinea's inhabitants have all shared the same fate.

1) The Kpele, Loma, Manon and Konon were pushed out of the Mandingue area, particularly since the introduction of Islam and the break-up of former empires and kingdoms, and sought refuge in the forests.

Although the origin of the Kissi has not yet been clearly established since Check Anta Diop made them move from the East, it is generally accepted that they transited through Fouta and belong to the same so-called Senegalo-Guinean linguistic group as Liberia's Gola and Guinea's Baga, Landouma, Nalou and Fulani.[4]

As for the others, the Loma, Kpele, Manon and Konon claim that their origins can be traced to Moussadou in the Beyla prefecture.

2) The Kpele, Kissi, Manon, Konon and Loma share the fact that their men were educated in the *Poro* (called *Polon* by the Kpele, *Pologi* by the Loma and *Toma Pondo* by the Kissi) and that the women were educated in the *Sande* (also *Hanin, Toma Bendo-Zadegui*). Before their Islamisation by Samori Touré, the Malinke from the Konian area followed the same educational traditions. The Kouranko used to go to the Tomaro. In the Macenta prefecture and in Liberia (Lofa), most of the Manian were educated in the Poro.[5]

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Furthermore, sixty years ago, they all bore initiatory first names. Their educational tradition imbued them with certain strengths and weaknesses: courage and obstinacy, endurance, sensitivity, patience, doggedness, keenness to work, honesty and loyalty,[6] but also a traditional withdrawal into themselves, particularly with the Loma, and the absence or near absence of any notion of progress.

On the whole, despite occasional differences and differentiations here and there, Forest Guinea's villages and townships are an inextricable mixture of the Kpele, Manon, Konon, Loma and Malinke clans. In Macenta, many of the Guilavogui, Béavogui and others belong to the Malinke community, having merged with their hosts through totemic analogies and vice-versa. In Baloma's villages in the former cantons of Koodou and Kinokoro, some of the surnames are Loma whereas the language is Manian, while in other cases the names are Manian and the language Loma!

Even better, in the 19th century, the Kondo confederation brought the Loma, Kpele, Kissi, Fulani and Gola together, as mentioned in Facinet Béavogui's book and the article by the historian Andreas W. Massing published in the *Cahiers d'études africaines* in 1985.[7]

During a meeting with the Director of the American Cultural Centre on 30 April 2004, Professors James Fairhead and Melissa Leach, co-authors of "African American Exploration in West Africa",[8] mentioned that during their research on Forest Guinea's environment and history, they had found proof of the existence of savannah, of towns with 10,000 inhabitants, and of the cultivation of cotton in around the 18th and 19th centuries.

3) With the support of the Church and American humanitarian organisations, emancipated slaves established a Liberian State on 22 July 1847. A dumping ground for emancipated Blacks in 1787, Sierra Leone became a British colony in 1808. Confined to the coast but carrying on trade with African kingdoms and empires in the hinterland, these States grew further after the scramble for Africa.

The 8 December 1892 arrangement concluded between France and the Republic of Liberia, represented by Baron de Stein, Resident and Consul General of the Republic of Liberia in Belgium, demarcated the border between French Sudan and Liberia. The arrangement lapsed in 1928.[8a]

On l July 1912 in Pendembu, Captain Le Mesurier, the French Commissioner, and Captain M.P Schwartz, the British Commissioner, signed a Protocol on the final public land survey to demarcate the border between French Guinea and Sierra Leone.[9] Naturally, neither the arrangement nor the above protocol took the prevailing historical and social realities into account.

Thus, the Kpele, Koma, Koniarlce, Manian, Manon, Konon and Kissi were spread out over Liberia, Sierra Leone and French Guinea. For instance, two-thirds of the Loma found themselves in Liberia while almost all the Manian were in Guinea.

4) Colonisation gave a further impetus to the spread of Islam due to the formation of Maninka-speaking hubs of traders and administrative officers in the main cities and markets, particularly in the Macenta circle, where villages were given names chosen by Malinka-speaking interpreters and infantrymen.

Almami Samori Touré's resistance led to a divide in Forest Guinea. Since this area had no imperial tradition and each village was a separate stronghold, and given the proximity of arms and ammunition supply centres (Freetown, Monrovia), Emperor Samori Touré took the support of the Loma, Kpele and Kissi to fight against the French conquest of Forest Guinea, while the Konianke and Manian were more or less allies of the French against the Guinean national hero.

Until his arrest in l898, Emperor Samori Touré used his alliance with these communities in Forest Guinea to obtain arms and ammunition supplies when the French blocked his access to Sudan and Sierra Leone. Further, he could claim Loma origins on his mother, Sowoni Onivogui's side.

5) Neither the slave wars, Samori Touré's reign nor colonisation were able to sever the ties between the Kpele, Loma, Kissi Manon, Konon and Malinke in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Despite customs border points, trade, education in the Poro area – with the various batches including initiates from both sides – as well as the backward surge of defeated resistance fighters and those fleeing forced labour continued unabated between these communities.[10]

6) For the entire period under colonisation and independence, up to 1991, relations between Forest Guinea's communities were marked by friendliness.

The Loma affectionately considered the Manian as their nephews and we know what that means in these societies, where there are no *griots*. Nephews are allowed much more and spoilt much more than one's own children.

Elsewhere, the Malinke, who found themselves in a minority among the Kpele, Konon and Manon, adopted a bearing filled with respect. In the Lola prefecture for instance, there are Dorés, Chérifs and Konés (usually Malinke names) who are actually Kpeles or Manons. In the village of Lainé, the Dorés, Konons and Doré Koniankés live together peacefully like brothers.

In the Kissi territory, interbreeding with the Malinke is fairly noticeable. The Leles – the Konos (from Sierra Leone, not to be mixed with the Konons) – are the product of extensive miscegenation.

During these two periods, no bloody wars were recorded. In Liberia, except for what the historian Facinet Beavogui described as Séléga's treason in 1884, all animosities were forgotten.[ll]

To conclude, on the eve of Liberia's civil war – for that was when it all began – Forest Guinea was a peaceful region thanks to the good neighbourly policies practiced by President Ahmed Sékou Touré, both with Liberia and Sierra Leone. A sensible politician, President Sékou Touré took into account the fact that the Guinean community was fairly large in number in both these countries, while also being extensively involved in trade, transportation and the economy in general. (Gold and diamond mining in Sierra Leone, where Bailo Barry was just as famous as the wealthy Lebanese man, Jamil.)

The acts of violence originating in Liberia and Sierra Leone which caused massive material and human damage, particularly in the Macenta prefecture, ignited the tensions that had arisen under Samori, continued to seethe during the colonial period and were stifled under the *Parti Démocratique de Guinée* (PDG, Guinean Democratic Party) from 1958 to 1984.

III. Conflicts in Forest Guinea

1- It started in Liberia

On 12 April 1980, a coup by Chief Sergeant Samnel Kanyon Doe took place in Liberia, putting an end to the 133-year-old domination by the Americano-Liberians or the Congo. This marked the beginning of the reign of the 'Natives'. President Doe allowed the Mandingue and Muslim community to enjoy certain rights and incorporated it in his regime. This community had been discriminated against by former Liberian presidents and opposed to non-Muslims.

President Doe's policy was not to everyone's liking. His management of the economy led the American government to consider placing Liberia under its protection in 1985-1986. President Doe's enemies used Quiwompa as a means to oust him. The latter, an estranged friend of Doe, failed in his attempt in 1985. Charles Taylor was then thought of as a solution and he went on to organise an armed rebellion in December l989 and reached Monrovia's gates in 1990.

The coalition forces of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) established the ECOMOG (ECOWAS Monitoring Group) under the leadership of Babangida's Nigeria to prevent Taylor's forces from taking over Monrovia.

2- Taylor and the expansion of the conflict

Unable to take Monrovia, Taylor and his National Patriotic Front of Liberia's (NPFL) troops established their base in Gbarnga, where they organised themselves and from where they controlled a large part of the Liberian territory. Taylor became a warlord, exploiting the country's wealth (timber, diamonds, etc.) to purchase arms and earn riches.

Once he was established, Taylor created the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) with the help of certain African States who sold him arms and ammunition and supplied him with troops in order to protect himself from the declared animosity of neighbouring States and sow discord in Sierra Leone so as to destabilise the country. He was so successful in his attempts that two coups took place in Sierra Leone between 1992 and 1995, with a third after the presidential elections in 1996. All this brought the RUF into international disrepute and the former colonisers decided to intervene with their considerable might in order to put an end to the civil war by arresting Foday Sankoh in May 2000.

That is when Forest Guinea's long years of torment began, as Guinea tried to protect itself from the spreading unrest and prevent the country's destabilisation.

3- Forest Guinea falls victim to conflicts

To counter Charles Taylor, Guinea – as it has been established, despite the government's denials – supported the United Liberian Movement (ULIMO), then LURD (Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy) created in Sierra Leone in 1990. This support enabled the latter to settle in the Lofa County, using the city of Macenta as a base camp – just 40 km or so from Vonjama, the Lofa Countycapital.

Hence, Macenta became the epicentre of the conflict. Its inhabitants suffered a series of attacks, starting in 1991. We shall take most of our examples and case studies from among these. Three different periods can be distinguished:

1990-1992,
1992-1997 and
1997-2003.

3.1-From 1990 to 1992, Taylor continued his rebellion in Liberia. He occupied the Lofa County. Atrocities were committed against the Mandingos who took refuge in Macenta, particularly as most of them came from the Macenta prefecture – mainly the neighbouring Manian villages. Unparalleled xenophobic acts were committed against them. They returned to the villages they had come from and merged into their population. Their inflow led to conflicts over land between Manian villages and neighbouring Loma villages, sometimes within the same Manian village. The Manian generally used their land for coffee plantations and had very limited shallow water areas for rice cultivation. The inter-community conflicts that took place occurred for economic rather than ethnic reasons. The Lomas generally managed to hold on to their land. As they were not traders, far less middlemen, they were unable to capitalise on their crops as well as the Manian did. They only had enough for their own subsistence. That is why many Manian emigrated to Liberia. So they are the ones who returned to their homelands.

In Taylor's defence, there were not many murderous attacks against Manian villages in Macenta during this period.

3.2-From 1992 to l997, with the support of its allies, including Guinea, the ULIMO occupied Lofa Country and used the town of Macenta as a retreat from Vonjama and as a base camp. Alhaji Kromah headed the ULIMO. His father came from Caro in Diomandou District, Daro sub-prefecture, 16 km from Macenta. The ULIMO troops in Macenta, mainly Manian, treated it as a conquered territory. Accusing the Loma of having signed a pact with the devil (Taylor) and of thereby having taken part in the atrocities they had been subjected to, ULIMO troops attacked Loma villages along the border. In addition, when they were hit by famine, they raided and looted Loma villages.

Thus, from 1992 to 1997, eleven Loma border villages were attacked, including Niavalazou in 1994 and Yezou on 30 March 1996, with over 200 dead and extensive material damage.

The Loma community was deeply affected and in 1994, fights broke out in the town of Macenta, leading to a number of victims and considerable damage, particularly in the Manian areas. The Mayor, of Loma origin, saw his house burn down. Long buried hostilities came to the fore, along with often-misplaced movements by the ULIMO troops. Liberia's Lomas sought refuge *en masse* and were welcomed by their clan members in Guinea, with no major problems. They received aid in the form of food, supplies and medicines from humanitarian organisations and the Church, to the great envy of the people.

3.3-From 1997 to 2003, among other events, Charles Taylor was elected as Liberia's President with a 75% majority. The Kpele, Manon, Konon, Loma and Kissi welcomed his election with great relief, in the belief that it would lead to peace. The Konianke and Manian, however, remained somewhat fearful.

During this period, President Taylor treated Liberia as his own fiefdom, despite a number of mediations, meetings and others, and also attempted to export the conflict to other countries, particularly Sierra Leone, where the RUF had committed a series of atrocities, as well as Guinea.

In Guinea, President Conté did not seem to like the way Taylor was conducting his battle for power (with President Doe's macabre assassination by Taylor's friends in 1990) nor his ambitions and even less Taylor's African alliances.

There were feelings of sometimes-overt animosity between Guinea's President Conté and Charles Taylor. [12]

On the defensive in 2000, Guinea strengthened its border defences in 2001 by providing the ULIMO and later the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) with effective support, helping the latter establish itself solidly in Lofa County, from where the movement fought its battles for Monrovia, with Macenta continuing to serve as a base camp.

President Conté was supported not only by the United Kingdom, which was determined to rid Sierra Leone of the RUF and reinforce President Kabbah's government's authority and control over the country, but also the American government, which wanted to break with Charles Taylor. We know that the United States had been Liberia's protector and was being pressured from all sides to act decisively in order to remove Taylor from power in Liberia.

The bloodiest and most devastating attacks were perpetrated during this period. In their battle against the ULIMO and then the LURD, President Taylor's troops first attacked Diomandou and Kotizou on 9 September 1999, destroying houses and killing innocents. Then, on 17 September 2000, they took on Macenta and attacked the military camp, wreaking havoc, killing many innocents and committing atrocities against civilians, while also killing the UNHCR delegate. They set fire to the villages of Bokoni and Massadou, as well as Déléou' on 4 December 2000 and, on the 18th of the same month, destroyed almost three quarters of the village of Kotizou. Badiaro was bombarded on 16 October and 27 November 2000 and left in ruins.

The Guinean army counter-attacked by pillaging Liberian territory and did not hesitate to bomb Gueckedou on 28 January 2001. The media self-importantly spoke of the Guecckedou "tongue", "hare-lip" or "parrot", which had become the rebels' base and refuge, including that of Sam Bockarie, who was really none other than Saa Bakari.

Forest Guinea paid a heavy toll – the outcome was tragic. Countless deaths, extensive material damage, almost 200,000 people displaced in neighbouring areas and over 500,000 refugees. Civilians fled to Upper Guinea, as far as the Fouta region and even Conakry.

It was mainly during this period that inter-community conflicts developed. The case of Konesseridou and Velezou is the most well-known, leading to arrests and sentencing. Kankan would have set all of Guinea ablaze, were it not for the wisdom of religious leaders in Beyla, Kankan and elsewhere. Other consequences included the swiftly suppressed demonstrations by young people from Forest Guinea in Conakry and the stand taken by the bishops.

Before Taylor's withdrawal under international pressure, the friendly relations between Forest Guinea's different communities had been put severely to the test: the Kpele, Loma, Kissi, Manon and Konon were at daggers drawn with the Malinke, Konianke and Manian, accusing them of being supported by the powers-that-be against them and holding them responsible for their suffering. The latter accused the former of being xenophobic and of trying to evict them from the land they had received or purchased.

Even relationships between the Liberian Kpele, Loma, Kissi, Manon and Konon communities and those in Guinea suffered a freeze. In fact, Liberians faced a number of problems while they were refugees – difficulties in finding land to farm, broken families, disputes over palm oil harvesting, etc. Guineans, on their part, had to share their land with Liberians and sometimes face extensive deforestation, family disputes and ungrateful acts like the destruction of their fields when the refugees were repatriated. But the worst was that the refugees served as guides for the raids conducted by Taylor's troops. Indeed, in Kotizou and Déléou, several former refugees who had been given safe harbour there earlier were recognised among the attackers.

Neither were the relations between the Manian free of suspicion or animosity. Families refused to send their children to suffer certain death.[13] Land disputes broke out between those who returned and those who had stayed back.

IV.   Conflict prevention and mediation experiences and mechanisms

The duration and extent of civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone left no one indifferent. They wreaked havoc in Forest Guinea and the entire sub-region. In fact, these wars called for both internal and external mediation and prevention mechanisms:

- Women, the Sacred Forest and Islamic organisations,
- Traditional methods, still used by forest communities.

1-   Women

While some believe that African tradition relegated women to the background, they nonetheless remain procreators and therefore a medium for the perpetuation and continuation of African societies. As mothers, they invite respect and love. In polygamous societies, people are fonder of their mothers than their fathers. They fear their mothers and avoid being cursed by them. This is especially true in Forest Guinean societies where women undergo their education through the *Sande* (*Hanin* in Kpele, *Zadegui* in Loma and *Toma Bendo* in Kissi) or the excision ceremony, to use the pejorative term. For 6 to 12 months, initiates acquire a rigorous education. At the end of it, they are mature women, ready to take on the world. When they apply kaolin and spend the night cursing, all those who have violated the rules of conviviality had better beware! They turn into proper warriors, defying men. For instance, there was Soghoni, the widow of Enégo Goépogui, King of Oubome, who raised the flag of revenge to avenge her husband's betrayal and murder by Sarafina Amara's men in 1885.[14] Much closer to home were the great RDA women activists who took part in the freedom struggle, such as Filani Fofana and Wattaba in Macenta. Indeed, they were the ones who successfully fought against certain measures during the 1959-1960 demystification campaigns.

Today, women are mobilising themselves at a national and sub-regional level in the Mano River Union to put an end to the horrors being perpetrated in Liberia and Sierra Leone. In fact, a Bassari proverb says, "Man is the anvil, the child is the iron and woman is fire."[15] Undeniably a blazing fire, these Amazons of peace command the admiration of men and women of goodwill – in fact, all peace-loving people. We pay tribute to these women and their most important leaders, including our fellow countrywoman Hadja Sara Daraba, for their patriotism, nationalism, dynamism and commitment. They have managed to force their way through the hermetically sealed doors of presidential palaces, knock down superiority complexes and speak the language of truth – that of a wife and mother. Their cry from the heart has found its mark. Better structured at national level, better organised, they rely not so much on well-placed women in the limelight, but essentially on committed women. Supported by all peace-loving people, the Mano River Union's women are likely to prevent many conflicts. Indeed, towards the end of 2004, they were already at work in Forest Guinea to spread awareness and education.

2-   The Sacred Forest

We understand the term as signifying a political and religious institution, which functions as a Constitutional or Supreme Court. It is the place where the Kpele, Loma, Kissi, Manon and Konon organise serious assemblies and debate the community's survival and future. Even the chief cannot evade a decision taken here.

The *Savei* (Loma), *Lowoxanna* (Kpele), *Bundo* or *Soko* (Kissi) is not only seat of the Supreme Court but also of religion. The *Polon*, *Pologui* or *Toma Pondon* organised here in cyclical patterns can last 3 to 7 years. Initiates learn medicine, the art of war, and physical and moral endurance here.

The scarification practiced here is a means of identifying a Forest Guinean. It is a cultural brand. The PDG's regime (*Parti Démocratique de Guinée* or Democratic Party of Guinea) had abolished it, forgetting that a mere decree cannot wipe out an entire belief system. Indeed, that is why Forest Guineans today are so passionate about being educated in the *Poro*.

While I was the Ambassador in the GDR (June 1990), I saw the Speaker of the Lower House (*Volkskammer*) proclaim God's name in a place where atheism had held sway, 45 years after churches had been turned into dance halls.

While demystification left its mark, the institution survived as a cultural link between different peoples and clans from both sides of the borders between Guinea and its neighbours. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the different batches of initiates do not recognise any borders between villages and cantons or between Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. Those from Macenta – the "Lofakomaiti" of the 1936-1937 batch – are spread out all over Macenta prefecture and in Lofa County. We have already mentioned the case of Samodou in Liberia, whose President was the Yoe of Kotizou (Guinea) in 1953.

In Liberia, all self-respecting Presidents have to go to the *Poro* in *Lofa* County. Thus, Presidents Tubman, Tolbert and Doe all had the initiatory first name of Tanou. Taylor took the first name of Dakpana and set himself up as the Yoe Superior Chief – a sort of Simbo in Siguiri or Kouroussa. The oath taken is secret and irrevocable. That is why, in the thick of the attacks in 2000, when the LURD's forces occupied Nimba and Bong Counties, the Kpele, Manon and Konon got together to prevent

the rebels from attacking their brethren in Guinea, while those in Guinea used all possible tricks to avoid infiltration and the provisioning of arms and ammunition. That explains why Lola, Yomou and N'Zerekore did not get their Massadou, Kotiyou, Deleou, Badiaro, Foloou and so on, and even less any brutal raids against cities and military camps, as was the case in Macenta and Gueckedou.

In fact, it is because of its effectiveness that this action led to the reconciliation and non-aggression pacts that are being signed today between Liberia and Forest Guinea's Kissi, Manon, Kpele and Konon. It is a safe bet that these pacts, forged in the Sacred Forest, will be long-lasting.

3- *Learned men*

The people we refer to here are scholars, full of wisdom and very honest, often confined to their huts or chambers, surrounded by their *Talibés* or vagrant children. Far from making their living as Imams, they often blend into their surroundings thanks to inter-marriages or conversion.**(16)** They live the same reality as their hosts, while respecting their customs. They are tolerant and believe in co-existence. As their ancestors had settled there in the 17th and 18th centuries, they had signed the Kokola Pact with their Loma hosts, for instance, by virtue of which they undertook to respect the latter's customs, rites and beliefs. **Remembering such pacts and educating people about them could prove to be of great help.**

On the other hand, there are an increasing number of Shepherds of the Church in Forest Guinea. Organising inter-faith discussion forums related to peace and conviviality could also be of great benefit. They have succeeded in getting their voice – the voice of truth – heard on several occasions. In fact, a friend ironically said that although over 90% of Guineans are Muslim, 100% of them follow traditional beliefs and practices. Whether Muslims of Christians, they all worship the ancestors, visit the same seers… Indeed, dialogue offers many opportunities to reach an understanding.

Outside the framework of religion, there are also other channels for conflict prevention.

4- *Traditional courses of action*

Family ties: In Forest Guinea, the nephew acts as the *griot*. In fact, there are three types of nephews: the family's nephew, the village's nephew and the canton's nephew. Thus, the Loma are the Kpele's nephews and the Kissi's nephews through the mother. The Kpele's case is in fact better-known.

However, according to Paul Degeen Korvah's "History of the Loma people", Fara Wubo's mother was called Kumba. Eklle was Kissi, married to Fali Kama (Camara?), a Mandingo from Moussadou.[17] For the Loma, this is a point of convergence between the Kissis and Kpeles. These ties have worked in favour of the Loma in times of crisis and in favour of the Kissi during the raids on Tekoulo and Gueckedou – because they received help in the form of volunteers and means of protection. Any intercession by a nephew calms people down.

No one takes the fact that kinship of pleasantry is regaining popularity in Burkina Faso lightly. Because it produces results.

In the Macenta region, the Loma community considers the Manian as their nephews. That is why they are called Toma-Manian (Loma-Mandingue in Liberia). In fact, no Manian can deny having at least one Loma great-grandmother. In Lofa County, most of the 13 Mandingo-speaking villages were originally Loma villages, in which the Loma element slowly disappeared, especially when most inhabitants converted to Islam and changed their family name. Apart from being a major slave market, Kotizou was a cultural hub where the Loma and Manian gathered on completing their education in the *Poro*. It was called Kamegui, a term derived from the Malinke word *Kamme* (understanding).

No uncle can ever say 'no' to his nephew. In the Kissi country, according matriarcal system, a nephew simply needs to respect the traditions in practice in order to enjoy the right to be his uncle's heir. And in the event of a conflict between a nephew and uncle, tradition calls for the sacrifice of an animal and the nephew has to wash his hands in the same canteen as his uncle or present the latter with cola nuts to gain his pardon.

Among the Loma, *Guinzé* is added to the cola nuts. [18]

Artists

Although the function of a *griot* does not exist among the Forest Guinean peoples, artists have taken on the *griot*'s role, either to glorify or denounce and criticise. All conflicts end in a blaze of glory with the reconciliation dance.

Dialogue

It brings disputing parties together at the palaver hut, over the ancestors' tomb or at any other common place. Dialogue calls for consensus and ends in a pardon around cola nuts. The parties can be convinced through periphrases, proverbs and examples, and reconciliation follows. This is where the elders and wise men excel. Their skills help to rally both sides and obtain an agreement or pardon. The various reconciliation attempts in Forest Guinea are all based on such dialogue.

- The attempt made on 25 November 1993 between Liberian Manian and Loma in Macenta,
- The one on 10 January 2000 in the Social Economic Council's office,
- The one organised in Macenta between the Loma and Manian in 2001, during which a bull was sacrificed.

All these courses of action are far from insignificant and are sometimes very effective. But they have been and still are subjected to censure by the modern economy, in which self-interest prevails over other considerations. They shatter often very personal ambitions for power and pomp. They buckle under the strain of the trickery and base acts to which some actors resort.

The values long promoted by the so-called traditional chieftainship, abolished in 1957, as well as those acquired during the education in the *Poro*, banned in 1959, are crumbling away or sometimes becoming obsolete in the face of the continuous assault by new values, often from the West. This makes interventions by external powers and national, sub-regional and African organisations necessary, desirable and even sought after.

African intermediation

On 25 August 1990, the ECOWAS set up an interposition force called ECOMOG (ECOWAS Monitoring Group) and devoted several ministerial and Heads of State meetings to the war in Liberia. Thirteen such meetings took place between 1990 and 1995.

The forces, which had no specific mission or significant resources,[19] only left the Liberians bad memories. The smuggling of drugs and all sorts of things made the suppliers rich and contributed to the decline of the youth.

The ECOWAS and the African Union acquired the resources they needed and enjoyed the United Nations' assistance. Although there was an obvious desire on the part of the different powers to let the Africans manage their own affairs – the United States proved it by not intervening directly in Liberia –, the fact remains that actions taken by the ECOWAS or the African Union are not as effective as one would have wished, given the geopolitical calculations of different parties.

Mediation by former colonial powers

This proved to be more effective in settling disputes. Indeed, the entire weight of Great Britain was needed to bring peace back to Sierra Leone, along heavy pressure and threats by the United States for Taylor to agree to give up power and take exile in 2003.

Conclusion

Making Forest Guinea safe is going to be a long drawn-out task.

*At the political and social level, there is no doubt that the pacts signed in the Sacred Forest would be respected. However, the hatred and rancour stemming from the consequences and burden of the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone are likely to continue to weigh heavily on inter-community relationships between Forest Guinea's Muslims and non-Muslims, and between its Maninka-speaking community and other communities, for a long time.

That is why we must all work towards political and religious education and a continuous dialogue based on principles of tolerance. The Imams, Priests, schools and universities should all be involved.

*On the economic front, the national community, government, NGOs and other organisations should proceed with the development of shallow-water areas where paddy can be cultivated.

*However, none of this will suffice if a development policy that benefits all is not adopted at national level and if we fail to establish the inspiring principles of a modern State in the minds of the people.

Notes

1. We have used the terms the people themselves use to describe themselves. The Guerzé call themselves 'Kpele', the Toma 'Loma', the Toma-Manian simply 'Manian'.
    Besides, since the Republic of Guinea adopted the teaching of languages as national languages, these are the commonly used terms – which comply with international usage.

2. In Liberia, estimates show that the Kpele, Manon and Konon amount to a little more than 50% of the population. Two-thirds of the Loma are in Liberian territory, in the Loma County.

3. Denise Paulme. Les gens du riz, Plon Paris, 1954.

4. Jacques Germain. Guinée, les peuples de la forêt. Académie des sciences d'outremer, 1984, pp. 44-45. Some traditions consider the Kissi as the Fulani's half-brothers on the mother's side.

5. In the Guinean newspaper *Le Lynx*, Issue no. 505, dated 26 February 2001, we set the record straight on *the Poro* being incorrectly referred to as the Sacred Forest. The Poro is a school from which you come out as a seasoned and accomplished man, for whom nothing is unfamiliar.

6. Joachim Kolie. *L'initiation Kpèlè et le christianisme depuis l'époque coloniale (1912) jusqu'à l'indépendance (1958) et ses conséquences. Etude historique et théologique de la pastorale sociale de l'Eglise en Guinée Forestière*, Doctorate thesis, December 1993.

7. Guinea was made a colony in 1893 and a French West Africa (AOF) territory in 1895. Upper Guinea separated from Sudan in 1899. (7a).

8. Facinet Béavogui. 1) *Les Toma (Guinée et Liberia) au temps des négriers et la colonisation française*, L'Harmattan, 2001, p. 47
    2) *Contribution à l'histoire des loma de la Guinée Forestière de la fin du XIXe siècle à 1945*, PhDs, Paris 1993.

8a The demarcation ended in 1928.

9. James Fairhead, Tim Geysbeek, Svend E. Holosoe and Melissa Leach – African-American Exploration in West Africa. Four Nineteenth Century Diaries, Indiana University Press, 2003.

10. The *Poro* organised in 1950-1953 in Samodou, in Koadu-Boni, Liberia, was chaired by the Zoe (religious chief) of Kotizou (Kabaro) – our village, which was a major slave market and held the Kamegui (reconciliation-understanding) upon leaving the *Poro* in the Onigou.

11. In a study published in 1994 for the members of his party – the *Rassemblement du Peuple de Guinée* (RPG, Guinean Popular Party) –, Facinet spoke of the treachery of Séléga, the Oubome capital, which set Loma and Manian against each other.

Even after a 4-year siege, the Manian assailants were unable to take Séléga. So a peace proposal was made. During the reconciliation dance, a Manian warrior severed the head of Enego Goepogui (and not Koivogui). The Loma took Gbazoene's death badly and avenged it.

12. In his speeches, President Conté referred to African countries without naming them. People thought he was referring in particular to Burkina Faso, Taylor's supporter, a country whose nationals were made prisoners during the conflicts in 2000. Houphouet's Côte d'Ivoire and Togo were both suspected.

13. Apart from the taxes and levies deducted in cities from transporters in order to support the ULIMO, each village had to provide a contingent of young persons for the fighting. Many lost their lives or returned disabled. I have it from my nephews and cousins living in Diarataoulédou and Komodou.

For more information on the conflict, read the magazine *Afrique contemporain:*

- Issue no. 198, 2nd quarter 2001, article by Stephen Ellis: "Les guerres en Afrique de l'Ouest: le poids de l'histoire", Pages 50 to 56.
- Issue no. 200, 4th quarter 2001, article by Dominique Bangoura: "La Guinée face aux rebellions au sud de son territoire". Documented article. In the INTERNATION CRISIS GROUP'S reports:
- Report no. 62 of 30 April 2003, "Tackling Liberia: the eye of regional storm"
- Report no. 74 of 19 December 2003, "Guinée, incertitude autour d'une fin de règne", page 17 to 19
- Report no. 87 of 8 December 2004, "Liberia and Sierra Leone: Rebuilding failed States"

    Our interview in the magazine, "Les Echos de Guinée", Issue no. 34 of 24-26 February, 2001.
    Our clarification in the newspaper, LE LYNX, dated 26 February 2001.

14. Soghoni was the widow of the Oubomè King, Gbazoènè Goépogui, and not Koïvogui.
    See Yves Person: *Samori, une révolution dyula,* Vol. I, p. 564.
    NB: Séléga is 15 km from Kotizou. Seven of our great-great grandmother's sons died there during the siege.

15. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch. *Les Africaines - Histoire des femmes noires*. Desjonquères Paris, 1994, p. 288.

16. The Imam Cissé de N'Zérékoré is of Kpele origin, just like the famous Bamakama marabout in Yomou.

17. Paul Degein Korvah: The History of the Loma People, O Book Oakland CA Vonjama City, June 1988.

18. The word *Guinzé* is the gallicised version of the Manian word *Gbensè*. In Loma, it is *Kolui* (iron). A bundle of 20 *guinzé* was the price of a bar of salt (*Kpolo ila*). The *guinzé* is only used in Loma areas during marriages.

19. The Senegalese contingent had to withdraw in less than two years.

2.3   Traditional mechanisms and socio-cultural strategies for resolving conflict: the story of Aguene and Diambone (Saliou Sambou)

[Original French]

I address you today on a vast and complex subject, and one that is extremely topical given the many bloody conflicts affecting our continent. From southern to central Africa, from west to east, every part of this continent is racked by conflicts, the origins of which are often vague or difficult to define with any accuracy. When enemies begin to lose sight of what they are fighting for, it is surely reasonable to re-examine our traditions and the deeply held values that they embody. Africa has been destabilised by centuries of slavery and a long period of colonisation and this has had a profound impact upon the way we behave.

Centuries of slavery and an extensive period of colonisation diverted Africa and Africans from the course of desirable, structured development most other societies follow. The time that it has taken Europe and other so-called developed countries to get where they are today must not be seen as the measure of how long Africa should take to catch up. We are expected to miss out stages. We are being denied the opportunity to choose our own path, which instead is imposed upon us to satisfy the demands of globalisation.

Our subconscious carries a burden which is almost too great to throw off. Our ancestors may have died long ago, but they live on in the spirit of people of colour, particularly black people, in attitudes which encourage the belief that black culture should not be valued.

As Europe moves towards unification, the balkanisation of Africa becomes more entrenched. Bids for secession are becoming ever more frequent. All this contributes to a rising sense of despair for the future of our continent.

However, by getting back to basics, not by touting vacuous and futile slogans, but through definitive and properly considered actions and strategic thinking, Africa can regain some stability and accelerate its own development.

We must do away with the servile behaviour we adopt towards others, which makes us appear subhuman, and, instead, bring a black influence to globalisation and its sense of balance.

We should not demonise others, however, and should be wary of casting about for scapegoats. Our mistakes and aberrations are largely our own, albeit amplified by the way we are viewed by others.

If we are to make our contribution to humanity, and all other aspects of the planet, we should feel no inferiority at all. The values handed down to us by our ancestors can help us resolve conflict without requiring others to intervene. Our societies hold the key to solving the problems which we ourselves created. Why should someone who is unfamiliar with our culture resolve issues which are cultural or religious in origin? In doing so, we risk being ridiculed by others!

Let us take control of our destiny. Let us be proud of who we are. Let us organise ourselves so we can play the role expected of us on the world stage. In Senegal, I have intervened boldly in ways I would never have imagined, were it not for my attachment to and respect for the values of my community, and I was able to take advantage of the kinship of pleasantry between Serere and Diola. Drawing upon their ancestral heritage, I united Serere who had been fighting each other for 20 years, and who had handed the conflict down to another generation. It involved the two Sine Saloum islands of Niodior and Dionewar. The animosity between the two was such that they would not even travel in the same boat. President Abdou Diouf decided to visit both islands during his election campaign, to avoid arousing jealousy in either community. But these two neighbouring villages insisted that the President must choose one or the other.

Attempting to divide himself between them ended in misfortune. The President's boat got stuck in open water, despite the running motors. When low tide came and made matters worse, protocol was in tatters. It took all manner of mystical interventions before the boat was able to move.

On a separate occasion, the former Regional Minister, Valdiodio Ndiaya, found himself in such a tense situation that a helicopter had to be despatched from Dakar to rescue him.

- What did I do?

At the time, I approached matters by saying "I understand that there are clashes between these two villages. As a Diola, and a cousin of the Serere, ancestral wisdom obliges me to resolve this conflict, if indeed there is a conflict. Why are you setting yourselves against one other?

No one in either camp could tell me what the cause of the conflict had been. Some elders tried to dissuade me from tackling the problem because of the sympathy I had aroused in both villages. In spite of pressure to come down in favour of the Diola, I decided to resolve the problem. After difficult meetings with both sides, I succeeded in bringing leaders from the two communities together.

A truce was signed and the two sides stood in front of the camera to swear that the conflict was over. Peace still reigns between the islands and the two communities are now happy to sail together.

Another conflict arose between customs officials and islanders. The islanders, when sufficient in number, would attack customs officers, knock them out and throw them in the water. I appeared on a national radio programme, described the problem and appealed for suggestions to help stop these vicious attacks. Not everyone seemed to like this idea. The customs agents were fearful of being attacked in front of the authority I represented. They told me I was taking a big risk by inviting them to the islands. Dionewar's village chief asked me not to intervene in such a dangerous situation. I insisted, and the discussions began. Representatives of the Serere diaspora made their views known directly, and in the end the customs officers were invited to spend the night on the island. They came laden with coconuts as gifts. Since then, the customs officers have gone about their work with no problem whatsoever.

The villages of Toucar and Ngayohène in the Fatick region also suffered problems. One village had taken against the President of the Rural Council. The two villages were head on, armed with guns, axes, sabres, bludgeons and other makeshift weapons. As Governor of the region, I was informed of

the situation. I went there with a squad of gendarmes. Having seen the massed fighting ranks, the gendarmes took their positions, equipped to intervene and use force. I asked the gendarmes to let me try to sort things out without them. They thought that was dangerous. I insisted, and positioned myself between the two sides, telling them: "If you dare to shed Serere blood in front of me, a Diola, then do so. You are aware that tradition dictates that I should not let a single drop be shed. Will you put me through the misery of having to drink all the blood you intend to spill? Go ahead, if you want to. I will do my duty and drink all of it."

They laid down their arms and I had the opportunity then to gather the enemies together in a room. After several minutes spent in discussion, the problem was resolved. In this instance, what intervened was the belief that Serere and Diola are cousins, born of twin sisters Aguène and Diambone.

These sisters lived long ago in the village of Kinara, somewhere in Africa. One day, their mother sent them to find wood. They were caught in a ferocious storm and their boat split in two.

Aguène clung to her side of the boat and was carried by the tide to Kalobane in Casamance, where she gave birth to the Diola. Diambone held fast to the other side of the boat and reached Diakhanor in Sine, where she gave birth to the Serere. That is why Diola and Serere are "Kal" in Wolof, "Sanawya" in Diola and Mandingo. They may not do one another harm. Whatever tensions arise between Serere and Diola, they must never take out their animosity on one another. Anyone who fails to obey this unwritten law transgresses the injunction and faces chastisement and punishment by immanent justice. This is what convinces us that Africa has valuable assets which have not been exploited in an appropriate way.

The sons of Aguène and Diambone are an example to us which, with due thought and careful execution, we can exploit to good end. And this may apply not only to individuals or ethnic groups but also to States, helping to resolve conflict in Africa and giving Africans the time to focus on development.

Getting back to basics also demands recognition of oneself and the acceptance of one's true personality. It is regrettable that, today, some Africans have unwittingly become the executioners of their own civilisation.

Indeed, in today's climate, it is rare to see Africans coming to terms with their own values. We are for the most part Muslims, Christians or traditional believers. However, in countries with a large Muslim population, people often celebrate all the Catholic ceremonies of their former colonial power. Our laws were transcribed directly from French laws and adapted to our institutions, but our behaviour is inherited from a different sociology. In saying this I will expose myself to the acrimony of those who uphold our civilisation, because for many, to value our customs is to associate ourselves with uncivilised behaviour, or at the very least to remain behind the times instead of modernising. The chasm between the laws we inherited from our colonisers and our normal patterns of behaviour has opened up because the laws and rules we adopted did not take account of the sociology of our own environment. These laws can only be interpreted by an elite, and this elite often uses the law against the masses who fail to understand it. However, this bourgeois elite is said to speak for the people. In many cases our elections are merely a formality because the result is pre-determined.

We call upon international observers to scrutinise our ballots because we ourselves have no faith in them. Why have we never sent officials to observe elections in France, Belgium, Portugal, Spain or England?

We believe that we should re-evaluate our laws, using our shared heritage to ensure they are in harmony with our culture and religions. In so doing we encourage others to look on us as equal human beings rather than as students of their superior discipline. Africa retains within it all the resources for its development, both natural and human. What we lack is organisation and a method. Japan and Korea were developing countries during the colonial period. Today these countries meet on equal terms with their once colonial rulers.

We fail to understand that, although we may blame colonial power for a great many of our shortcomings, there is one undeniable fact we must recognise and be grateful for. During the darkest days of colonialism, our rulers nonetheless provided the opportunity for us to learn. We studied in the same schools, universities and lecture amphitheatres as their children.

Why do we feel unable to apply the knowledge we acquired in those universities just as they did? This is at the heart of the contradictions characteristic of so many African countries.

Conclusion

It is clear that Africa is able to seize this chance to develop. Schemes to create joint enterprises have succeeded. Air Africa is one example, although the company wound up using methods which seemed far from catholic. Neither did the OERS survive for very long. However, the OMVS is holding its own, and the OMVG is at quite a developed stage.

There are other sub-regional organisations in the same mould. What is their prognosis? It is high time we put an end to the navel-gazing which we have indulged in. Total development is impossible without some degree of integration between African countries to create a body which will attract donors, convincing them that we are as willing as anyone else to follow the path of development. No one is asking us to re-invent the wheel. We are human, like everyone else, and we have the same intelligence, acquired in the same way. There is no reason, therefore, to feel despair for Africa. But we must exorcise the defects which weaken our societies. This will be, without doubt, a difficult process. Several attempts have already been made which, though well-intentioned, failed to achieve the desired result. National conferences have taken place and led to disappointment. We need to be courageous and clear-thinking. Psychological barriers must be taken down by force, if necessary. Africa is not turning its back on development. Having been so disastrously diverted from its normal and natural development by slavery and by colonisation, Africa has simply found it hard to get back on the right road.

This is why we ask our fellow Africans to examine the choices which led us here, to analyse the difficulties and obstacles we have encountered in order to see where our societies have faltered. Let us be bold enough to recognise that our predecessors lived better even without the sophisticated tools we have at our disposal today.

Wisdom suggests that we must make a complete break with the past in order to re-examine our cultural heritage, to value it and to bring it up to speed with advances in the fields of media and technology. The Senegalese government is testing another type of social dialogue to help solve the Casamance problem, drawing upon the relationship between Diola and Serere, which has existed since the dawn of time. It uses the kinship of pleasantry which comes from their once very close kinship, but which has since been eroded by time and distance.

The meeting between the MFDC and the Government at Foundiougne in Serere territory is not a coincidence. The anticipated outcome, if the meeting is successful, will allow Senegal to make a decisive step towards resolving a conflict which has lasted for more than 22 years. The initial stages of this process have already achieved some success by calming tensions in southern Senegal. The presence of Serere in itself acts to reassure the opposition, the MFDC being made up mainly of Diola.

The Diola know that their blood link with the Serere will not allow them to evade the outcome of the meeting. They also know that the Serere will not do anything to damage their own interests. This ancient tie between Serere and Diola cannot be transgressed or renounced by either side, and that in itself is a source of hope.

Similarly we believe that if such kinship of pleasantry existed between certain ethnic groups in Côte d'Ivoire, approaches to and contact between enemy groups would be facilitated. In Africa, boundaries cannot be transgressed without consequence. Our laws, for the most part, are not written ones. But anyone contravening these laws puts not only himself but also his family, descendants and his clan at risk.

Getting back to basics also requires a re-examination of the composition of our political parties. Under the pretext of modernisation and democracy, political parties in certain countries have tended to act as substitutes for clans, ethnic groups or tribes. Rejecting this introspection and turning a blind eye to our defects and shortcomings will not bring about the required transformation. Before change can take place, we must first recognise that we are not on the right road. Otherwise we will continue to bury our heads in the sand. Africa knows the disease from which it suffers and has made the right diagnosis. The continent has the cure for this disease but it is not taking it. It is tempting to think: "So what, let them die if they want to, as long they don't blame anyone else for their dismal failure." Maybe I am rebelling. But how can we do otherwise when every day we see destruction being wrought in front of our eyes, but are powerless to intervene? Is it inevitable? Is it so hard to make the leap to the other side? The right side? It can be done. All that is needed is for enough people to want the same thing.

Session 3. « Endogenous forms and methods of governance in West Africa »

3.1 African political science: a few areas of discussion (Prof. Pathé Diagne[6])

[Original French]

In the 1960s, Modibo Keita, the first Malian Head of State, acted as a mediator in the border and military conflict that opposed King Hassan II of Morocco and the President of the Algerian Republic, Ouari Boumediene. He organised a tripartite meeting. After the various meetings and appeased political jousting of the Casablanca and Monrovia groups, within the framework of the OUA, Modibo Keita reinvented direct contact African diplomacy, the diplomacy of dialogue or, better, "fertile discussion", to quote Hampathé Ba. This conflict resolving technique was to prosper within the United Nations and in bilateral relations between Heads of State usually dominated by irreconcilable reasons of State, without the protagonists having to eat humble pie or lose face.

The tripartite meeting between Hassan II, King of Morocco, Ouari Boumediene, President of the Algerian Republic, and Modibo Keita was not politically comparable with the Congress of Versailles which led to the drawing of the borders of the States after the military defeat of Germany and its leaders, in the capital of one of the victorious powers. Nor can it be compared with Yalta where Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin, embodying the hegemonic powers, shared out as zones of influence a world also characterised by the liberation struggles of the African and Third World people, who were both targets and clients in the confrontation between the two major blocs. Contact and direct communication diplomacy, invented by African Heads of State and their governments as a realistic utopia in the 1960s, focused, as much as possible, on personal relations rather than simple reasons of State and hitherto dominant pure power struggles of international tradition.

No wonder one says that the French or Americans have friends, but that France or the USA as States or hegemonic geopolitical powers do not have friends but, rather, interests. History has forged this reality which has nothing metaphysical about it.

Mao Tse Dong's China, to talk like the Maoists of the 1960s, always promoted the concept of friendship. The Vietnamese, more than the Japanese student movements of Zigatkuran or Iranian movements of the 1960s, also made us familiar with this vocabulary. It is a fact that China has given Africa plenty of "stades de l'amitié" within States that call themselves brothers.

Little attention was paid to this, but personal contact and direct communication African diplomacy has strongly influenced the United Nations system. It has given an increasingly strong focus to bilateral relations, to the detriment of multilateral relations in certain areas. Countries are judged by

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[6] Directeur du CEPAP, Dakar.

the image of their soccer teams but also by the know-how of their Heads of State. It was the South Africa of Lutuli and Muzerowa, Nadine Gordimer and Steve Biko, Mandela and Frederik de Clerck that invented, not a Court, but a clinic of said and confessed Truth that imposed Forgiveness (*baale*). Here again, this provides a lesson in political and ethical morals as an institutional, judicial and legal means of managing relations between communities and individuals.

It is no accident if, today, in the Abrahamic Middle Eastern conflict, world opinion considers the South African lesson concerning Israel and Palestine, Iraq and Lebanon.

In fact, the rule of Forgiveness which challenges the Law of Talion, "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a slave for a slave, a woman for a woman" codified by Hammourabi against Sumero-Babirunian – and not Babylonian – tradition, adopted by the Tara-Torah, the Bible and the Koran, does not just relate back to distributive, compensatory or repairing justice. It is also ethical and metaphysical. In a fairly common vision of African, and particularly Bantu, *mennfarite* thought, it is believed that the wrongdoer becomes weaker while the forgiver becomes stronger. It could be claimed that this is simple, "cheap" psychology, or, at best, a matter of common sense. Forgiving a peer obviously involves morally committing that person to return to what the Wolof consider to be two principles – *ponk* or pillars – of life ethics: *mandute* or integrity towards one's conscience and oneself, and *njuq* or equity in behaviour to others. We see how the moral strength of bare hands here takes risks against the physical strength of arms and good faith against bad faith in conflict potential and the techniques used by the religious or secular institution to solve them.

Léopold Sedar Senghor, the Sereer poet, who had not totally broken with the management methods of his society, did not hesitate to investigate and question texts by scholars. He considered "kinship of pleasantry", admirably studied by Max Glucksman, then by Georges Balandier, and made this cultural trait one of the best, if not the best and most telling, method in the management of differences and diversity on the social and political levels. The physical aspects and customs expressing the differences and diversity of humans are mocked to remove all nastiness or conflicting content. The *Ndamal Gossas*, a more or less mythical character, embodying wisdom and Wolof philosophy, **to quote Abbé Boilat, who** is neither Paulin Hountoundji, nor Souleymane Bachir Diagne, nor the most sophisticated Euro-critical philosopher, was perhaps not "the small size of Gossas" and the **Car** as described. Any Sereer knows that the *aal pulaar* cousin is "greedy, cattle-stealing, ugly, lazy, but a good servant nevertheless". The Aal Pulaar gets his own back. L. S. Senghor, a man of State, if ever there was one, who was a president-poet before becoming president and poet, had relations with his Mamadou Dia, his former prime minister, worthy of all Sereer and Toucouleur relations, "the suzerain *buur* with his servant *dag*", "the master *borom* and his slave *jaam*" or "benefactor *geer* with his griot *maccudo*", before their political relations broke down due to post-colonial reasons of State.

The deliberate content and violence of the terms strengthen the will to break down taboos and reservations to establish an affective communicating relationship. To measure the weight of this "kinship of pleasantry", it would have been worth visiting the schools managed by Alioune Sow, in the 1980s, with "his Joola, Fulani, Soose, Lebu, etc. slaves", his clans of Saint-Louisiens, Lougatois, his supporters from J. A[7] or Jaraaf[8]. The system is built on a number of parameters that can be found

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[7]   J. A. : Jeanne d'Arc football club

[8]   Other Senegalese football club.

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in Abidjan with Bété, Jula or Bawle fans of ASEC, Stella or Africa[9], as well as in Bamako, Niamey or Accra.

Village democratic traditions of homogenous, enclosed or partitioned populations, now find it difficult to escape from this instrument of sociability.

Henri Louis Gates, in a remarkable book called *Signifying Monkey*, illustrates this social character whereby Rap Brown, one of the pioneers in the civil rights and rap movement, gave one of the most striking illustrations in *Die Nigger*, a classic from the years of struggle and the civil rights movement. This tricksters' trope, as a stylistic device that uses ambiguity and humour, profoundly characterises Transatlantic African oral, written and literary traditions of storytellers, *mensatarum* or minstrels, and *tarabatara* or troubadours. The novelty above all lies in the fact that this stylistic device or trope, on the other side of the Atlantic, came from original pre-Colombian African thinking and art and not the post-Columbian era of the slave trade. Langhston Hugues, Bascom and Dobson got it wrong, as did H. L. Gates, although in good faith, without this mistake affecting the quality of their work.

This way of cultivating human relations with humour is so crucial to the management of ethnic, racial, cultural or religious diversity that it is a characteristic trait in the management of power and the African State. This form of management not only federates but has also respects the different communities and gives women, minority groups and exceptional individuals a place in the institution. The history of the traditional and pluralist African State has no place for the inquisition, jihad or crusade, introduced by the ethnic State or the Abrahamic-inspired chosen People.

Last and not least, there is a political tradition that has recently been investigated, over and above the birth of ethnography or eurocentrist political anthropology, and focuses on rights, not human or of Man, but of persons of all race, age and gender. A whole technique to protect the legality and expression is implemented.

The history of the rights of the *Ramatu* person, *Matu* creature of *Ra*[10], cannot be described in the same way as that of the Torah, the Decalogue and the Law of the Talion or even Promethean law revolting against an unjust Greek God. African or Indo-European civilisations and nations, trapped for over three thousand years by the Hammourabi Code and the Torah, are now, downstream again, seeking to win or win back the rights of the inviolable person; these rights were won upstream, over six thousand years ago, in Sumerian Mesopotamia, in the Nubo-Egyptian Empire or the Wolof Bantu Kingdom.

The Mandeng, the Akan, the Aztecs, the Bantu Sasum Kansum, like the *Ray Hatit* or Hittites, who, circa 1700, Abrahmen or Abraham fled from, practised royal human sacrifice until the accession to the throne of Mobutu Sese Seko at the Kensasum or Kinshasa. The symbolic sacrificial gesture of Abraham following the fashion of the Egyptians or the Lebu priests of Thiaroye sacrificing, not Apis the Haba black bull, but the ram of the *Samm* nomads and drivers of small flocks, marks a change of direction towards the superior values of civilisation.

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[9]   ASEC, Stella and Africa are all Abidjan football clubs.

[10]   *Ra*, the God, is inviolable in his physical, spiritual, intellectual or political integrity in Sumerian or Babylonian Mesopotamia in the Equity Code of the, *Lugal* or the Nubo-Egyptian Code of Integrity or Innocence.

The Wolof chase the murderer as though he had been struck by a curse. They are even frightened of the person who kills the *ramatu*, the sacred sparrow. Killing is for war. Killing is not cold-blooded. They do not guillotine. They do not burn on a pyre, shoot or execute on an electric chair. The call to abolish the death penalty is not the adoption of the vegetarian cult of the sacred cow but a return to the sacred vision of the *Ramatu* as a person. African fundamentalists of Judaism, Christianity and Islam can boldly stand up for a law that even many Texans, Chinese or Saudis would like to abolish, as the purest form of barbarity, in their countries.

The Wolof *Bissete* is much more than the King's jester. An inviolable character, he is allowed to say things out loud, to tell the truth and denounce all breaches in the State of law. He does not flatter. In Cayor, this job is not held by aristocrats or priests but by a very modest line of Naaru Cayor. The practice of the akan-bawle *mmerante*, led by a *nkwankwaahen*[11], allows, in the case of a conflict with the sovereign or any other power, to publicly declare one's inviolability and appeal to the justice of the land. Likewise, the Sereer, in the case of a crisis in authority, changes the direction of the door to his home. He thus disputes the legitimacy or legality of an authority or an act and calls for arbitration. Here again, this is an institutional lesson in the freedom of expression of the State of law and the legitimacy of the exercise of power.

Like all power, traditional African power, with or without the State, calls on the implementation of management institutions having a moral or physical force of protection, dissuasion or repression. The control and distribution of relations governing the force or forces determine the State's power models, according to the balances and imbalances that shape it. African politics has produced a stance that even the scholar does not or no longer listens to and which, in practice, is manipulated at will.

In *Le pouvoir politique traditionnel en Afrique occidentale*, published during the period of independencies looking for an institutional model, we tried to recall that it was necessary to build a system that provided a modern and appropriate solution to the needs of an African political sociology with its own rich experience and superior values. It is valuable to recall these models and values.

Contrary to many traditions which make their institutions divine or simply mythical revelations and give them absolute and timeless value, the political and institutional African ramakushi tradition is the result of experimentation. Here it is the implementation of an epistemology of the real that observes, conceptualises, implements or theorises. Technique or science, medicine or biology, astronomy or geometry, like knowledge, wisdom or science in terms of power and institutions and values, are born like the fruit of an experiment that can and should be empirically corrected. Neither biological science nor astrophysics here contradicts the Divine whose word is infinite and revelation permanent.

The politician, like the priest, the technician or the scientist, thus naturally progresses by coalescence. This approach built up the pluralistic State, the empire of diversity like the monotheism of God with a hundred names. Political tradition, which manages diversity on the basis of shared principles and values, thus proceeds more from the oligocracy than the monocracy. It confers more than it centralises. Therein lies its strength. It has survived thousands of years, more through the weight of

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[11]   Free and inviolable common man.

ethics, integrity and equity as the basis of the State of law than through the sole fear of the police. This quality explains its fragility when faced with blind force or the strategy of betrayal.

In *Le pouvoir politique traditionnel en Afrique occidentale*, I attempted to make my critical and constructive contribution to an era when Africa was moving towards independence and development. It was searching for a democratic institutional model that balances the individual freedoms of the person and the "communicratic" requirements of public interest. Intellectual exercise was easier than the implementation of results when confronted with the internal and external issues of power. It was possible to do better than the egalitarian village democracies of the Ibo or Bantu, the class and caste oligocracies of the Sahelian kingdoms and empires of traditional power, more or less despotic oriental type emirates or almamia or the Euro-Christian colonial type State.

The one-party State of the founding fathers and military dictatorships was not inevitable. Post-crisis experience in Africa and more or less adapted solutions allow us to investigate the legacy of traditional African power to draw the most fertile conclusions possible from it.

From the legacy of traditional power to the modern institution

One of the features of traditional power is its "communicratic", selective and elective vision of the political management institution, of the endogenous or exogenous diversity of more or less homogenous societies organised by the State as the sole or confederative entity.

The Cayor and the Baol, the Toro Sylla and the Fouta Toro are, like the Pharaonic Empire of Kusta, Upper Egypt and Susten, Lower Egypt, the kingdoms of the two crowns. Not only do they bring together two States but also two kingdoms whose legitimate heirs may be subjected to a conquering sovereignty with Naramara, also known as Narmer, wearing the crown of North and South, or homogenous, egalitarian sovereignty invested with the titles of Dammel Teigne, but may not be erased.

The empires of Jolof and of Mali confederate, like the seven Hausa *Bakwa*i, the Yoruba or Bantu Vili entities of kings or royal lines and the founding Lamanal authorities of the *dugu tigi* and the masters of the earth.

The United States elect a President on the federal level and governors, in the American sense of the word, in each State. They provide an interesting textbook case for transitions.

The empire of Alexander the Great tried to confederate. The Roman Empire tried to centralise. Julius Caesar was a merciless leader. He killed Barasentarig, alias Vercingetorix, after having shown him as a trophy in the bloody amphitheatre of Rome, which the Greeks abhorred. He was a regicide. He broke Hittite but also African, and most probably Gaulish, Welsh or Celtic, tradition which exiles the vanquished king.

The function of the so-called king (*Buur*, *Mansa*, *Alake*), to avoid using the word "monarch", has always been elective and selective, which presupposed competition or compromises in balance in or between legitimate candidate lines or branches. The same is applicable on the level of free (innocent) communities, *jaambur*, castes and slaves of the crown. The Mandeng *Jontigi*, the Hausa *Bilama* or

the Wolof *Jaraaf* are part of the College of Grand Voters, oligarchic Kangames. They represent the different communities including the women's community led by a Candace or a *Lingeer*. A great oligarch (Jawril, during the Yoruba Ibashurun Yoruba and the Bantu Mulango) led this college (Wolof *Hawdan*, Akan *Oyomesi*, Bantu *Nokena*).

This model which places the sovereignty, exercise and balance of the State's and government's power into the hands of an oligocracy, the emanation of closed communities, obviously prevents total and borderless expression of the will of individual citizens, as in a modern political party. It is understood that apartheid mummified it and that the "*one man, one vote*" fought it, without always anticipating the imbalances of the mechanical majorities that denounced, in Central Africa, the deposed president of the Kagamé regime in Rwanda and Nelson Mandela in the case of Burundi.

The partially obsolete character of the traditional "communicratic" model is obvious. Yet it is difficult to see the citizen and pluralist republican model living easily with the institutionalisation of blacksmith or untouchable castes, even if the aristocracy of the griots or sons of priests and religious leaders is currently structuring itself into interest groups.

However, the issue of minority groups has found, in the transitional pluralist and secular republican State, democratic solutions allowing balance and protection for racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious and even regionalist minorities. It is a question that equally applies to Algeria and Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Rwanda and Egypt. Alongside the national or confederal democratic integration institution, it will be necessary to set up a complementary institution of local authorities, territories and regions as a controlling counterbalance.

Traditional power organises the balance of power and the legality of its exercise rather than separating them. Oligarchs are the guardians of sovereignty. They are legislators, judges and administrators. Republican power was rooted in the promethean revolt against the absolute monarchy of divine right; it separates the functions of sovereignty expressed by the community of the power of legislation and justice.

The complexity of the problems facing the modern and materialistic State, its emancipation with respect to the supervisory role traditionally taken by metaphysical or purely ethical considerations, legitimises not only the balancing forces of protection, dissuasion and repression and the separation of decision and execution centres, but also the increasing professionalisation of the administrators of power. The democratisation process in Africa is an illustration of this, where the personalised one party State has corrupted institutions. It will be necessary to separate the power of the State and of execution, the "guardian of the Constitution" and the independence of the administrative apparatus, with governmental power acting under the legislative impulse and under independent judicial control.

The English and American model separates the governmental executive from the legislative and the judiciary, under mutual control. It gives room to freedom of expression theoretically embodied by a press that is more or less independent and manipulative. Despite the electoral problems in Florida and the Courts issues in 2000, it has reached a certain maturity that mixes up competence less than the French model which is still under the influence of Louis XIV, the Jacobins and Napoleon.

The uncertainties revealed by these models show how the debate on African institutionalism should not only be open to experiments that should not be slavishly copied but above all open up to the legacy and identified institutional needs of African societies and nations still in the gestation stage.

From constitutional drifts to political science

Notions of constitutional law and positive law defined by English- and above all French-speaking African lawyers, usually with no notion of sociology and political science, are the most serious threats to African political science. Whenever constitution or constitutional reform are discussed, African constitutionalists bandy around the British, French, German or American models as absolutes and the way forward. They will support them with all the erudition and political apparatus that composes them. They care little, in this biased approach, for constitutions which, although less well known, could provide a better solution to the sociological context. In this form of blind and fanatical obscurantism, there is a certainty that constitutional law can solely exist on the basis of the experience of Italian or French law. They are also convinced that judgement of existing and ongoing law is necessarily positive and definitively moving in the right direction.

It has therefore become a fashion to set up senates or second houses which, in fact, neither raise nor solve problems but encourage an inflation and plethora of political parliamentary staff. The one-party Head of State with a mechanical majority establishes his customers in this system, thus attracting and disarming legal opponents.

There is a practical and theoretical crisis in institutional thinking and action. Theoretically, research has invented a new set of problems and more appropriate methodology. In practical terms, the legislator and decision-makers should strive to break away from turnkey, made-to-order constitutions in order to listen to institutional needs dictated by social and historical contexts. Interdisciplinary discipline and approaches should be implemented on the heuristic level.

For researchers and decision-makers who choose to push the State or confederation of State into the economic and political integration process, there is a necessity to establish dialogue that breaks away from conventional wisdom and vertical and organic relations.

A few theoretical and practical suggestions

The traditional legacy and the heritage left by modern institutions searching for "demonocratisation", democratisation and development strategies should be taken into account very seriously and very critically.

The dual challenge involves the establishment of a citizen democracy. It is hindered, as during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras by monocratic, autocratic or oligocratic tendencies accentuated today by the threat of war leaders, leaders who are simple manipulators of minority pressure groups, ethnic and religious groups or ideological partisans.

In this context, it is necessary to invent transitional strategies that "demonocratise" institutions. Herein lies one of the major tasks of African political science.

What in my opinion is the remarkable scenario of the multi partisan situation of Bernin, to cite just one example, is not valid in Central Africa or throughout Western and Mediterranean Africa. It is necessary to study the issue case by case.

Theoretically, the role of disciplines, like political sociology, political science and constitutionalism should neither be erased nor inverted. We should stop believing that constitutions or even constitutional right in itself are the prerogative of lawyers. Lawyers are technicians at the end of the chain where they draft, by request and according to precise terms of reference, legal solutions to social, economic or cultural and therefore political problems.

The political sociologist's discipline involves highlighting data and institutional malfunctions in societies and revealing their institutional needs. Bolstered by the critical appraisal of political sociology, political science draws up institutional solutions. The politician, as a decision-maker informed of the results of political sociology and the proposals made by political sciences, makes his or her choices. Following this approach, sociology and political science elaborate the terms of reference for the constitutionalist lawyer who then draws up the necessary institutional arrangements.

To be less theoretical, we should say that an institutional model, i.e. a constitution, is the product of an interdisciplinarity which a political scientist, if he or she has the right team and competence in all the required disciplines, can use. One of the stalling points of African institutional models is the fact that constitutionalist lawyers are so trapped by the vision of absolute so-called constitutional law and so-called positive law that they do not perceive their roles or limits.

In practical terms, in the field, it is necessary to break away from the theoretical threat of constitutionalists and the totalitarian experience of the patrimonial State dominating through confusion all powers put between the hands of an omnipotent President. It is therefore necessary to separate powers and dispel confusion on the presidential or "presidentialist", governmental or parliamentary, executive, legislative or judiciary concepts.

To lift totalitarian control over the State apparatus in particular, it is necessary to construct State power, in the strict sense of the word, into an autonomous entity. The Head of State is above all the guardian of the constitution, the durability, autonomy and smooth operation of the State apparatus as an instrument of execution and administration.

Independent judicial power is the guarantor of a constitution watched over by all the components of power. It administers justice and is required to watch over the State of law, the constitutionality and legality at all levels, over which it has a direct right of intervention.

Legislative power is the guarantor of sovereignty and the political will expressed by the people in transparent elections characterised between competing projects and manifestoes. It authorises governance subject to the constitution.

Governmental power is the emanation of the legislative only. It governs and manages in agreement with the law and the legislative, subject to the legality of the power of State and the judicial power.

Here are the few directions for discussion.

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3.2 African endogenous mechanisms for governance and conflict prevention (Prof. Honorat Aguessy[12])

[Original French]

> "It is... recommended that African universities identify themselves with the societies they serve and actively contribute to solving the issues presented to them immediately or in the long term. Too often, African students are not familiar with their own society or culture...
> For African universities to be able to – as is their role – promote understanding and appreciation of African civilisations as national needs and encourage economic and social development, the content of study programmes and, if need be, their structure should be reviewed radically.
> Fundamental scientific methods remain universal; they need to be applied in all disciplines, civilisations and the needs of Africa".

> Higher Education in Africa Conference (Antananarivo 3-12 September 1962), Chapter V of the report.

We are too used to exogenous forms of governance and conflict prevention in West Africa which claim to adhere to globalisation to the point that we forget that our societies harbour endogenous forms of these concerns that are effective, sustainable and efficient.

Although we cannot see their implementation in the present and modern organisation of our societies, we at least have the results of research on endogenous forms of governance and conflict prevention which can enlighten us as to the capability and possibilities of innovation and creativity in our societies which were once truly independent.

The essential characteristic of these endogenous forms of governance and conflict prevention is the holistic nature of implementation measures, to the point that good conflict prevention illustrates good governance and good governance implies a capacity for good conflict prevention.

What examples can we present and what concept of society do they denote? What is the substance of endogenous governance and conflict prevention?

From the outset, we should be delighted at the holistic input of healthy and genuinely sustainable management of public affairs in West Africa, as observed by the conflict prevention practice highlighted by Almany Conde, in an interesting UNESCO publication[13].

To prevent conflicts and their extension to other regions, Africans are said to have invented the equivalence of regional patronyms (a Diop in Senegal is called Traoré in Mali, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and it is impossible for conflict to occur between a Diop from Senegal and a Traoré, i.e. also a Diop). Kinship of pleasantry was invented for the same reasons. In Senegal, the Toucouleur or Peul is

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[13] L'éducation pour la paix, les droits de l'homme, la démocratie et la compréhension internationale en Afrique : la situation actuelle et perspectives d'avenir, in BREDA Séries n° 11, 1995.

never annoyed by what a Sèrere says, however violent it may be. Various age groups and the relations they have with each other also illustrate the same concern for peace.

This practice – nowadays called traditional – was nothing less than a bold innovation, *in illo tempore*, an innovation so relevant that it sealed sustainability thanks to the clever or obsessive initiative of a wise man who respected the most essential desiderata of his people: governance goes hand in hand with conflict prevention, hence an anchored action in the long term.

Governance needs to detect the existence of underlying tensions that could blow up at any moment and disintegrate management of public affairs and paralyse relations between nations, ethnic groups or components of the same group. Within the context of governance, the accumulation and stratification of economic, social, cultural and political injustices should be avoided.

Governing authorities need to be vigilant at all times, basing their behaviour on a multi-dimensional awareness of the life of societies.

The Greek saying, εγ λαντα, can be applied to Africa: All is One; everything is linked; everything is independent.

After this first example, we should take a look at another example. It concerns the multi-sector value of the associative momentum in Dãxomε.

It concerns the practice of Donkpε, and here is the description given to it by the former Research Director at the National Centre of Scientific Research, a former researcher in Benin, Paul Mercier, in *Connaissance de l'Afrique - Civilisations du Bénin*:

"Little work is done independently. Collective activity, where emulation and rhythm are imposed on everyone, is very important here…"

"Everywhere, in diverse forms, organised to various degrees, one can find this idea of mutual support in work: not only is it effective because it always takes the form of a competition and people work very quickly but it also allows for a good working atmosphere"… "In Dahomey, the collective work association, the Donkpε, included all the young people in a village who are active members, and all the men, because they were members of the Donkpε at some point in their lives and this membership was never lost. All Dahomeans were thus members of a Donkpε, and dignitaries and the King himself, even if they did not work, would buy their work with presents. The king was in fact the "father of the donkpε", and a chief of all the donkpε, appointed by him, and living in Abomey, could, if necessary, mobilise all the labour force of the country. Anyone, even the king, who met a working donkpε, was required to greet his chief and, through a small gift, obtain permission to continue his route. Each donkpε, in fact, has a chief and there was usually one in each village.

The function was in fact hereditary, even though the appointment of a new donkpεgan, chief of the donkpε, needed to be approved by the king and his induction was chaired by the Migan. No man of working age could refuse the call of the donkpεgan; not only could he be fined, but he could be threatened with not having a decent funeral, as the donkpεgan was also in charge of funeral ceremonies.

Whenever more than five people worked together, they fell under the authority of the donkpɛgan. All individuals, all local authorities could ask for help from the donkpɛ, or from part of it, for ploughing, building and roofing work. People would contact the donkpɛgan and, in exchange of a small gift, the day's work would be fixed and food would be supplied by the requesting party. If that person was poor or sick, the donkpɛ did not even ask for that; its chief had to bear in mind the words pronounced by the Migan when he was appointed: "You should help the rich but also help the poor and even foreigners." By asking the donkpɛ for help, the king was exercising a right open to all… Workers went to work with their drums and pipes which, especially during ploughing and treading of clay, set the pace of their work. When the task was important, several donkpɛ were involved, each striving to finish their share of work first and seeking the praise of spectators. If there was only one donkpɛ, it divided itself into teams that competed in the same way. Everything was organised in a recreational and joyful atmosphere. It is still quite a spectacle today… The importance of collective work, whether of an age group and associations or of large families who bring together a large number of adults and young people, had an essential by-product: there were no employees."

Such a description not only allows us to understand the associative movement or, to be precise, its momentum, but also the total social phenomenon represented by the relative manifestation of social affairs.

The complexity of relations between different actors or leaders of society took into account the sacred aspect of the donkpɛ's function and was so important that any trivial definition of governance could not grasp and capture its full meaning.

Besides the ductility of the governance concept, its recent acceptation brings it into line with the understanding of the donkpɛ phenomenon.

The evolution of the governance concept

During the eighties, "good governance" was suddenly launched and confused with "good management". Any organisation, association, group, society or institution showing good management could, indifferently, be recognised as a form of good governance.

It was the accepted meaning of good governance used by Transparency International, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, etc. which sought well-trained managers for development organisations in Africa.

In this context, the CESAG developed successfully in Dakar. Later, the aforementioned international organisations were influenced by political and economic considerations and, gradually, by all the aspects involving sustainable development: economic, social, political, cultural and technical.

In this way, the expression "Good Governance" came to designate the conditions on which democracy is founded. "Good Governance focuses on the state of law, the assertion and respect of rights, freedom of citizens, the authority of fair justice for all, the implementation of a favourable legal environment for business, good State management taking appropriate initiatives such as decentralisation."

But the evolution of the governance and good governance concept did not stop at that.

Projective studies undertaken in certain West African countries offered a more precise meaning of the governance concept.

For example, for the projective studies in Benin (Benin 2025), "good governance is the set of values, rules and regulatory provisions allowing good government. In this way, in a pluralist democracy like Benin, good governance should involve:

- Separation of powers (executive, legislative, judiciary);
- The smooth operation and effective coexistence of power and opposition institutions;
- The participation, transparency, responsibility, effectiveness and efficiency in public affairs management and in the administration;
- Interaction and complementarity between the public and private sectors and civil society;
- Good management of solidarity (safety of people and property, fair distribution of national wealth, territorial development, etc.);
- National mobilisation for the fight against corruption and impunity;
- A modern republican army serving the Nation."

Providing a few explanations as to how these requirements should be expressed, the projective studies of Benin stipulated the following:

"Specifically, good governance should allow the anchorage and consolidation of a pluralist democracy and a State of law and the promotion of offensive and always courteous diplomacy. Pluralist democracy should rely more on:

a) Free, transparent and competitive elections liable to lead peacefully to alternating government;

b) A reasonable multi-party system;

c) Respect for Human Rights and individual and collective freedoms;

d) The pre-eminence of constitutional legality;

e) Submission of all citizens to the laws of the Republic."

From this widening of the meaning of the governance concept, we can draw the following lesson: instead of continuing to be considered as an aspect of democracy, governance has become an all-encompassing framework, integrating many democratic aspects.

In short, just as the concept of governance as pure and simple management could seem superficial and foreign to African practice, so its progressively holistic concept defines an appropriate and relevant framework to get a precise idea of its endogenous West African form.

This holistic approach to governance involves the capacity of good conflict prevention.

What are the characteristics of good conflict prevention?

Conflict prevention requires permanent, profound and circumspect vigilance and knowledge of all differential phenomena that can produce excuses and discrimination opportunities. Attention should be paid to various types of relations:

- Inter-gender relations,
- Inter-religious relations,
- Inter-ethnic relations,
- Education,
- Political policy.

Conflict prevention requires an acute awareness of the ubiquitous nature of areas in which violence is infiltrated, whenever the slightest opportunity for distinction is offered. Violence, which expresses conflict, travesties any distinction and difference. It is a permanent threat. The language spoken by others, their reflexes and mannerisms, smiles and laughter, their attitudes, everything that distinguishes the alter ego from the ego and is taken as an excuse to highlight a new type of discrimination, is expressed by violence.

In any case, as far as the way society works is concerned, it is worth knowing that the desire for power, domination and control of others, as well as the refusal to recognise the right to difference for the alter ego, are the base of the artificial upholding of pseudo-values and mechanisms and systems set up to exercise violence.

It could be worth having an idea of the reasons for wishing to create discrimination which leads to conflict.

Focusing on the following factors would be valuable:

i) The uncertainties of society;
ii) Prevailing security;
iii) Insecurity of economic competition;
iv) Fear of the unknown;
v) Future obscurity.

Moreover, as "hell is being the other", people seek to protect themselves by refusing to accept the others as they are: they barricade themselves behind their self-assertion. Discrimination therefore benefits the accuser who takes the initiative to reject others in its perversion; discrimination expresses the desire to attack others and search for the legitimisation of aggression by obliterating the will for hegemony. Discrimination that leads to violence in the areas expresses affectivity and interest travestied by an illogical quibble. It is then that – contrary to scientific discoveries in biology focusing on i) genetic polymorphism founding the evolutionary mechanism, ii) the fact that humanity is one and all men belong to the same species (Homo Sapiens, iii) cross-breeding was omnipresent right from the beginning – these basic truths are denied to declare the superiority of one race over another, of one group over another.

To balance the self-defence reaction to fear, basic insecurity and "economic avidity" that make up the roots of conflict-generating discrimination, a fundamental measure such as the one mentioned at the outset can be used to break the circle of irrationality, passion and self-interest created by discrimination fostering violence. This endogenous form of conflict prevention expresses the conscience of the profound and grotesque multi-dimensional origin of conflict, as well as the necessity of providing a profound and versatile multi-dimensional response.

A police or even legal measure cannot eradicate the causes of conflict. As recalled in a UNESCO text: "The problems caused by discrimination and prejudices cannot be resolved by legislative measures alone. Attention is increasingly focused on mechanisms which integrate racism into social structures and allow prejudices to be perpetuated and find their legitimacy."[14]

Peace is not established like an object to be captured or a place to be accessed, just as a country may be discovered. Peace is a way of being. It results from permanent dialogue between one and oneself, between one and the other one, between one's group and other groups. The important thing is dialogue, real dialogue where the "dia" prefix indicates crossing from one side to another, which is the only way to weigh up something, just as the diameter measures the circle by crossing it;

Dialogue is a process, a journey. It indicates movement and life, not a set idea or attitude. Dialogue moving towards peace is not the one which, in Plato's Theatetes for example, Socrates' interlocutor is reduced to making the following type of comments:

"It is true" (alèthè)
"It is my opinion" (dokei moï)
"What I think" (emo ge dokei)
"Perhaps no"(Isos ou)
"Yes, quite certainly" (panu mên oun)
"Thus must I do it, if that is your advice" (alla krê tauta poein eisoi dokei)
"Yes" (egoge)
"How can I deny it" (pos gar ou)
"What do you mean" (ti mên)

This type of reply means maintaining a relationship between dominator and dominated which is accepted by giving free rein to ever stronger violence. Shared dialogue experienced in the form of communication is preferable, as illustrated by endless debates under the village tree.

Shared and experienced dialogue implies tolerance, which is the harmony in difference and should not be taken for condescension. Shared and experienced dialogue takes into account social justice.

The endogenous form of conflict prevention expresses this radical search for the origin of conflicts and the establishment of a dialogue between one and oneself, between one and the other. This endogenous form is solid, profound, at the heart of reality and relevant.

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[14] Medium-Term Plan 1984-1989 p. 247.

So, what is an endogenous form of governance, and how is it essential in the search for a relevant, dependable and sustainable solution to conflicts?

At this stage, we should recall a still relevant comment by Claude Lévi-Strauss, even though it goes back three decades: "The sacred duty of humanity is to keep both terms in mind, to avoid, without doubt, a blind distinctive identity that would reserve the privilege of humanity to one race, one culture or one society; but never forget that no fraction of humanity has solutions that are applicable to everything and that all of humanity living a single lifestyle together is impossible because it would be an ossified humanity."[15]

This sort of reminder is very important – but UNESCO stipulates how development will never cease to be endogenous insofar as the targeted end is the fulfilment of the human being in totality, according to the promotional process of humankind by and for itself.

We will stick to three essential texts that highlight the various facets of endogenous governance:

- Firstly the **1976-1980 Medium-Term Plan** highlights two endogenous development requirements[16]: "Development is no longer set up to be a simple race to catch up on more favoured countries economically, as governed until recently, but as an implementation of developing societies' own potential in addition to fairer distribution of wealth on the national and international levels. Through this double action, integrated development will lead to the right to express civilisation values taken from a specific history and social situations of emerging societies. Without disowning fertile contributions from other cultural areas and, in particular, science and technology, as well as rational organisation methods, cultural identity and certain forms of authenticity are now upheld as development factors."

- Another text, **The future of the world: thoughts on a new international economic order**, analyses the overall character of endogenous development which does not consist in exclusion but is the accomplishment of several potentialities and all sorts of riches: "Whenever it is conceived to be general, development can only be the direct extension of the whole world of knowledge, thinking methods, lifestyles or experiences specific to one single area of the globe. Each local development should be linked up with its values and cultures.

  Transferring the stock of knowledge available in developed countries to developing countries is not enough: that would exclude any genuine scientific and technological development in host countries. It favours the "brain drain" and even slows down general progress of knowledge by depriving the inventive imagination of access to a wider range of sources than those having nourished the current system.

  In the first place, it is noted that the scientific or technological needs and traditions of developing countries need to be monitored. Scientists should therefore conduct their research by taking their motivations and inspirations from their own environment."[17]

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[15]   Claude Lévi-Strauss (Claude), *Race et histoire*, UNESCO, 1978, p. 83.
[16]   1976-1980 Medium-Term Plan, chapter 3.2.
[17]   *Le monde en devenir*, UNESCO, pp 114-115.

- The third essential UNESCO text on endogenous governance is called: <u>Understanding to act, UNESCO faced with today's problems and tomorrow's challenges</u>.

  In this text, integrated, general, fair and endogenous features of development are identified as follows: "This development should be integrated… planetary… fair… endogenous, i.e. various societies should remain themselves, taking their strength in specific forms of thought and action and giving themselves purposes linked to those values and to their needs and sources."

These three essential UNESCO texts have a mobilising, reinvigorating and liberating concept, to such an extent that chapter V of the Lagos Action for African Economic Development 1980-2000 (1980) could only qualify everything that was great and fulfilling for the future as being endogenous: "endogenous technology", "endogenous inputs", "endogenous technological development"…

Likewise, all the speeches and papers presented at the first Convention for African Scientists held in Brazzaville from 25 to 30 June 1987 insisted on the endogenous nature of development.

- Title of the 9th recommendation: "Rehabilitation of traditional technologies within the best possible time lines".
- Establishment of a comprehensive inventory of traditional technology within the best possible timelines.
- Research work on this technology in order to assess practice and encourage use in agriculture (traditional medicine, pharmacopoeia, etc.)".

To conclude

From the above, if one sought to specify the function and role of endogenous governance, one should insist on the fact that research/action should seek to:

- Integrate the people who will not be content to provide information with which anything can be done, but as an "intellectual collective".
- Strengthen the South-South axis.
- Show the true image of Africa, not a tarnished or deceptively enhanced picture.
- Put the technical achievements of current or recent powers into perspective with multi-secular and thousand-year old achievements of Africa accompanied by Asia, the Arab World, etc.
- Follow the European example which, only in the fifteenth century, encountered a certain number of foreign techniques, borrowed and applied them effectively with the prospect of world domination.
- Find support in the shared heritage of humanity to solve its own problems.
- Respect the human cost of progress by avoiding the known consequences of European development, the Inquisition, the Hundred Years War, two global holocausts in the twentieth century, concentration camps, civil wars, social repression.

- Use history properly: "History allows us to know ourselves better as we are, without self-indulgence. Not only through a genealogical concern but to free ourselves from the irrational: it highlights vision upstream and is used as a remedy and leverage downstream.

- Give oneself a realistic and bold collective role, namely by freeing the economy from domination and exploitation and using it to support the people.

- Give education its true vocation of awakening global solidarity by the necessity of learning to live with others and not imposing on others.

- Be pioneers in the rebirth of knowledge in Africa.

- Identify the real neutrality of Science by ridding it of dangerous prejudices that proliferate, especially in human and social sciences.

- Reject ideologies making our present their past and proposing their present as our future.

- Depict a real reason for living.

- Prevent the educational system from being a factor of social division and permanent dependence.

- Check that society "is not a defeated society to which any products, services or obligations are imposed for each part of life".

- Elaborate common culture and ideology, complete political independence by the development of the national economy, an appropriate technology and specific culture.

- Forge relevant and modern tools for our development on the political level, where there are specific tasks to maintain national cohesion, gradual integration of various ethnic groups and regions within a conscious political community; on the economic level, where the priority tasks are development released from the restrictions of colonial exploitation, always redeveloped but never removed and the definition of norms and strategies and a real emancipation framework targeting the well-being of citizens; on the cultural level which requires the in-depth decolonisation of attitudes, reflexes and reference systems and values associating tradition with the requirements of modernity by enriching the world's cultural heritage instead of remaining dependent on foreigners, their language, methods, values and capabilities.

- Encourage criticism, imagination, and the search for solutions adapted and favourable to real development.

- On the basis of demands to be met, needs to be satisfied, development to be founded to conceive of and use appropriate technology contrary to the vicious circle of technological transactions.

- Lead the whole world to greater modesty (not following the example in this area of powerful countries).

We need to recall two requirements to establish endogenous governance: on the one hand, being a man means being Responsible; on the other hand, "*Ex Africa, semper aliquid novi*".

So we should try to be always responsible and not poor consumers or impenitent hedonists.

We should maximise our potential, capabilities and activities to that the optimism of this saying creates reality.

3.3 African endogenous mechanisms for governance and conflict prevention (Yoroms Joses Gani)

[Original English]

Introduction

> *"...perhaps in the future, there will be some African history…But at present there is none; there is only the History of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness...and darkness is not a subject of history"*[1]

Since independence the African state has been preoccupied with migrated social structures of governance which have deepened the contradictions within the society as the state becomes fragile and ungovernable. As a result Africa is ridden with conflicts. Unfortunately solutions to these conflicts do have built-in conflict mechanisms because they are not endogenously generated but externally sponsored. Thus, rather than preventing or resolving these conflicts they instead fan the ember of conflicts. So, conflicts have continued to regurgitate ever since the penetration of colonial rule on the continent. On this basis, it is necessary for us to look back at the past to ascertain whether there was a concept of governance in Africa which we can capitalise on to prevent further conflicts. If there was, how was it practiced? More importantly, how did it help in preventing conflict? This is basically what this paper will be doing. But fundamentally the question that keeps hunting me while preparing this paper is, how would an African indigenous mechanism for governance and conflict prevention be useful in the present world system predominantly overtaken by globalisation and the new world order defined by synthetic fabric of social structure that tend to deconstruct the paradigm of African indigenous culture? Before we attempt to understand this question, it is important for us to appreciate conceptual variables that link governance with conflict prevention.

Governance and Conflict Prevention

In every social system there is a process of order, organisation and management of people, resources, and materials. This process is dependent on three fundamental variables such as ideological orientation, development and security. These variables are the fundamental ingredients which constitute governance in any society. A society needs to have an ideology on how it could be guided to organise and manage its people, resources and materials. Ideology provides a worldview for the society. The purpose of an ideology is to enable the society attain the ultimate goal of the other two objectives: development and security. Therefore, the process of governance in any society is fundamentally linked to the stability of that society. Thus, accordingly, governance " is the institutional capability of public organizations to provide the public and other goods demanded by the country's citizens or their representatives in an effective, transparent, impartial, and accountable manner, subject to resource constraints" [2].

In a classical political science theory governance is identified as a political system in which a legitimate government defined by the will of the people is endowed with power and authority to rule. This is achievable through its ability to create order, organisation and management of the society based on rule of law. Such legitimate government, as an authority, is given the mandate to authoritatively allocate values by defining who gets what when and how[3]. Because it can authoritatively allocate values, it also has the legitimate right to utilise the means of coercion in order to establish sanctions and rewards[4]. This means that the authority must conduct itself effectively in a transparent, impartial and accountable manner. But where the state which has the authority to govern fails in its mandate from the social contracts with the people, the later who has the ownership can withdraw it.

In order words governance is a *partner-ownership.* Partner-ownership is the governance process where both the governing elite and the governed class (or pleblians and patricians) maintain the rule of law to sanction deviants and reward achievement in order to ensure the stability of the society. There is a collective acceptance of sanctions and rewards. From the side of the state there exist governmental institutions like the legislature which is the window of democratic expression of liberty. The courts and the judicial systems are there to create trust and confidence in the partner-ownership while the administrative or executive agencies are there to provide efficient services as baseline for stability. These institutions though acting as checks and balances to each other, they are however linked to the society in one way or the other in terms of the renewal of mandate and also by way in which the people pay tax to maintain these organs. The whole concept of partner-ownership in governance has to do with full participation and involvement in the political process, constant dialoguing and consultation between the institutions and the people, periodic elections, rights of the people to organise and associate with others who have the same frame of thoughts.

These processes give the people the rights to question the governing ability of those given the mandate to govern them:. How well do they have the capacity to govern? Does the governor have the capacity to govern heterogeneous society with all the demands and pressures in the midst of few supplies to meet their requirement? This is the basis whereby the nature of the political system or governance is put within the context of interdependence and interacting web of interface. This necessitates the emergence of political parties, the media, organised civil societies, community organisations, associations, trade unions and other pressure groups. The process is tied up with the social system involving individuals, families, tribes or ethnic groups through an interface of boundary. Where there is a crack in the boundary line of this relationship conflict is bound to occur. In other words, good governance which is set out to maintain the rule of law is likely to prevent conflict than bad or ungovernable state where the partners part ways because of lack of trust in the governing process. Therefore governance is at the root of all human society, though norms and folkways may differ.

Indeed, Society exist because there are people who put it together for the purpose of **security** and **development** based on the **ideological** foundation which they have decided to pattern for themselves. Therefore, as earlier noted, ideology provides the basis for a world view for any society to govern itself. Some societies have made progress more than others. This is not because the others do not have a world view of their own. Rather, three factors could be responsible for it. First, they might not have discovered the type of world view they want to couch for themselves, but the raw materials are there from their archaeological historiography. Second, they might have discovered the potentials but they are yet to articulate it in a context that would have spurred them to a greater

height in their national development. Lastly, they do have it in practice but intervening variables might have forced them to retreat from its practices. As a result it becomes contaminated. This contamination process is what Professor Peter P. Ekeh noted as 'migrated social structure'[5]. What this Ekehian theory posits is that 'colonialism turned African society upside down and inside out, and marked a reinvention of social formations that have endured in various ways up to this day' [6]. This seems to be a major basis for conflict sourcing in Africa, because it turned governance inside out. The colonial interlude also created a mixed grill of governance that in process make conflict eternal to Africa.

On the basis of this it is imperative for us to identify the African mechanism of governance and conflict prevention which colonialism had turned upside down and inside out.

Endogenous Mechanisms for Governance and Conflict Prevention

The opening quotation of this paper has shown the erroneous notion about Africa predicament. This predicament has been attributed to the ungovernability of the African state which in actual fact is not of their fault to develop their own worldview as basis for development. Africa indeed has its own world view and had the capacity to govern itself. However, this was chequered by the intervening variables of the migrated social structures. In spite of this Africa still has its endogenous mechanisms of governance which invariably can prevent conflict.

There are several cultural proclivities in African that provide basis for governance and in subsequent avert conflict. These include various types of traditional institutions, checks and balances, migration/withdrawal process, Oath-taking, Ostracization, religious rites, love and forgiveness, collective/consensus approach in decision making among others. Indeed Africa in pre-colonial societies had a robust tradition of political system of governance .This include the decentralised political system of the Igbo and Nuer societies and the centralised political authority as found in the Asante and the Benin Kingdoms as well as the Yoruba Empire of Oyo. However, whether in a centralised or decentralised political system, there was a rule of law that existed which was sustained by the principle of checks and balances.

In Igboland, apart from the Onitsha Kingdom, almost all parts of Igboland have decided for a decentralised political system, having discovered that a centralised authority (given the character of the people), would breed tyranny. A centralised leadership in such a society would not give into checks and balances. Therefore, it was dispensed with in favour of village democracy. Under this system of democracy, contentious issues that might lead to conflicts are discussed openly in the village or market square and decisions were taken by consensus. Of course the elders were always available to provide organisational procedures but they do not have the ultimate authority to determine a case. In the case of the centralised authority as practised in Asante, Benin, and Zulu Kingdoms as well as in Oyo Empire certain measures are put in place to check tyranny. For instance, the Asante tradition prevents a tyrannical leader through a process of delicate balance that existed between the paramount authority and the councillors. If a ruler abuse his power he could be removed from office by a member of his council, a subordinate who was authorised to do so. But where such a subordinate councillor or any other person in the traditional council was found guilty he could be equally de-stooled by the Asantehene. So, both of them were often careful not to face the wrath of the law.

Likewise, in the old Oyo Empire of Yorubaland, the Alafin was at the mercy of the Oyomesi whose power if invoke would lead the Alafin to committing suicide. Apart from the Oyomesi, the Ogboni cult could also exercise their authority that could make the Alafin to abdicate his position. Similarly, in the Zulu kingdom, the powerful Shaka also had a council of title holders known as *Ibandla.* He also delegated his authority to members of the ruling lineage, given the largeness of the kingdom.

From all indications African society exhibited some moral of good governance. In fact, comparatively more sophisticated wars have been fought in the contemporary Africa than in the pre-colonial era. This was because the system of governance in the pre-colonial period had all that was required for governance and conflict prevention. This is in other variables that could prevent conflict. For instance, if there was a dispute over land between two communities or between individuals from the two communities, the traditional leaders of the communities would meet in council with the Elders of the two communities as well as the priests of both side. What is required was for them to trace the historical process of the dispute. In Africa traditional boundaries are defined by landmarks. The older people would be tasked to trace the ancient landmarks. Once this done and accepted the conflict was ended.

The council of Elder play a significant mediation role in conflict resolution in Africa. In each extended family, clan, kindred and tribe or ethnic group there are heads and elders in council who specifically tackle conflicts that are proportionate with their status. Those that are beyond their capacities are transfer to the highly graded chiefs and Elders. In most of the cases the paramount leader does not get to hear of the cases. They are only mentioned to him in the daily or annual reports he receives from each wards. The paramount leader equally does not judge a case by himself alone. He has a larger council that represents each ward in his kingdom. And they are involved in the process of settling a dispute.

The next level of significance in the prevention of conflict which is by no means the least is the Chief Priest and his council of priesthood in the African settings. The religious aspect is taken to be very important in the art of governance and conflict prevention. In most African societies, divination is the last resort when injustice is seen to have been done. The divination process is imprecatory oath taking and trial by ordeal processes. Under imprecatory oath the accused and plaintiff are made to attest to or appeal to the gods of the land. The administering process is done by the priest. While trial by ordeal has an instantaneous consequence. This is administered with the recounting of previous consequences which earlier victims have suffered as a result of it. As noted by:

> It is a self-imprecation charge with punishing power. It may be sworned by elemental forces of nature such as lightning or the sun or by the spirit of the forefather, or by some sacred objects charged with magical power, or by some non sacred object symbolising the kind of punishment that will overtake the swearer if he perjures himself"[7]

Many aggrieved persons feel justice is more seen through divination more than mortal methods of justice. These endogenous mechanisms have existed in Africa but gradually they have been eroded by colonial penetration, the character of the post colonial state and the emerging dimension of globalisation.

Colonial interlude, postcolonial character and globalisation

The penetration of colonial rule into Africa has destroyed the pristine dynamics of African governance and conflict prevention mechanism. Africans are presented with rulers rather than leaders who rule without the basic consent of the people. People's participation ends after elections. Because the people are not involved in the checks and balances that are alien, the rulers could afford to do what they want. Thus, the World Bank has finally acknowledged this:

> Colonial rule tended to be unaccountable to Africans and overly reliant on the military to suppress dissent. Its departure was rapid and unanticipated by both colonizers and colonized. Part of the early caution about the departure of colonialists was perhaps a response to the recognition that local skills were inadequate and the institutional foundations of incoming African governments were poor… The constitutional innovations introduced at independence partly sought to promote long-repressed local values[8]

This colonial interlude and consequently, the postcolonial period raised rogue leaders who developed rogue state in Africa. The postcolonial rulers felt that replacing colonial rulers and enjoying the luxuries left behind in colonial quarters was the euphoria they fought for during the period of nationalist movements. Unfortunately, they deepened the African conditions and punctured the economy that gradually brought about social and economic crises with the consequent on political quagmire and conflict escalation on the continent.

This is made more difficult with the trend towards globalization, as individualism reaches its greatest height, leaving Africa in its communitarian society to content with conflicts, generated by colonialism sustained by the postcolonial state and undermined by globalization. And as it is, globalization brings risks of increased economic instability, which can lead to social conflict.[9] The implications of this for Africa are that first, the concept of governance and the practice is misapplied. Secondly, with the migrated social structure there is a crisis of governance in Africa. And at the end Africa is taken as a continent without history.

Capitalizing on Endogenous Mechanism for Governance and Conflict Prevention

We have earlier pointed out that the colonial interlude in Africa has brought about mixed-grill of governance the impact of which has exacerbated the process towards conflict prevention in Africa. The impediment caused by colonial migrated social structures would be difficult to be done away with. What is expected is to take steps that would provide structural accommodation of both the endogenous mechanisms and the migrated social structures.

First, it important for Africa to domesticate some values of western democracy. Democracy should not be a copycat. Each society in Africa like elsewhere has its values of political system. The African system of governance could be blended with the values of western democracy. In other words the donor agencies and the international political power holders should not impose democracy on their own terms. The African state should be allowed to practice a political system that should exhibit their own democratic values to the world. For instance, the keen emphasis on election as a kernel of democracy is appalling to some, if not in all parts of Africa. In most of the elections in Africa there is no true democracy because most of these politicians use money to purchase themselves to power.

Ordinarily in Africa, a community may elect to decide on consensus candidates to represent them in the parliament. In this way it reduces money politics. The person that is chosen knows genuinely that he represents his people. It is therefore, important that the use of electoral law in Africa should be flexible to allow people to decide what constitute an election as a means of re-presentation.

Secondly, the use of traditional institution and council of Elders has not been properly utilized in Africa. This institution like the Palaver Stool in New Guinea is a vibrant force for conflict prevention. In most African society the people listen to the last testament from their traditional rulers before the bear true allegiance to the civic state. They are not ready to take order from government security organs or bureaucracy. They take directive from their traditional leaders because they are part of their appointment and could de-stool them when they function contrary to the traditional rule of law. During colonial period this institution was an asset to the colonial authorities all over Africa. It is ridiculous that the postcolonial state abandoned it. In Nigeria the traditional rulers are still fighting for relevance. In South Africa they have been recognised somehow. There is the need to redefine and re-capitalize on the role of this institution as basis for conflict resolution in Africa. African still has a strong and virile tradition of morality that the civic state is incapable to do away with. In his thesis of 'Two Publics in Africa' Ekeh posited that the western values are so alien to Africa that a public officer that steals from civic realm and returns to his village is rewarded while any one that steals from the primordial realm would be met with sanctions.[10]

Thirdly, consensus building in negotiation is very important in Africa. In most of the negotiation so far the enemy-image has been factored as an obstacle that should be dealt with. This a quick approach to peace, which has not worked in Africa. African tradition has a long process of negotiation towards building not only consensus but also forgiveness. A conflict is never resolved in Africa except it comes with forgiveness. This involves both parties having to exchange something, which they both treasured to remind them of the peace reached and the consensus. The essence is for them not to recourse to conflict. Memories are erased as the lineage of the parties begins to engage together in community hunting outing or farming exchange. No one sees each other as an enemy after the negotiation process. Leaders who are involved in the negotiation process are always patient, tolerant and are seen as burden-bearers. Their ultimate goal is to achieve consensus and forgiveness. Therefore, as Spear and Keller pointed that given the wave of conflicts plaguing Africa in which the "western political competition is at odds with traditional African consensus-building tactics, it is wise to consider the creation of new institutions and procedures that would better facilitate the resolution of conflict among various minority groups"[11] In short African traditional system believe in inclusivist approach rather than exclusivist means of preventing conflict.

Fourthly, The concept of oath taking is very potent in Africa. Though this had been replaced by swearing to the constitution and in most cases alongside the Bible or Koran, for those elected leaders who chose to do so. But the constitution does not carry the potent which traditional oat taking exhibits. Even some of the religious books carry the notion of grace of God. Therefore, many of those that have sworn by them have gone free without being held accountable for their actions by God, because they understand that God Almighty is a patient God. But for traditional Africa oath-taking is potent enough that those who chose to occupy an office and those who persist in fomenting conflict in the society are put on trials under imprecatory oath or trial by ordeal. It is believed divine involvement in the art of governance and prevention of conflict gives room for peace to prevail as parties and community know the consequences of their disloyalty.

Strategies for Actions

There are various ways we could fashion concrete, African strategies for governance and conflict prevention. First, we must establish the fact that there is a lacuna between the existing governance process and the past. In short, there must be a political will by the leaders to accept this failure and be prepared to face the challenge of reorientation. African leaders should stop being fetish with power should allowed opposition to thrive. Opposition also exists in African society, and like the western society that encourages a healthy opposition so also this is found in African culture. Many Africa leaders in traditional societies have been challenged an removed from office. It is a surprise that contemporary African leaders do not tolerate opposition. Because of this they tend to suspect their opponents are sponsoring a conflict. As a result their art of governance tend to re-invent and create multiple channels of conflicts. They try to block avenues of conflict prevention and resolution.

Secondly, following from above, African leaders should begin to acknowledge that various constitutions in place in most of the countries in Africa have no bearing to direct and popular participation by Africans. There is the need for constitutional review to accommodate communitarian perspectives of governance in Africa.

Thirdly, African traditional rulers as local leaders who are the custodians of the culture of the African people should be given a role in government. Their duties and functions should be recognized and be made a tier of grassroots government. Government should have no hand in their appointments nor interfere in their local affairs. The people know how to sort out their local leaders problems.

Fourthly, ECOWAS should be commended for establishing the council of Elders as part of the method for preventing conflict in West Africa. It should go further in making a policy that ECOWAS parliamentarians should be directly appointed/chosen by the people as the case may be.

Fifthly, the AU Constitutive Act and the NEPAD document contained well-articulated African values that should be supported by civil societies to be implemented to the letter. The panel of the Wise in the Constitutive Act is a demonstration of recognition of African concept of council of Elders. It is important also to note that the concept of Peer Review Mechanism is very important to resolving part of conflict in Africa. This mechanism has helped to ease Charles Taylor out of office. The documents have helped to push for credible political level playing field in Togo. There is need to encourage all African leaders to endorse this document. The UN and donor agencies may have put up as a condition for assistance.

Sixthly, African states should re-evaluate the existing educational system. The African child should be taught of African culture of governance and conflict prevention. He should be encouraged to read African history up to graduate level. This means we need to revisit our school curriculum. This has to do with understanding also what type o ideology we want to pursue. We need to establish this if we are to clearly define our world view.

Lastly, there is need for an Integrated Conflict Management Process (ICMP) to accommodate the impact of modernity on the African traditional of governance.[12] In the light of this, there is need to develop a Think Tank on endogenous method of Governance and Conflict management. The Think Tank should evolve a study group across the subregion to include UNESCO, UNDP and research institutions to work out the modalities.

Conclusion

It is important to emphasis that Africa has a culture of governance and conflict prevention. The period of globalization, not withstanding, we must find ways of how to internalize the process. This is possible if there is a re orientation and evaluation of what we are as a people. We must determine what we want as Africa.

End Notes

1. Cited in Claude Ake, 1992, <u>The New World Order: A view from the South</u> CASS Port Harcourt, Nigeria, 1992, p.19

2. This definition is too structural and one-dimensional. Our concept of governance here is the interactive interface between the vertical and horizontal; the governing class and the governed. However, the definition is taken to drive home the point of transparency in governance. See details in World Bank, 2000, <u>Can Africa Claim the 21ST Century? </u>, The World Bank, Washington DC. P. 4

3. See David Easton, 1953, <u>The political System</u> NY: Alfred. Knopf. Inc. p. 130

4. See Max Weber, 1946, 'Politics as a 'Vocation' in <u>From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology</u> edited by Hans H.Gerth and C. Wright Mills; NY; Oxford U.P. PP. 77-78)

5. See Peter. P.Ekeh, 1975, Colonialism and Two Publics in Africa <u>Comparative Studies in Society and History </u>vol.17. No. 1

6. Eghosa E. Osaghae, 'colonialism and civil society in Africa: The Perspective of Ekeh's Two Publics' p. 1

7. Cited in Gani Yoroms, "Akutayoko" Traditional Institution of Conflict Management Among the Gbagyi people of North Central Nigeria" paper prepared for <u>programme for Ethnic and Federal Studies</u>, University of Ibadan, December 2004.

8. The World Bank <u>Opcit.</u> P. 52

9. Ibid, p.49.

10. Peter. P. Ekeh, 1975, <u>Op cit.</u>

11. See Mary Spear and Jon Keller, 1996, "Conflict Resolution in Africa: insights from UN Representatives and US Government" <u>Africa Today</u> 43, 2 p.124.

12. See Gani Yoroms, <u>Op cit</u>.

3.4 African endogenous mechanisms for conflict prevention and settlement (Bakary Fofana[18])

[Original French]

Introduction

Africa has been and continues to be seen as a continent of war – incessant fratricidal conflicts between hostile "tribes" or "ethnic groups". Unfortunately, the violent conflicts that continue to affect a number of regions on the continent seem to bolster this negative image.

However, violence is neither deliberately cultivated by African people, nor is it unavoidable. It has often been imposed on them by the contingencies of history, through slave trade, the colonial conquest and certain perversities of the post-colonial State. Hence, it is important to break away from the misguided clichés and myths that have long upheld an image of our societies that underscored the warfare between "primitive tribes", which the colonisers alone were able to stabilise and pacify.

Without refuting the fact that the historic process in Africa has been marked by bloody clashes and a series of intra and inter-community conflicts, in the past as in the present, the African civilisation as such manifestly defines itself essentially in terms of dialogue, compromise, coexistence and peace. The values attached to tolerance and non-violence lie beneath a number of cultural traditions everywhere and find expression in popular wisdom.

It is interesting to observe the amount of interest being shown today in the mechanisms adopted by the African people throughout their history and everyday experiences. Indeed, it indicates a return to social values, in the face of the current crisis in Africa's contemporary political and social systems. A great deal of research is being done on this subject, as compared to conflicts, such as the excellent work by Thierno Bah, Djibril Tamsir Niane, Sory Camara, Moussa Ali Iyé and Doulaye Konaté, which has inspired the present study.

The conflict prevention and resolution process is aimed at helping the parties involved to find a peaceful solution to their differences or to the conflicts between them, through a mechanism that each of them accepts, while ensuring that social relations are disturbed as little possible. The system is more or less similar to a conciliation procedure. Since time immemorial, local conflicts were settled through traditional or customary dispute settlement mechanisms, as far as possible. Traditional societies did not necessarily share the instrumentalist perspective of international relations. Conflicts took place not only within a political context within which minimising risks was preferred over maximising profits, but were also based on specific notions of values and cultural spirituality that defined these notions' sacred and secular nature and the interplay between them.

Our approach consists of analysing some social practices and other methods of conflict prevention and settlement. Our study will then broach the functionality of these mechanisms in contemporary Africa, in the perspective of promoting a culture of peace.

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I. **Conflict Prevention**

In most West African societies, aspirations for peace led to the development of standardisation techniques aimed at avoiding or at least curbing violence and armed conflicts. This process gave birth to a diverse range of dissuasive tactics and conflict prevention methods, as violence was channelled through specific socio-political structures and oral or tacit legal or magico-religious conventions.

Secret societies are important institutions that have contributed to preventing conflicts. Their nature and objectives are widely recognised and they are key institutions in society due to the esoteric nature of their activities.

In the approach to conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms, the particular community's and organised States' level has to be distinguished from inter-State relations.

Within communities and organised States in most so-called segmented West African societies – i.e. clan-based societies that are strongly linked through a solidarity system –, alliances play a vital role in social cohesion.

Inter-clan marriages

The practice of exogamy and polygamy ensures matrimonial links and relations between clans. These inter-clan alliances through marriage create blood relations that considerably reduce the risks of open conflicts.

Sports and arts competitions

Sports competitions such as traditional wrestling that take place in several West African societies, the *Fantasias* (camel or horse races) in nomadic societies and music or dance contests are events that contribute to bringing communities closer together. They can also put a stamp on the reconciliation between groups.

Between communities and between States:

Extended matrimonial alliances

Ghana's Emperors, for instance, took wives from different provinces of their vast State. The resulting blood relations cemented the links between the royal family and local overlords. The children from these marriages became effective intermediaries for the central authority and were excellent mediators in case of conflicts. The same practice could be found in Mali's Empires and several other kingdoms in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Hostage policy

For the overlords, the 'hostage policy' consisted of demanding that their vassals' children be brought up in court, particularly the eldest, who were often related to the royal family. The practice was aimed at ensuring the princes' loyalty through the intellectual and ideological training they received.

The same system was adopted by the colonial administration with the establishment of the School for Sons of Chiefs in Gorée, Senegal.

Economic cooperation

The establishment and economic development of different communities or States was also a valuable method of ensuring peace. The high level of diplomatic activity between the Malian and Moroccan sovereigns was also motivated by economic interests, among others, which played a role in keeping the peace too. Indeed, Soundiata understood the role of trade in integrating the different people in the empire he had founded so well that he gave trade a place in the sun in his famous order, "land, trade and war", which so clearly summarised his political agenda. In the Sudan-Sahel context, characterised by the opening-up of different areas and increasingly easy circulation of people and goods, markets and fairs played a vital role in bringing communities together.

Sacrificial alliances and conflict prevention

One of the founding characteristics of African societies is the intertwining of the spiritual and the temporal, and the prevalence of magico-religious beliefs and practices in the ethos. Some of these involve sacrificial alliances or "blood pacts", universally practiced in traditional African societies. Peace has sometimes been defined as the absence of war. Peace treaties generally put an end to a war, but not to a state of war. On the other hand, if they are consecrated by sacrificing blood, it puts an end to any deceit stemming from disagreements. In Black Africa, many communities have established sacrificial alliances. In a remarkable study on Côte d'Ivoire's Anyi-Ndenye, Claude-Hélène Perrot revealed some of the rituals involved in concluding such alliances. That is how the Abrade and Akye communities "took fetish", thanks to which they became "brothers". The participants ceremoniously drank a specially prepared brew. Each of the contracting parties invoked their community's patron divinities and offered them libations and sacrifices. The alliance thus established ensured the two groups' safety, deterred any aggressive inclinations and, in particular, favoured the free circulation of people and goods along the most important route – the Comoe River. A similar alliance – symbolically expressed in a religious contract – was identified among Côte d'Ivoire's Abron, Baoule and Baraba communities. Among various other reasons, one was to make the situation of an *entente cordiale* patent and impress it on the communities' minds – an *entente* that would be a binding agreement for existing and future generations.

The role of leaders in conflict prevention

A leader is both the protector of his people and responsible for reinstating the political and social order, as well as the cosmic order. A leader has to play an important role in conflict prevention in order to ensure that his community remains prosperous. That is why qualities like wisdom and level-headedness are always taken into account in the devolution of power, particularly in lineage-based societies.

In order to maintain good neighbourly relations and prevent conflicts, chiefs customarily exchange gifts – inevitably sumptuous gifts – particularly on occasions like funerals or the enthronement of a new chief. Traditionally, the one receiving a gift had to return the gesture when the occasion arose. Thus, a system of gifts and return gifts was instituted, characteristic of Africa's various communities. It generated an atmosphere of trust and even friendship that was likely to favour the attenuation of inter-community tensions.

II. **Conflict management**

Conflicts in Africa had different causes and took different shapes.

At least 5 types of conflicts can be distinguished:

- Wars for expansion (e.g. Almamy Samory Touré's conquests, 1883-1888),

- Defensive or freedom wars (e.g. Soundiata Keïta's struggle against Soumaworo Kanté for Manding's liberation in the 12th century),

- Punitive wars (e.g. strikes by generals against recalcitrant kinglets who resisted the conquerors' authority),

- Clan wars, triggered by the devious and implacable opposition that characterised relations between brothers with different mothers in polygamous families, and

- Religious wars (e.g. El Hadj Oumar Tall in the 19th century).

Traditional conflict resolution methods were based on making the most of shared values that build bridges, such as: refraining from demonising the opposing party; understanding and sharing views about the conflict environment in order to take an objective stand on the stakes involved, the advantages of peace and the obstacles in its path; focusing efforts on finding solutions to the problems faced by the disputing groups; encouraging open debates in order to identify better conflict resolution mechanisms; and finally, encouraging a participatory process involving all the parties who could contribute to consensus-building debates.

After prevention, it is important to examine the mechanisms that would help restore peace when it has been disrupted because of apparently obdurate antagonisms. In fact, traditional African societies did not wish to be trapped in an absolute logic of confrontation. In order to break a deadlock and prevent chaos, avenues were always provided to enable disputing parties to initiate normalisation procedures and restore peace.

In case of conflicts between organised States, sovereigns alone had the right to declare war, but the actors involved were these States' nationals, recruited on the basis of different modalities. Most conflicts in the Sudano-Sahelian strip had territorial, economic or ideological motives. These conflicts were rarely based on tribal dissensions. Indeed, the existence of peace-promoting mechanisms and the observation of traditional conventions governing wars by all the protagonists undoubtedly explain why the numerous conflicts that punctuated the life of African societies rarely degenerated into genocidal operations.

Concerned with ensuring the normalisation of relations and resolving conflicts, African peoples gave considerable importance to negotiation processes. The objective of negotiations is to reach an agreement. But the prerequisite is that the concerned parties have to be truly motivated to reach an agreement and avert the escalation of violence, which would lead to non-negotiable situations.

Various factors help in ensuring the success of conflict prevention or management measures. It is true that they have to do with the economic, political and social context, but they are essentially related to the mediators involved. The degree of the mediators' influence in the community,

their knowledge of the milieu, their age and their approach are the factors that are the most frequently cited as having a decisive impact on the solutions adopted. In rural communities, the elders' decisions are law. Custodians of their territory's history, they have known entire generations of all the families and have witnessed all the events comprising the community's history.

Mediation

Understood as intervention by a neutral third party between two or several parties in order to reconcile and reunite them, mediation is a vital and ancient practice in West African social relations. The process of conciliation and reconciliation between different parties is often sealed by animal sacrifices (expiatory victims), carried out by the eldest descendant of the village's founding family, for instance. Heads of the lineage, priests or blacksmiths may also play this role in specific cases. In Islam, mediation between members of the same community has to lead to better behaviour, a duty for all believers. Sudano-Sahelian societies, which find inspiration in these diverse sources, are distinct in that certain social categories have been designated as specialists in mediation and advice missions. In Mandingo territories, the *niamakalas* (blacksmiths, *griots*, cobblers, etc.) play this role.

Plenipotentiaries

In times of peace as well as war, every community has to set up mechanisms for managing its relations with its neighbours. That is part of the diplomacy that traditional African societies have practiced extensively. Thus, in the Beti country, certain important persons, whose significant qualities of wisdom, eloquence and patience were appreciated by several lineages, played the role of plenipotentiaries and temporisers. Not only did this facilitate the circulation of persons and goods, it also gave birth to a group of negotiators/traders. They were involved in trade over a short, medium or long distance. They benefited from associates and allies in different communities and spoke different languages. They emerged as privileged agents in resolving conflicts and restoring peace because of the immunity they enjoyed and their vast network of relations – e.g. the missionaries Samory Touré sent to France in 1886 following battles with French troops, as well as his cooperation with England.

Negotiations

Apart from psychological qualities, negotiations call for technical knowledge based on the culture of the group concerned, a good knowledge of the community's history, as well as many years of practice, which help in developing irrefutable stratagems. Thus, the traditional Bamum society had a specific post for its authorised negotiator-conciliator, who bears the title of *Tet Nkune*. The Bamum sovereign even had a permanent reconciliation body, consisting of an influential head of family, an eminent jurist (*Ngapassa*), a prestigious hunter and a reputed geomancian/priest. Negotiations, whether short or extended, go through a certain number of phases, punctuated with rites, norms and tacit rules. They take place at specific locations and times, generally at a border between the disputing communities, under a tree, away from eavesdroppers. Indeed, negotiations – a bilateral process – have helped solve many conflicts, restoring peace and harmony between two neighbouring communities.

There are several examples of conflict mediation. The King of Ketou (Benin) apparently initiated a mediation process between his peers in Nigeria and Ghana in order to try to ease the tensions caused by the numerous incidents between the two countries. He made it possible for the two countries' traditional chiefs to meet and they in turn managed to get the kings of Nigeria and Ghana to get together, thereby considerably reducing the antagonism between the two regions.

The Guinean President, Sékou Touré, succeeded in clearing up certain misunderstandings between the Presidents of Mali and Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) by enabling Sory Kandia Kouyaté, a well-known personality, to intervene. The latter used the ancestral ethnic alliances of the two Presidents to recreate a climate of understanding. In Niger, the power of reconciling parties in customary, civil and commercial matters requiring settlement is vested in canton or tribal chiefs. Their power to intervene for reconciliation has been enshrined in law. In the long and bloody Liberian conflict, crossborder local populations between Guinea and Liberia were able to prevent the Liberian conflict from extending to Guinea thanks to a traditional non-aggression pact.

"Palabre" – A privileged framework for conflict settlement

Etymologically, the word "palabre" comes from the Spanish "palabra" and means speech, discussion or endless, idle conversation (whence the word "palaver" in English). As a structure for the organisation of open forums, for expressing different views, offering advice, using different dissuasion and arbitration mechanisms, the "palabre" has emerged over the centuries as a suitable framework for conflict settlement in Black Africa. Unquestionably, the "palabre" is[19] a fundamental mechanism in African societies and the most obvious expression of the vitality of the culture of peace. The same conception of the "palabre" can be found all over Black Africa, with the odd minor differences, in which its sacred character, authority and knowledge are interlinked, the latter being personified by the elders who have accumulated wisdom and experience over the years [1]. A genuine institution, the "palabre" is governed by established norms and the main actors have to be highly competent.

The "palabre" is always held at a place laden with symbolism: under a tree, near a cave, on a promontory or in a hut built specially for the purpose. All these places are marked with a sacred seal. The date of the council meeting is not left to chance either – it has to correspond to a propitious moment determined by geomancians. In principle, the council is open to all, which makes it a body that promotes social and political expression with a high degree of freedom. However, for reasons of confidentiality, young children and women reputed to be chatterboxes (*Ekobô kobô*) are sometimes excluded.

The council lasts a long time and the inevitably convoluted debating process calls for patience. Apart from talking, there is an entire symbolism of ritual gestures, with silences fraught with meaning – all this is the result of a very intense and elaborate education and culture. The "palabre" does not aim to establish the respective wrongs of the parties in dispute and pronounce sentences, which lead to exclusion and rejection. The "palabre" has emerged as something of a logotherapy, which aims to break the infernal cycle of violence and counter-violence in order to restore peace and harmony.

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[19] Thierno Bah, cf. Bibliographical Notes p. 12
    Doulaye Konaté, idem
    Thierno Bah op. cit.

Thus, among the Dogon in Mali, it has been established that common interests call for peace and that rainclouds flee areas where disorder reigns. Accordingly, Dogon wisdom has it that in case of a dispute, both parties share responsibilities and the supreme consideration is the maintenance of internal tranquillity, through a mutual pardon [2].

Consequently, in traditional African societies, the deterrence, prevention and settlement of conflicts finds expression in the following adage, devised by the Banen in central Cameroon: "Eschew war at any cost, wage war if it cannot be avoided, but always restore peace after war."[3] This inherently reflects the culture of peace, which has been a dominant factor in traditional Africa's historical process, despite the panegyric about the heroic deeds of its empire builders and a certain ethnography, which has deliberately highlighted inter-tribal conflicts.

This is where the "palabre" comes in – interminable verbal jousting and pleas that can last for days and weeks or even months, as was the case for certain traditional reconciliation conferences. Far from being ineffective council meetings – as some impatient modern negotiators believe, obsessed by achieving short-term results –, this is a very important tradition. At the end of the day, the vitality of the agreements concluded and the commitment of the different parties depend on it. In fact, in the conflict resolution process, the manner in which negotiations are conducted is as important as the result itself. These "palabre" sessions help one get things off one's chest, retrace the source of the problem, air one's grievances or any feelings one harbours, express the suffering endured, examine the history of conflicts and peace agreements that have been signed. The art of rhetoric and gestures as well as poetic, even humorous talents are used to move hearts, strike minds and finally defend one's case. Indeed, the "palabre" does not intend so much to mete out sanctions as it aims at convincing, reconciling and restoring peace in a community disrupted by conflict. It campaigns against a very law-based vision of the society. As opposed to a system of monitoring and punishment, the "palabre" stands apart by laying an emphasis on discussion and redemption.

The opportunity to speak out acts as therapy for the groups involved, like psychoanalysis, which enables each camp to express its grief and frustrations and is thereby purged of accumulated resentments. When we say that the stomach of Africans is not just the centre of sentiments and emotions, but also the centre of their willpower and the very breath of life, we can understand the extent of the therapeutic importance attached to these sessions by these communities.

III. The post-conflict stage

In the African mind, settling conflicts and righting all wrongs is not enough. Future conflicts must also be prevented. It is therefore important to ensure that wounds are healed and to safeguard solidarity and social cohesion. Thus, the ceremony for sealing reconciliation is equally significant. Efforts must be made to ensure that each side feels that it has gained something in the negotiations or that, at least, it has managed to safeguard the community's general interest. This approach, reminiscent of the modern conflict settlement method called "the win-win approach", calls for some theatrics. An entire ceremonial is organised around reconciliation, acting as a reminder of the social impact of the decisions taken and the advantages it offers the communities involved. Certain types of animals are sacrificed, while invoking God, the spirits of common ancestors and saints in order to bless the verdict.

Conclusion

Can there be any link between the past and present? In other words, to what extent can traditional procedures work in the current context, marked by the incursion of elements of modernity? Fundamentally, the answer to the question is "yes". The "peace-keeping" operations conducted by major powers in Africa and their failure have proved that the search for peace has to be based, above all, on endogenous processes.

Indeed, intervention by external powers to maintain their economic and cultural presence or for geostrategic motives is in itself a threat to peace and security in Africa.

The return to popular mechanisms and values of consensus, solidarity and the culture of peace, about which there is increasingly talk, is a sign of this awareness, since it is a well-known fact that the universal is actually the local, but without the walls. This new approach requires that we dispassionately question not just the predominant discourses on peace and democracy, but also the instruments and accessories that come with them. It implies a systematic criticism of all the new political, economic and institutional slogans and gadgets that people are trying to impose on Africa, through all sorts of conditionalities. It calls for a veritable education for peace and democracy, which digs its roots deep in the rich soil of our cultures.

In other words, with this new approach, the equation of democracy and governance has to be posed differently henceforth. The issue is no longer that of looking for means to acclimatise or Africanise imported or imposed formulas, but of trying to see how we can modernise the positive values of Africa's democratic traditions and make them relevant today. It is a major challenge that cannot be limited to commonplace ideas of Africa's glorious past and the listless discourses on the specificity of the African man.

Ultimately, it can be said that what the Africa of today lacks in order to be able to settle its numerous conflicts and promote peace is a common political will and the means to translate such a policy into reality.

African cultures contain hidden resources that can contribute to the promotion of a culture of peace and a new humanism based on gratitude and the respect of others. In Mali, these values of tolerance have found expression in largely shared attitudes such as the duty of hospitality and respect due to strangers.

According to some people, the frequent references to African cultures (identified with "culturalism") are aimed at singling Africa out and may eclipse what is fundamental, which in their opinion is the edification of a modern State whose vocation is social regulation itself. As it happens, the State's universality is not self-evident and, moreover, it is facing enormous difficulties almost all over the world in ensuring its role as a regulator and in guaranteeing everyone's rights. This could undoubtedly explain the extraordinary boom in community life and the increase in the number of community reflexes, including in the old world. We believe that a better understanding of the mechanisms and modes of functioning of our African societies would further enlighten our understanding of the transformations underway, thereby contributing to the collective effort to seek and keep the peace.

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3.5 Endogenous African capacities in conflict governance (Pr. Basile L. Guissou)

[Original French]

Introduction : two contradictory views

The view, interpretation and analysis of African socio-political and cultural realities over the past century and more have hitherto always raised the same problem. There are two contradictory and even conflicting views:

1° The Berlin Conference (1855) and dogmatic assertions of the great thinkers of "the philosophy of history" like Hegel in "Reason in History" have pulled a lead blanket over Africa that continues to prevent analysis from within, by itself and for itself. Within this logic, experts in African problems are in their vast majority, non-African:

"Africa proper, as far as History goes back, has remained – for purposes of connection with the rest of the world – shut up; it is the Gold-land compressed within itself – the land of childhood, which, lying beyond the day of self-conscious history, is enveloped in the dark mantle of Night… The peculiarly African character is difficult to comprehend, for the very reason that in reference to it, we must give up the principle which naturally accompanies our ideas – the category of Universality… In Negro life, the characteristic point is the fact that consciousness has not yet attained to the realisation of any substantial objective existence – as for example Gold or law – in which the interest of man's own volition is involved and in which he realises his own being. … The copious and circumstantial accounts of Missionaries completely confirm this". In his Reason in History G.W.F. Hegel ([20]) asserts these "divine truths" held by Europeans concerning Africa!

2° In contrast to European scholars, there is the endogen version of African scholars, like the Professor of history Joseph Ki-Zerbo who introduces the first of the eight (8) volumes of the general history of Africa ([21]) in these terms:

"Africa has a history. The days are long gone when for whole areas on globes or maps, representing this marginal and enslaved continent, the knowledge of scholars was summarised by that pithy phrase that feels like an alibi: "*ibi sunt leones*" – "lions are found there". After the lions, highly profitable mines were found there and with them the indigenous tribes that owned them but who were themselves incorporated with their mines as properties of the colonising nations."

Other "heretics of instituted knowledge"([22]) on Africa, like Cheikh Anta Diop, have helped to impose a view of Africa by Africa and for Africa. Nowadays, no fundamental questions on Africa and

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[20] Cf. G. W. Hegel. 1965. La raison dans l'histoire, Paris. Plon Pages 247-250 (Reason in History).

[21] U.N.E.S.C.O/J.A./N.E.A./Histoire générale de l'Afrique huit en (8) tomes. Paris 1999.

[22] Ela, J. M. Cheikh Anta Diop ou l'honneur de penser. Paris. L'Harmattan. Paris, 1989.

its future may be tackled without taking into account these two contradictory views of African reality. It goes without saying that the title of this communication should save us the need to dissertate on the position and role of the view of "Africanists".

The aim here is to find within human societies, their institutions and specific civilisation values, the real or virtual potential to deal with Africa's crises and internal contradictions "constructively". What are or what can be the real capacities of Africa in terms of conflict governance? Our answer to this question will be organised with respect to history: the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial period.

I. <u>Governance and internal conflict in pre-colonial Africa: case of the Moogo Naaba Empire of Burkina Faso</u>[23]

Africa, before the "colonial collision" with the European occupying powers of the nineteenth century, evolved, like all other continents, with its own contradictions and through contradictory ways forward towards the constitution of several nations, States, empires and other entities. Regardless of the form and content of structures, socio-political and cultural institutions, it is scientifically established that each community "creates" its own mechanisms capable of solving conflict and crises.

The construction of pre-colonial States and nations on the African continent involved wars of conquest still sung today by *griots* and other traditional historians in human communities. But victors and the vanquished were forced to find ways and means of constructing this "will to live together" that underpins all nations and States. Without wishing to cite the many examples identified in the course of twenty-five (25) years of research in the field, we can summarise the exemplarity of the kingdom of the Moogo Naaba in Burkina. The victorious army from Dagomba (in the modern Republic of Ghana) occupied the whole territory which, in the tenth century, was to become the "Empire of Moogo Naaba" with its three (3) kings, thirty-three (33) "Viceroys", three hundred and thirty-three (333) "supreme chiefs" and finally, three thousand three hundred and thirty-three (3,333) "village chiefs", as told by traditional chroniclers. This institutional and political organisation, which allowed the Mossi people to exist to the present day (2005) and continue to defend its national identity, could not escape the judgement of the first French explorers such as Louis Tauxier([24]) who wrote:

> "The structure of the Mossi State included a supreme chief, a carefully established hierarchy of chiefs, a class of nobles enjoying great privileges… It was necessary to obey the chiefs but there were no internal struggles, no crushing by foreign pillagers. In all, the Mossi had embraced the organisation of policed States and represented a superior state of civilisation."

But establishing this "superstructure" described by Louis Tauxier required tried and tested tension management mechanisms resulting from the conquest of land and the first occupants who were subjected to the "imperium" of the victor. The genius of the conquerors was revealed right from

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[23] The transcription is by the Commission Nationale des Langues du Burkina Faso: Moogho (the country) Mooaga (the citizen) Moose (citizens of the country).

[24] Cf. Balima, A. S. Genèse de la Haute-Volta. Editions Presses Africaines. Ouagadougou (BF). 1969. page 37.

the beginning with their capacity to integrate themselves and all communities conquered through cultural, institutional and political cross-blending. Firstly, to get themselves accepted, the conquerors gave up all claims on the ownership of lands and of the soil. The "right of soil" was recognised for the first occupiers. They were the "tengsoba" (landowners) who continued to manage the distribution of land (fields, forests, groves, new village sites, etc.) according to rules passed down from their ancestors to guarantee peace, good rains, good harvests, good health for mothers and children, etc. Michel Izard (1992: 156) rightfully observes that the "Tengsoaba" (chief or landowner), Great Priest of the monotheist Moose religion, "was the necessary intermediary between the manes of the ancestors and the newcomers whose sole right to ownership came through conquest. Is not conquest usurpation? And, usurpation requires legitimisation."

This fundamental option opened the way to the existence of a Mooaga NATION, "a stable, historically constituted human community, originally born through a community of language, territory, economic life and psychic learning reflected in a cultural community", according to J. Staline (1953: 33).

1- Social, administrative and political organisation

The settlement of the conquerors was organised and structured from the "mother house", the home of the founding father which, through the centuries, would become the old imperial residence, "Naten Kudgo" in the Moore language. Social, administrative and political organisation was pyramidal. It was structured from the top downwards so as not to leave anyone or any community outside its organisational framework. The basic unit was the family founded by one ancestor from which each member inherited the same name. Family members respected the same proscriptions and did not marry each other. The family always had a head who was necessarily the eldest, therefore the most experienced person. Members of a same family who moved away from each other (for various reasons) formed a clan and all the clans formed an agglomeration that became a tribe. The Buudu of the Mooaga claimed to have the same ancestor. Several tribes grouped together to form a village which each member called their homeland, their ba-yiri (father's house).

After this level, organisation became purely administrative and political. Several villages, each with their own chief, were grouped together into a canton under the authority of the superior chief (head of the canton) and the heads of cantons were brought together under the authority of a King. With its three (3) Kings, the Empire was rather like a confederation. The federation of the kingdoms formed the Moogo (literally, the Empire of the World or the Universe) which was ruled by the only son of Wedraoogo who lived in the capital, Ouagadougou, and was called Moog-Naaba. He was not Emperor or King of the Moose as Napoleon was Emperor of the French. He was Emperor of the Moogo:

> "The basic principle was that there could only be one Mog'Naba and only he could personify order in
> the world. He was the living symbol of the city, the sole source of all authority." (Balima, 1969: 23)

If, in principle, the Moogo Naaba was all-powerful, in fact we observe that the organisation and operating rules of the Emperor cleverly "distilled" power and counter-power in all layers of Mooaga society to make a perfectly intermingled, stable and functional body.

2-   A society without social exclusion

The patrimonial Mooaga State or "Empire of the Moog Naaba" was like a very well woven basket, a traditional chief told us in 1990([25]). No group (clan, tribe or village) was excluded. They all had their place and specific role in the search for social cohesion and peace. War prisoners, refugees seeking protection (especially unlucky candidates) and settled traders were integrated in the management of power. For example, the "chief of the Hausa" (come from modern-day Nigeria) sat on the "council of ministers" of the Moogo Naaba of Ouagadougou. There was a Hausa district housing all the Hausa living in Ouagadougou. The same applied to the Fulfulde (Fulani) community who had a chief sitting at the Palace. The whole electoral college voting for the Moogo Naaba consisted of notables who were ineligible for the throne. They included people of all origins and all statuses who had found distinction through their wisdom and capacity to solve conflict and tensions. Even within the basic family unit, the Mooaga boy would quickly learn that he would one day become a mediator in their mother's family. His maternal uncles would ask him to rule on all sorts of disputes. And it was well known in the Mooaga country that the verdict of a nephew is never disputed. It was forbidden.

Without being exhaustive on this issue, it is important to know that all so-called traditional societies have mechanisms based on sacred values that allow all members to participate in the positive handling of crises and tensions.

Finally, between the Moose and another neighbouring community, the San (or Samos), there was a mechanism called "parenté à plaisanterie" ("kinship of pleasantry")([26]). This mechanism allowed a Mooaga to publicly insult and make fun of a San and vice-versa. Getting angry or trying to fight each other was forbidden. It was a real yet inconsequential means of letting off steam which both communities (or ethnic groups) still respect today. The same mechanism exists between all the ethnic groups of Burkina and kinship of pleasantry days are still organised every year.

A mobile phone company has just organised a "kinship of pleasantry competition" in February 2005, offering a large number of prizes([27]).

II.   Colonisation and Decolonisation

French West Africa (AOF) and French Equatorial Africa (AEF), as conquered territories for half a century (1900-1960), were subjected to the rigours of "pacification and enhancement" of land, people and values of endogen civilisation. Indigenous institutions, powers, languages, culture and all indigenous values were judged and condemned until they disappeared to make way for FRENCH CIVILISATION.

Refusal and the many forms of active and passive resistance led to political independence in the 1960s. Since then, the African content has had to confront the rest of the world in fifty-three (53) pieces or detached pieces pompously called "Sovereign and Independent States". In each sovereign

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[25]   Cf. Guissou, B. L. 2002. De l'Etat patrimonial à l'Etat de Droit moderne au Burkina Faso: esquisse d'une théorie de la construction de l'Etat-Nation en Afrique. PhD Thesis in political psychology. Cocody University, Abidjan (RCI).

[26]   Cf. Sissao, A. Alliances et parentés à plaisanterie au Burkina Faso. 2002. Sankofa et Gurki. Editions 186 p.

[27]   Cf. Le quotidien privé, "Le pays" Monday 21st February 2005 publishes the results.

State, after forty-five (45) years, in 2005, the same observation can be made: failure. Excessive external debt, impossibility for the State to take on its sovereign responsibilities and functions (education, health, security, etc.), deterioration of exchange terms, etc., are the structural problems that condemn all States to accept the drastic structural adjustments dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). In the current situation of Africa and its 53 different pieces, it is quite a feat to ward off civil war (Congo ex-Zaire, Somalia, Sudan, Ivory Coast, etc.), negotiate with outside backers to calm cash problems and soothe social tensions.

Poorly managed mechanisms

In spite of everything that has been done and is still done to denigrate, criticise and underestimate endogenous values specific to African societies, there are still internal resources, tried and tested mechanisms and credible personalities capable of activating them to the benefit of the populations. None of the communities "excluded" from globalisation are dying. Every day, treasures of genius and ingenuity are invested so that poor Africans (with less than one dollar a day to live on) can continue to live and hope, with or without civil war.

As in economic life, where the "formal" and "informal" sectors co-exist in each African country, the same applies in terms of conflict governance. Conflict governance works at two levels and at two speeds:

1° The official, State and media level, aimed more at international public opinion and where a "lucky few" – ministers, members of parliament, political opponents, association leaders who speak French, English, Spanish, Portuguese, etc., well – are seen and heard.

2° The "informal" and non-official level, strictly limited to indigenous capacities only who, left to themselves, remain the only guardians of local knowledge and know-how in terms of conflict governance.

Obviously, the origin of tensions, conflicts and civil wars in Africa is found in the accessing and sharing of resources (possession), strategic posts (knowledge) and political responsibility positions (power), all focused in the official, State and "formal" sphere. On this level, all intrigues and plots are forged between "experts in good governance traditions" imported from colonial Europe, away from the eyes and ears of locals in the "informal" sector. Herein lies the importance of official African languages which appears like a "wall of China" that unites and protects the elites and ruling classes against any "intrusion" from locals who are not versed in French, English or Portuguese, in debates on access and sharing of knowledge, possession and power. Official African languages are used to exclude the majority of the population from official debate on governance and the governance of conflicts. The language of politics, administration and justice, in all former European colonies in Africa (AOF/AEF), is a foreign language, not understood by the majority of African people. In Burkina Faso, a survey by university students and researchers (linguists) conducted in 2000 ([28]) shows that only 113,335 Burkinabe (01.09 %) in a population of 12 million can speak the official language (French) on the same or above the level of the Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle (BEPC) (high school certificate) standard! In fact, no-one can be an active citizen in the spheres of official governance without speaking the only language that is used to govern the twelve million population

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[28] Cf. Barreteau D. et Yaro A…, Scolarisation et niveau de compétence en français au Burkina Faso, 13 pages. 2000. Ouagadougou.

of Burkina Faso. Therefore there are only 113,335 "fully" empowered citizens in Burkina Faso! And yet, for the past century, (1919) primary schools in Burkina Faso continue to recognise French as the only teaching language (even for subjects like natural science and maths), excluding all the mother tongues of children which nevertheless are all described, studied and have their own scientifically designed alphabet established since 1981 by the Institut de recherche en Sciences des Sociétés (INSS) of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique et Technologique (CNRST)[29].

The elite ruling classes of Africa want to govern without and far from the masses. Professor Aly Amady Dieng of Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar (Senegal) claims that official Africa is subjected to the suicidal behaviour of a "spineless" elite without a cultural identity.

Considering that language contains philosophical, cultural, ideological, political and institutional values to consolidate and defend the identity of a human community, society or nation-State, it is clear that the official African elite rejects endogenous capabilities to offer constructive management of conflicts and tensions.

None of the pseudo-scientific arguments or policies put forward to justify the refusal to make African mother tongues official can stand up to criticism. In 1958, a scholar (Egyptologist, physician and historian) like Cheikh Anta Diop, showed that "the centre of the world is everywhere" and that the theory of relativity developed by the Jewish-German physician Einstein could be translated into any language. He did it in his mother tongue, Senegalese Wolof.

All endogenous African tension and crisis governance and management capabilities and potential will remain trapped, confined to the clandestine "informal" sphere of legal political life recognised by the "international community", for as long as the social, cultural, political and administrative status of African national languages do not change. To give a comparative example to sceptics, a country like India has one thousand eight hundred (1,800) national languages, but through a scientifically elaborated linguistic policy, all Indian children start primary school with their mother tongue as the initial teaching medium.

In India, this is called the "three-language formula" and this language policy is the basis of the recovery of the cultural identity and creative genius by Indian citizens who always surprise the rest of their world by their increasingly strong presence in all sectors and all fields of economic and social progress, even the nuclear industry!

That is why we strongly claim that Africa is badly handling its heritage on the official level of governance. Whereas in India and Asia, linguistic and cultural diversity is exploited as an asset (consolidating national cultural identity), in Africa, it worsens artificial conflicts created by an elite prepared to lead the country into suicidal experiences – as is currently happening in Côte d'Ivoire with the ex-nihilo creation of the concept of "ivoirity" by university professors. If you have the patience to read the book entitled "L'Ivoirité" ([30]), you realise to what point, a "spineless" elite, involved in the fight to monopolise knowledge, power and possession is capable of raising itself intellectually, against its "foreigners" on the African soil. We really need to move in the opposite

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[29] Cf. Kedrebeogo, G. 1998. Linguistic diversity and language policy: the challenges of multilingualism in Burkina Faso. Warsaw. Hemispheres Studies on cultures and societies. N° 12 p. 5-27.

[30] Cf. L'ivoirité ou l'esprit de nouveau contrat social du Président Henri Konan Bédié. Minutes from the CURDIPHE forum 20th-23rd March 1996. Abidjan (RCI).

direction to establish structures and institutions capable of positively enhancing our endogenous capacities to manage tensions and conflicts.

Conclusion: Hope in despair

According to all experts and specialists, Africa is the continent that is excluded from ongoing economic globalisation. I often want to say "that's all the better for us as, at last, we will have the time, leisure and means to think of our future for ourselves, by ourselves and for ourselves".

The UNPD and UNESCO asked me in 2002 to do a critical analysis of ongoing programmes to fight poverty in Burkina Faso with three other sociologists working in Benin, Niger and Mali. The result of its findings were published by Editions Unesco/Karthala under the title "La pauvreté, une fatalité ?" (Poverty, a fatality?) with a preface by the director-general of UNESCO, Koïtchiro Matsuura. My contribution in this document ended as follows:

"On 25th April 1963, Dr Kwamé N'Krumah had the necessary and useful intellectual clear-headedness and forward thinking to cry out in Africa Hall, Addis-Ababa, on the creation of the African Unity Organisation: *Africa must unite!*"

He proposed an African army, an African government and an autonomous, independent and concrete mechanism to pool together the exploitation of economic riches. Just reread his book "Africa must unite"([31]) and you will realise that from today's standpoint (in 2002), he was not right too early but his critics were too backward thinking in the search for a vision for Africa. While African Presidents could only see "their national borders" behind which they could get rich fast through exports of raw materials to French or English colonial capitals in strict regard for the colonial pact, Dr N'Krumah imagined a unified Africa reconstructed along the lines of the USA or the USSR.

Forty years on, development of each independent and sovereign State, *against* the other African States and to the benefit of non-African interests, has failed. Poverty is everywhere, in rich countries (Nigeria–South Africa) and in poor (Senegal–Burkina Faso).

In reaction to these failures, new initiatives like the African Union and NEPAD have recently been launched. However, the way ahead opened by these projects will only become a real momentum to eradicate poverty if they are implemented in concrete terms. Despite malevolent attacks (internal and external), and despite pessimistic prophecies, all initiatives based on the will to establish "self-empowerment" on the continental level help to push back the hegemony of the former colonial powers on the thought and action of development in Africa and, as such, should be welcomed. In spite of the naïve character of outside funding expectations contained in the NEPAD to set up infrastructure, the thoughts and construction proposals for economic integration it contains are excellent. Reconquering the historic initiative and making a conscious choice to invent a specific destiny are the problems raised which should be solved by all Africans who want to think with their own minds to solve their own problems, today and tomorrow.

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[31]   N'Krumah, N. 1994. L'Afrique doit s'unir, Paris, Présence africaine.

The prime merit of the African Union and NEPAD projects is that they are African projects conceived and proposed by African minds. Everything starts there, with autonomous thought and the capability of proposing a vision by and for oneself. It is a good start and, as we say, the longest journey always starts with the first footstep. Comparison is not always good, but the idea of the European Union goes back to the 1950s. It is currently being achieved. Roads, railways and transnational air links will forge African unity better than the miserable stances taken to attract "international aid"([32]).

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[32] Cf. La pauvreté, une fatalité? Collective document. Editions UNESCO/Karthala (Paris) 2002.

3.6 Indications from the history and culture of West African Societies on the role of women in prevention and governance (Dr. Mariam Djibrilla Maiga[33])

[Original French]

I. **Traditional Roles of some Famous Women in History in prevention and governance**
(Extract from the book by Adam Konaré entitled Dictionnaire des Femmes célèbres du Mali, Edition Jamana, March 1991)

1- Women with Mystical Powers

Sogolon Kondé: mother of Soundiata KEITA, founder of the Mali Empire

Naré Makan KONATE, the king of the Kri, sent his hunters to fight for the King of the DO, ridding the latter of his enemies, manipulated by his aunt, DO Kamissa. As a reward for his warriors' success, King Naré Makan KONATE married Sogolon Kondé because soothsayers had predicted that she would beget the greatest man ever to be born in Mandé land. She gave birth to Soundiata KEITA. Some oral sources say that:

- Soundiata KEITA's grandmother, commonly called "Do Tigui" or "Do Buffalo", let herself be killed by witchdoctors and entrusted them with her granddaughter, Soundiata KEITA's mother. The soothsayers had said that she would bear a child that would make the whole world talk.

- Soundiata KEITA's sister, SOGOLON KOULOUNKA, played a particularly important role in his accession as king of the Manding. She strategically decided not to follow her brother into exile and stayed in the paternal family to avoid the traps set by their half-brother; she also accepted to marry Soumangourou Kanté so that he would support the emergence of her brother, Soundiata KEITA, as king of the Manding.

- Soundiata KEITA's government included 18 (eighteen) women. Through their occult knowledge, they acted as councillors and protected the actions of his army, the royal court and kingdom with the aim of predicting possible threats and dangers.

- The women prepared a small canary which fed all the warriors as they did not have much time to cook. They also cooked <u>fonio</u> in winnowing baskets to feed their warriors and threw bees over the enemy.

In the time of Babemba and Tiéba, oral sources reported that, in order to maintain Sikasso's territorial integrity, Babemba's sister cut off her right breast to be able to adjust her gunshots.

The oil and cream operation was initiated by women to poison enemy forces.

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Kasseye: the sister of Soni Ali Ber, founder of the Songhoy Empire (1464-1492) and mother of Askia Mohamed, founder of the Askia Dynasty. Asseye was a great sorceress. The protective Genies of the SI one day told him: "Your sister Kasseye will have a son that will kill you when he becomes an adult." So Soni killed six of her sister Kasseye's sons. When Kasseye was expecting her seventh child, one of her slaves, from Nigeria, was also pregnant. The two women gave birth to sons on the same day. Kasseye switched her child with the slave's baby which the SI killed. Kasseye's son, Mamar, was raised anonymously. At the age of 15, Mamar visited his father who gave him a superb horse, a caftan, a spear and a sabre. Mamar approached the SI, who was sitting on his hide, and cut off his head. The Si's sons said: "So he who is dead is our father?" Kasseye replied: "He who is dead is my brother. He killed six of my children. Come nearer, I will kill six of you, the remaining one will fight Mamar and the winner will receive the turban (become chief)." Mamar won and became the owner of the turban.

But once Mamar had taken power, he led a military expedition against his adoptive parents in Bourgou. He narrowly escaped a humiliating defeated. He sent a trusted messenger to Gao to inform his mother. His mother, Kassey, said to the envoy: "Mamar drank the milk of a Borgantye woman. He will never be victorious against the Borgantye." She gave the messenger a piece of wood, an egg and a stone. When Mamar was about to be caught up, he threw the piece of wood which transformed into a great forest behind him. The Bourgantye crossed the forest and caught up with Mamar. He threw the egg which transformed into a great river. The Bourgantye crossed the river and caught up with Mamar; he then threw the stone which was transformed into a great mountain. The Bourgantye stopped there and Mamar returned to Gao.

Diaba: is the priestess Soninké, the name of the white hyena of Dinga, the eponymous ancestor of the Cissé, founders of the Wagadou Empire (Ghana).

Niamé: the only daughter of her parents, living in the Nile valley and daughter of a warrior-hunter. She was a legendary woman from whom all the Soninké from the Cissé clan are descended. Following a drought, Niama took all her father's clothes and announced that she was going to war to help alleviate the disastrous effects of drought. She mounted a winged white horse that was able to talk to men. Niama fought the enemy. It rained that year. She became the great warrior hero of the Soninké. Her name is carried by both men and women. The motto or song of praise for the brave Cissé starts with her name.

Harakoye Dicko: is the Goddess of the Niger river for the Songhoi of Gao and Ansongo and in the Republic of Niger. Her home is Dara, in Niger. Harakoye DICKO is said to have been the mother of the Torrou/Holley genies (who are intermediate gods, between men and God). These Holleys are able to transform themselves into the body of possession dancers. When they fall into a trance, they directly deal with the problems of terrestrial life and offer up words, advice or threats which, according to the initiated, are not theirs but those of the genies controlling them.

Ba Faro is the Goddess of the Niger for the Bamanan of Ségou. Faro is supposed to be the majestic divinity of the Bamanan from the land of Ségou. Her reign followed that of Penba, the God of discord. She has the power of classification, she is the mistress of the word. The Niger river follows her forms but some places, called Faronti, found in the river depths, are supposed to be her place of residence. Ba Faro guarantees the prosperity of the land lying between the Mandé and Ségou where she is worshipped. She is commonly called Faro Dimba Niuman (the good mother).

2- *The Power of Women – mothers, wives, legendary and feudal queens and princesses.*

Badjoni wéré Coulibaly: Mother of Da Monzon Diarra, the most famous sovereign of the Bamanan Empire of Ségou. Da Monzon gave this Empire its outer borders ranging from Timbuktu to Kouroussa in Guinea; Bélédougou to Mali to Tingréla in Côte d'Ivoire.

Adya: Wife of Sékou Amadou Bari, the founder of the Peul Empire of Macina 1810-1844. Mother of Amadou Sékou Bari, son and successor of Sékou Amadou 1844-1852; grandmother of Amadou Amadou, son and successor of Sékou Amadou. Adya is therefore the wife, mother and grandmother of three emperors. She played a key role in her grandson's education, Amadou Amadou, and in the dynastic crisis that almost shook the Dina of Hamdallaye with the premature death of Amadou Sékou. Two men claimed the throne: BA LOBBO and Allaye Amadou.

1. BA LOBBO, the nephew of the founder of the theocratic State, evinced from the throne by his uncle, to the benefit of his cousin, Amadou Sékou, designated by his father to replace him. Finally, BA LOBBO was forced to accept the position of supreme chief of the armed forces.

2. Upon Sékou Amadou's death, Allaye, the son of Sékou Amadou and Adya and civil governor of Timbuktu, who was better qualified than BA LOBBO, threatened to declare war if he was not designated to replace Sékou Amadou.

3. Tests to choose Sékou Amadou's successor, accession of Amadou Amadou, son of Amadou Sékou, and of Munayessa, daughter of Isaaka, the imam of Djenné. BA LOBBO suggested that Amadou Amadou succeed his father. BA LOBBO appealed to Adya, Allaye Amadou's mother, to persuade her son to stand down, like him, from the succession of the late Sékou Amadou. BA LOBBO said: "… Mother Adya, I accepted to stand down and I would like Allaye to do the same thing so that Amadou Amadou may replace his father and so we may no longer have any problems. Allaye has besieged us whereas my army is three times larger than his. Allaye is a marabout, he is not a warrior and I would not like to harm him tomorrow as I would have no eyes to look at you, you our mother. Try to persuade him to stand down in favour of Amadou Amadou."

In this crisis situation, Adya went to her son, Allaye Amadou, and reportedly said to him: "Here are the two breasts you suckled. You father never wanted you to rule this world. He intended you for the other world and you came to fight for this lesser world, this trivial prize. Leave this toy to children. I beg you, by the milk you suckled, to stand down in favour of Amadou Amadou." Allaye Amadou accepted to take the oath of fidelity to his brother, Amadou Amadou.

Thanks to the influence of Adya, the mother of Allaye Amadou Sékou, war was avoided in the Macina and the Kingdom established a patri-linear form of succession as of 1853, with the nomination of Amadou Amadou as the successor to his father.

Bouctou: A Tuareg woman who lived next to a well, a transhipment point for Maghreb traders crossing the Sahara in the thirteenth century. These traders had taken the habit of entrusting her with their goods. The place gradually became a trading centre and BOUCTOU gave it her name: Tombouctou (or Timbuktu).

Sokona Kamara: Mother of Almamy Samory TOURE. History has it that Almamy Samory TOURE (1830-1900) was a djoula, from the Konian and Sankaran region (current Republic of Guinea). During his absence, the Marabout Sory Birama/Séré Bréma, King of Wassulu, destroyed Sanankoro, Samory's village, and took several prisoners including Almamy Samory TOURE's mother. To obtain the release of his mother, Almamy Samory TOURE became a warrior for Séré Bréma. Almamy Samory TOURE received a religious education from Séré Bréma and distinguished himself in several battles. Thanks to Samory's exemplary devotion and the fear he inspired, Séré Bréma freed him with his mother, seven years later. Almamy Samory TOURE then created a small troop armed with fire weapons from Sierra Leone. Between 1870 and 1875, he conquered several villages and regions through a vast campaign. After the death of Séré Bréma, he became the King of Wassulu and, in 1880, took the title of Commander of the Believers.

Mariama Kamara: Wife of Almamy Samory TOURE, the first of two women known to have been in charge of his food, a privilege not granted to other women. Mariama Kamara bore the title of Almamy Samory TOURE's mistress of the household. She alone lived in Almamy Samory TOURE's concession.

Aramata Toure: Daughter of Almamy Samory TOURE and Bagbè Mara, grandmother of his Excellency Ahmed Sékou TOURE, the former President of the Republic of Guinea Conakry.

Syan: Soninké heroine at the origin of the Soninké history of Gana. The eponymous ancestor of the Soninké of Wagadou was called Dinga, and came from the Nile valley. One of her sons, Dyabe Cissé, founder of the Empire of Wagadou, in the fourth century AD, moved to Koumbi Saleh, between Goumbou and Néma, in present-day Mauritania, with the permission of the area's protective genie, the Wagadou Bida/Snake. He promised Dyabe that his kingdom would enjoy prosperity on condition of his receiving a beautiful young virgin every year. Dyabe Cissé accepted, and, every year, the representatives of the four provinces met in Koumbi Saleh to sacrifice the virgin to the Wagadou Bida (the Kayamagan); and thus the kingdom prospered.

At the seventh Kayamagan, events took a new turn. Amadou Yatabari, the fiancé of Siyan, the virgin chosen for the seventh year, beheaded Bida and took his fiancé away on his horse. Bida's head fell into the Bouré, in Malinké country, which became a country of gold. The Wagadou Empire was liberated from Bida but the Empire declined.

3-   Women with power through sorcery and geomancy

Doussou Damba or Ma Doussou: is a Mandé woman with tremendous witchcraft powers. No event could occur in the Mandé country without her knowing. She is said to have lived before the creation of the Mali Empire in 1235. She was the patron of Mandé witches and the equal of men in the management of Mandé affairs.

Nyagalen Jatara: she prepared arrows for M'Baransaknna Sanka Dabo, the greatest poisoned magical arrow-maker in the Mandé before the era of Soundiata KEITA (thirteenth century).

Niele: is the famous witch from the Koulikoro region. Her mortar was discovered in 1960 and is now exhibited in the National Museum of Bamako, in which she ground her magical potions and the skulls of her victims.

4-   The case of Dahomey: A branch of King Béhanzin's army was made up of amazons, who were the backbone of his army.

5-   Senegal: In the history of the Diolas, women played a decisive role. Queen Aline Sitoé's vision of farming development and famine prevention strategies and her position-taking led to her deportation by the colonial power in the region of Gao, north of Mali.

6-   The KURUKANFOUGA Charter or Mandé Charter

The representatives of the traditional Mandé and their allies, brought together in 1236 at **KURUKANFOUGA**, after the battle of KIRINA, adopted the Mandé Charter, aimed at controlling the wide MANDING region. This charter had 44 articles covering basic rights. For example, article 5 stipulated the Right to Life; article 9 the Rights of Children; article 4 stated that society is divided into age groups at the head of which is a chief. Women were therefore not excluded by the Mandé Charter.

A Mandé proverb reflects participation of women in these terms:
"NI BOMBOCHI CHIRA NI KAN MIYYE TÖ BE DOUN NO KAN DEYYE"

Translation: "Food is eaten during the day with the promise taken by the beard at night."

II.   Analysis of Roles played and the values upheld by women

1-   The traditional Social Role of Women: women are a key factor in the family circle and the Community, and their absence creates a void:

We can conclude from the above that women play different roles guaranteeing that they were not excluded from any community. Women were considered an institution, belonging to the community and to the family and not to an individual.

Women's family and social role, know-how and knowledge, gave them the capacity to become discreetly and effectively involved in the search for peace, without having to wait from instructions from any source.

1.1   Woman as a wife: a woman becomes a wife then a mother. In view of her education, of her role as a wife, she has a particularly significant informal influence on the balance of the family, establishing special social relations with her husband and other members of the family.

- In the marital hut: a woman has positive and constructive relations with her husband thus contributing to men's individual balance and intellectual and moral security: she brings relief to her husband, contributes to his individual harmony. She takes care with his clothing, prepares and watches over his food, gives him advice in the home, develops intelligent and fertile dialogue with her husband, while avoiding contradictory and conflicting relationships between her husband and family and friends. To maintain perfect relations with her husband, a woman fosters positive values between her husband and close ones (extended family, parents and friends of her husband). Incorrect behaviour of people close to her family-in-law and friends of her husband are denounced by the most appropriate third party. A woman speaks little and only intervenes or reveals a State secret if she feels her husband or the nation is in danger. She never goes out when her husband is present, except if required to satisfy his needs.

- One often hears people say: "This man's wife really is a woman." This means that she behaves so well "that she is dead, that she makes herself forgotten to the benefit of her husband and his family and friends".

- According to certain notabilities: "Submission of the woman to her husband is not done uniquely to please her husband; the wife submits herself because in doing so, she gives pleasure and joy to her husband, which contributes to the children's luck."

- One woman said: "A woman will always try to protect her husband and the credibility of his family and make sure that his family is considered to be one of the main families in the community." She continued by saying: "Moussoya yè goundo déyè", i.e. "being a woman means being party to the innermost secrets of man".

1.2 Woman as a mother, begets, gives life through labour, in the very difficult circumstances which divinity gives her. She guides her child's first steps, breastfeeds then feeds, washes, dresses, educates and protects her child. This child is the most beloved being. The various ways in which the child has been conceived and brought up mean that this child will one day become the father or mother of a nation or, quite simply, the father or husband of another woman and, for a daughter, the wife of another man. This social construction creates a very strong emotional and social bond between mother and child which is consolidated by breastfeeding.

1.3 Woman as a sister: acts as an adviser and gives her brothers moral support.

Through her privileged social status, she plays a key role in upholding and developing certain values of pacific coexistence.

2- *Social Coexistence Values and the Role of women in maintaining these values guaranteeing sustainable peace and stability.*

2.1 Values dictated by nature and its laws:

❑ **Neighbours**: relationships with neighbours are sacred. Joy and sadness are shared with neighbours. Neighbours are the first relations, the first witness of an individual, of a family in

the community. Bonds are developed on the basis of specific gestures and behaviour, like appropriate and perceptive assistance in the case of a problem or difficulty.

❑ **Respect for elders**: is sacred, as they essentially play a moderating, conciliatory and mediating role. Elders strongly contribute to social balance and cohesion through their experience, knowledge and relations.

❑ **Life in the community**: understanding its importance and materialisation in behaviour such as dialogue and consensual management of problems under the village tree is a major peace factor. This democratic value involves all social categories and focuses on participation of all members of the community, the search for balance and social cohesion.

2.2   Values linked to the practice of trade, the complementary production system and/or the co-exploitation of the resources in the same territory

As early as the eighth century and throughout certain Empires like the Empire of Ghana, peoples (from Western Sudan) came into contact with major forms of trade, such as trans-Saharan trade. Arab-Berber traders and black traders known as the Wankara thus travelled the trails of North Africa. These trading contacts fostered cultural, political, religious and parental relations. Various ethnic groups were therefore required to share a common space, common or complementary activities, lifestyle and supportive and complementary culture. (For example, common farming of the same pastures, of the same salt earth, of the same water sources; supervision of animals by each other for each other, sharing of farm produce, etc.).

These values imply economic interdependence. The different communities, over and above their belonging to a tribe, form the foundations of communal life. The concern to satisfy basic needs conditions this age-old balance. A give-and-take pattern stems from this practice, which creates and develops a very fertile partnership between individuals, families and communities and then allows a strong connection between sedentary groups (villages) and nomadic groups (travelling populations). This economic interdependence means that each community is acutely aware of the key role the other plays in its own existence.

Climatic difficulties, dearth or abundance of natural resources and their optimal management have conditioned the movement of men and animals. These values periodically lead populations to come together along river valleys to use available resources and trade in flooded zones for green pasture, salty soils and harvested products. This long-established natural resource management system has fostered interpenetration between communities and the establishment of strong relations between neighbours implying agreement, solidarity, mutual respect and cultural intermingling.

This necessary complementarity of production systems is strong in communities' awareness, as symbolised by a cooking recipe from northern Mali called "Alabadia". This recipe is a mixture of local rice grown by sedentary people and minced beef and butter produced by nomadic populations. It is also embodied in the declaration of testimonials entitled "each sedentary family has its nomadic family and vice versa".

2.3   Values developed through social bonds:

❑ Cousinhood or kinship of pleasantry, a frequent cultural factor in intercommunity relations. It consists in playing tricks or exchanging jibes, usually unbearable between individuals in normal situations. This value is sealed between several tribes: Songoys-Dogon; Kel Tamacheq-Dogon; Touré-Maiga, etc. This practice, through known historic links, enhances community life, removes any possible misunderstanding, boosts mutual trust and relieves tensions.

Kinship of pleasantry or "African cousinhood", called Bassetareye in Sonrhaï, Taboubicha in Tamacheq, Dindiragnène in Peuhl. For example: Bassatereye between Songhoï and Dogon, between different Tuareg tribal groups (Kel Ansari, Chamanamass, Immididaren, Idnane etc.). It is a form of alliance based on joking, taken from lessons drawn in the management of contemporary conflict, on the control and awareness of the role of each community in coexistence zones.

It is aimed at preventing or reducing antagonism between ethnic groups or tribes. This alliance includes the mutual obligation to support and not threaten the other's life and property. It helps to break the ice when first meeting strangers and create favourable conditions to welcome the stranger, etc.

2.4   Values developed through family bonds

Mixed marriages and cultural imprints have produced a common value system in which the imprint of each group can be perceived. This is the case, for example, of grandchild/grandparent relationships and of relationships between the children of a brother and sister, commonly known as cousins, which are linked by cousinhood relations, therefore a kinship of pleasantry.

2.5   Special values

❑ **The code of honour: While social structures establish a hierarchy between their groups, they also define, for each group, its role in society with a view to maintaining a certain harmony. Thus, while some groups have the formidable task of safeguarding the code of honour, they can also play this role if they show consistent loyalty, integrity, harmony and attention shown to others.**

❑ **Belonging to the same cultural identity: Despite its apparent sociological and linguistic diversity, Africa is a common cultural fund that can be used as a benchmark for the rational harmonisation of different social components.**

❑ The social pact/blood pact: Economic interdependence, consanguinity, cultural identity, neighbours, cousinhood, etc. The result is a social pact called ALLAHIDOU in Songoy and ARKAWAL in Tamacheq, based on extensively shared social values and norms: honesty, fairness, mutual respect, hospitality, respect for a promise given, discretion, the transgression of which is punished by society.

❑ The sacred quality of "social power": Whether the head of the family, the village chief, the chief of a given community or a spiritual (religious) leader, a chief is generally respected and listened to especially when honest, loyal and transparent. Generally speaking, the chief has to maintain cohesion, stability and social peace in his tribe and among his neighbours.

❑ Hospitality: It is strongly rooted in the culture of ethnic groups of certain countries such as Mali, Guinea, Senegal and Niger. It expresses a deep will for solidarity, peace and sociability.

❑ The role of Islam: Islam perpetuates and implies the implementation of a code of conduct and honour based on solidarity, agreement, forgiveness, mutual respect which draws its strength from religious principles.

3-   Raising of the right or both breasts / sacred value of suckled breast milk in conflict prevention or management

As a last resort, this gesture is shown by a woman of a certain age in the case of a very serious crisis between children/brothers of the same mother to which no solution has been found within the community. The right breast is raised by the mother between the children or directed at the child causing the conflict. It deeply symbolises a mother's appeal to her child to stop violence in the superior interest of a nation or a family.

III.   The Power of Women and their Traditional Preventative Role

There is a strong perception of women's extraordinary strength in preventing all crisis situations.

1-   Legendary power, sorcery, geomancy and others

There are legends that are felt but never said; except when allowed to whisper them between age groups "a tèfo, atè sébin, a tè dabila" (translation: "it's not said, it's not written but it doesn't stop there.") This is because these legends contribute to individual, family and community harmony.

In the balance of traditional society, codes relating to women argue in favour of social balance (social cohesion).

Even if women are self-effacing and do not officially speak up, their strength is based on certain attributes including:

1. Silence, discretion and inherited mystical capacities

2. Self-effacement, i.e. the informal character of their initiatives

3. Commitment and determination to succeed when threatened

4. The capacity to communicate, interpenetrate and adapt in all situations. "Muso hakilli latiguélindo", i.e. they are quick to trust, do not doubt and do not fear.

5. Easy exchange of information around wells and markets

6. The sixth sense, "Mousso Somi kadian". They understand, know how to imagine, spark off and refuse. Their refusal is gentle, as they wish to maintain peaceful relations. They refuse and create hope so as not to cause vexation.

2- *In crisis prevention*

In African tradition, women are considered to be an essential peace factor. Tradition has it that women mean security, as they are at the beginning and end of all processes. Three parameters contribute to the definition of women. Through their close relations, their humility in the management of society and the power given to them, women play several roles:

2.1 Rapid Alert Role

They sense threats and know whom to alert. For example, when there is a threat of an epidemic in a village, women are the first to raise the alert. In the case of conflict in a community, they are usually the first to be informed.

2.2 Role of Adviser for Individual and Social Balance

Traditionally, women advise brave warriors, great chiefs and traditional leaders. Women's advice is always positive in the regulation of society, maintaining social balance and cohesion. If not, in the case of problems that jeopardise social balance, women are the first to suffer the consequences.

3.2.3 Women suffer the consequences of crisis or conflict. As such, they play a monitoring/sentinel role to protect the lives of their children, husband, father: Women always suffer the consequences of a crisis or conflict. For example: if a woman loses her husband, she becomes a widow; if she loses her child, she loses her family status (hence desolation and despair); if she loses her marital home, she loses the sworn heritage of all women, as all women dream of having a marital home where they are valorised and wish to stay there until the end of their lives; if a woman loses her father, she loses her moral support in her own family but also in her husband's. Her role as mother, wife and sister gives her the right to take initiatives to prevent crises.

Moreover, traditionally, this role is rarely perceptible as, despite the bellicose character of a woman, she will never seek conflict.

For example: Traditionally, conflict is part of the family and community heritage. When, for example, a girl has many suitors, she shows discernment and her choice generally helps to avoid conflict. Her choice is always concerted and consensual, as it is underpinned by a mechanism and code defined by her parents. Her parents do not force her to marry a man in particular, but they help their daughter in her choice by discreetly advising her through codes that help to uphold the family image and maintain norms and social values in traditional society.

In conflict management, women's role is not perceptible but it is essential. Traditionally, it is said that "the woman is allowed to do everything", i.e. in Bambara language "Ton tè musol". In her concern to maintain peace in all crisis situations in her community, she discreetly takes informal steps with the aim of understanding the ins and outs of the conflict. She becomes her husband's best adviser. Her advice usually strives to reduce tension between protagonists.

Driven by the desire not to lose her husband, child or father, she is personally involved in the search for a solution, through her own relationships and social bonds. She does not want to be a widow; she does not want to lose her child or father.

To conclude, Woman is wisdom:

- Woman as a mother, wife and sister is the guardian of traditions.

- She plays several roles, meaning that she is never a stranger in any community.

- She plays a decisive endogenous role, adapts to all situations and easily fits in with the aim of being useful.

- Her family and social role, her know-how and knowledge give her the skills to become involved discreetly and effectively in the search for peace without waiting for instructions from anyone.

- Her sixth sense gives her early alert and prevention skills.

- In all community conflicts, belligerent parties often use alliances to bring back peace (marriage, kinship, kinship of pleasantry, Antarctic relations). These alliances help to seal blood, friendship, solidarity and collaboration pacts and develop the community spirit and identity.

- A woman is considered to be an institution belonging to the community, the family and not an individual.

- In this way, friendly communities usually accept rules and principles of pacts with the aim of avoiding the break-up of social relations and commitments made through these pacts.

- Conflicts declared between communities concerned by these pacts are usually calmed down through the intelligent intervention, know-how and knowledge of women forming these bonds.

<div align="center">Poem:</div>

Message: Woman, universal asset of peace and stability
Oh, ME, Woman, Woman just a Woman,
Oh, ME, Woman, Woman just a Woman, Wife of the king
Oh, ME, Woman, Woman just a Woman, mother of the king
Oh, ME, Woman, Woman just a Woman, sister of the king
Oh, ME, Woman, Woman just a Woman, mother, grandmother, sister of several kings
Oh, ME, Woman, Woman just a Woman, wife, mother of a woman or a man
Oh, ME, Woman, Woman just a Woman, mother, grandmother, sister, wife of a woman or a man
Oh, ME, Woman, Woman just a Woman, whether black or white, I carry the child
Oh, ME, Woman, Woman just a Woman, whether black or white, I give life in very difficult conditions
Oh, ME, Woman, Woman just a Woman, whether black or white, I guide the first steps in particularly difficult conditions

Oh, ME, Woman, Woman just a Woman, whether black or white, I educate in particularly difficult conditions

Oh, ME, Woman, Woman just a Woman, whether black or white, I feed in particularly difficult conditions

Oh, ME, Woman, Woman just a Woman, whether black or white, I protect in particularly difficult conditions the person dearest to me, my child, who will one day become the father or husband of another woman. Such is life.

Oh, ME, Woman, Woman just a Woman, whether black or white, I am or will become a generating institution of life and social cohesion, the basis of a social capital that I protect despite the current contingencies of internal conflict; which if I transmit successfully, despite the difficulties of modern life, I will contribute to the sustainable development of the African family, the African community and the whole continent.

So Me Woman, Woman just a Woman, wife of the king, mother of the king, sister of the king, mother, grandmother, sister of several kings, wife, mother of a woman or a man, Woman, Woman just a Woman, mother, grandmother, sister, wife of a man,

So, Me Woman, am I really aware of my power, of my capacity to save and protect <u>life and human life</u>? So why must I remain indifferent?

Why not take from our history and culture the traditional values of pacific coexistence to consolidate the development of my country??

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3.7 Traditional power and local governance: the case of Ghana (Emmanuel Kwesi Aning[34] & Prosper Nii Nortey Addo[35])

[Original English]

Introduction

This paper focuses specifically on the outline and objectives of the theme "*Capitalising on Conflict Prevention and Governance Endongenous Capacities Initiative*". It uses Ghana for its empirical case because of the argument posited that Ghana's experiences in using endogenous knowledge to prevent conflict, regulate socio-political issues and establish the parameters for governance are worthy of examination. This assertion is buttressed by the fact that Ghana's particular efforts in negotiating the potential dangers that could have arisen by applying a diarchy has in it potentials for conflict and disagreement. However, the manner in which the inherent tensions between modernity and tradition have been channelled and moulded to suit present day Ghanaian needs is worth of closer examination. Nevertheless, it is important to establish that in this paper, the concepts *traditional authority* and *tradition* as appears in the title will not be applied in the Weberian sense. We use traditional power to represent that special claim to legitimacy because the institutions that support such power structures are perceived to represent their people's history, culture, laws and values, religion and even remnants of pre-colonial sovereignty.

The above point is critical due to the tensions that may arise as a result of how traditional power is perceived. In Ghana, as will be shown briefly, traditional power has existed during pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. A critical point is to examine the methodologies that have been used to protect traditional power while concurrently making local governance processes constructive and functional in a modern state.

To that end, in following the outline presented, the paper seeks to do four things: first, identify endogenous capacities as regards governance; secondly, to discuss the mechanisms and strategies for conflict prevention; and thirdly, indicate what types of action are likely to capitalise on these strategies. Finally, the paper makes suggestions that can be translated into concrete actions.

Endogenous Capacities as regards governance

What does Ghana's experience show us in terms of local governance processes which are steeped in endogenous capacities? We argue that there is the need to deconstruct the meaning of the terms 'government', 'governance' and 'rural local governance'. According to Ray, (2002:9) 'government deals with the formal activities and political culture (including legitimacy) as designated by such formal state mechanisms as constitutions and legislation'. Furthermore, he posits that 'governance refers to government plus unofficial activities and culture (including legitimacy) not originally endorsed or rooted in the post-colonial state. He, therefore, concludes that the term local governance

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includes not only *'the rural local government structures, processes, and political activities and culture (including legitimacy) that are rooted in the colonial state and the post-colonial state, but also those rooted in the pre-colonial states and other pre-colonial political organisations'*.

This is a critical conceptualisation for understanding the underpinnings of traditional power and authority as it relates to local governance. Furthermore, these are power relations that are first and foremost founded on legitimacy and whose historical linkages pre-date colonialism and the establishment of modern states. What is critical about this conceptualisation is that it enables us to include chiefs (those who wield real traditional power in both rural and urban Ghana).[36] As a result, when in this paper we deal with traditional power, we are by extension referring to chiefs and all those who exercise legitimate traditional power in one form or the other. A potential role for such traditional power structures in the exercise of local governance processes has recently been recognised. According to the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF), it argued for the need to legitimise traditional leaders, and mobilise them to benefit local government. The CLGF then concluded that

Traditional leadership is afforded considerable credibility and functions in many local communities and that with the creation of appropriate mechanisms for their involvement, such leadership can assist in the realisation of development goals (1995:13)

In Ghana, there is a constitutional acceptance and awareness of the 'usefulness' to which chiefs, who wield traditional authority and power can be put and what role they can play in local governance. Because of the norm and values that these chiefs provide, it creates the context for 'the institutionalised local government structure and the perennial traditional authority structure' (Owusu-Sarpong, 2000). Owusu-Sarpong in explaining the duality between tradition and modernity in Ghana and how traditional authority and power impacts on local governance infuses concepts as divided legitimacy and sovereignty, political and legal pluralism and introduces the concept of 'resurgent heritage'. What is fascinating about this approach is that

'If the rural local government structures of the Ghanaian post-colonial state wants to reflect the true range of values of their citizens, then such structures need to recognise the reality that some of the attitudes that their citizens bring to the practice of democracy [and governance] is rooted in the pre-colonial period, and that the offices of traditional leaders are the survivors from that period' (2002:17).

It is because of this 'resurgent heritage' that this paper analyses the processes through which the modern Ghanaian state has dealt with and responded to this potentially dangerous resurgence and managed to co-exist in peace. To fully understand this marriage of convenience, the subsequent analyses will be based mainly on the constitutions and administrative processes of Ghana over the last thirty years.

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[36] A 'chief' is defined in the 1992 Republic of Ghana Constitution as "a person, who, hailing from the appropriate family and lineage, has been validly nominated, elected or selected and enstooled, enskinned or installed as a chief or queenmother in accordance with the relevant customary law and usage."

Traditional Power Structures and Conflict Management & Resolution Processes

A striking fundamental feature of Ghana for the last two decades has been the unprecedented scale and scope of low to medium intensity conflicts.[37] Since January 2001 alone, a number of conflicts – cross-cutting environmental, religious, social and economic issues – have been consistently reported in the Ghanaian media but not dealt with and responded to in any consistent manner by the established conflict management and resolution institutions. While there is a fair understanding of the immediate causal factors that lead to dormant conflicts exploding, neither the *root causes* nor the *triggers* of these conflicts have been understood in detail.

While there is an increase in all forms of conflict, there is a corresponding lack of a national conflict management policy and an effective institutionalised framework for dealing with such conflicts and the threats that they pose, leads to a dangerously *ad hoc* and *uncoordinated* approach to the management of conflicts. Such *ad hocism* leaves far too many conflicts unresolved and in danger of escalation.

Key among conflict types found in Ghana, and which should be responded to by these institutions are: chieftaincy disputes, struggles over access to and distribution of land and the multiple dynamics fuelling ethnic and religious conflicts. Added also are cultural and perceptual conflicts.

There is a caveat though: While chieftaincy disputes seem to have engaged the national conscience for the past couple of months, it is important to note that an exclusively narrow focus on chieftaincy disputes is not only stereotypical but does distort and obscure the broader causes of conflicts dealing with resources, 'ethnic' and other local concepts of citizenship, belonging and historical memories.

This section of the paper discusses the conflict management structures in Ghana within the context of 'resurgent heritage' and the capacity and capability of traditional institutions and authority to respond to and ameliorate tensions through local governance structures in the light of the increasing preponderance of conflicts in Ghana. What are popular conceptions of traditional authority?

- That all power and authority derive from the people;
- They are the embodiment of traditional values and norms; and
- Form a linkage with the past and the future. Thus, the traditional attributes are:

    Osagyefoo (the conqueror)
    Odayefoo (doctor of medicine, healer)
    Dasebre (the one who wants to thank him will get tired)
    Paapa (father to all)

If these are popular conceptions about the wielders of traditional power and authority, then what has been the relationship between the modern Ghanaian state and traditional centre of authority and power?

Different Ghanaian governments have had different approaches to:

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[37] We conceptually differentiate between these levels of conflicts in terms of battle-related deaths per year.

… Find[ing] the optimum relationship with traditional authority, often by adjusting formally the governmental powers and authority that the post-colonial state believed it was granting to traditional leaders. These adjustments were formally manifested through a variety of legislative and constitutional instruments ranging from ordinances and laws to constitutions. Also, the post-colonial state in Ghana has attempted in part to incorporate traditional leaders by creating the House of Chiefs system which operates from the national or state level through to the regions and localities (Ray, 2002:88).

In spite of these constitutional processes, it cannot be denied that the overwhelming share of sovereignty, power and authority is vested in the Ghanaian state. It, however, accepts that traditional leaders also hold considerable amounts and types of legitimacy, authority and influence.

Ghana's conflict management and resolution processes thus straddle these dual power relations between the *modern state* (comprising political structures) and *traditional councils* (made up of chiefs, traditional leaders and elders of the community and opinion leaders among others) at the local government level. Disputes or conflicts arising within a local community which falls under a traditional area and under a local chief is brought to his attention, when the aggrieved parties fail to resolve the conflict or dispute.

Given that the chief is considered as the embodiment of the culture, norms and values of his subjects, and granted that a chief's judgement is rarely fallible and backed by the 'spirit of the ancestors', his intervention and judgement remains sacrosanct. This traditional mediation process has stood the test of time through the pre-colonial days to the current post-colonial dispensation.

This notwithstanding, corrupt practices within the chieftaincy institution and the negative impact of modernity and its values on traditional values, norms and practices have greatly undermined the concept of 'resurgent heritage' and its tendency to elicit allegiance from subjects to their chiefs. Hence, chiefs either engage in disputes between and among themselves or between them and their subjects, necessitating the need to seek recourse at the 'higher powers' that be.

With the creation of the House of Chiefs system under Article 270 (Chapter 22) of the 1992 Republic of Ghana Constitution, unresolved conflicts or disputes at the local or community level, goes beyond the local government level through the districts to the paromouncy (where the paramount chiefs presides and mediate) at the Regional House of Chiefs, the National House of Chiefs (represented by five paramount chiefs from each of the ten regions in Ghana) and finally the Supreme Court.

The traditional conflict management and resolution process is complemented by District Security Councils (DISEC), Regional Security Councils (REGSEC) and National Security Council (NSC). These respective Councils are chaired by the District Chief Executive, the Regional Minister and the President of the Republic or whoever he designates.

Thus, aside from the political structures put in place to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts, the traditional power structures at the local government levels are meant to, complement state structures within the conflict response or management spectrum in Ghana.

This credible traditional conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms, backed by a 'resurgent heritage' that is still acknowledged and respected at all levels of society, therefore, requires a national conflict management policy, an effective and reinforced institutionalised framework and a more permanent and coordinated approach to the management of conflicts in Ghana.

Negotiating the modern-traditional chasm: local governance issues

How then have respective governments in the post-colonial state attempted to negotiate the chasm between tradition and modernity? In the immediate post-independence period, the Nkrumah regime continued with British policy and enacted both the 1961 Chieftaincy Act and the 1963 Chieftaincy (amendment) Act which strengthened the powers of the state over traditional power bases. The overthrow of Nkrumah and the accession to power of the NLC saw the withdrawal of recognition from several chiefs. Subsequently, the Second Republic of Kofi Abrefa Busia actively intervened in the determination of traditional authority status. Although the constitution recognised chiefs under Article 153, through a manipulative administrative procedure, government still had authority over who was to be chief and recognised as such. In 1972, the NRC took over power but kept the 1971 Chieftaincy Act Article 23 which vested the recognition of chiefs in the state.

There was, however, a radical change in state perception of the uses to which traditional power and authority could be put within the context of local governance in the 1979 Constitution. In this constitution, Article 177 did not only guarantee the chieftaincy institution but also specified that Parliament had no authority to confirm or withdraw recognition from a traditional ruler. This marked policy shift then vested authority in the Houses of Chiefs, which was expected to act in accordance with customary law and usage.

After the Jerry Rawlings coup d'etat in 1981, the general tenets of this law was maintained but had to be revised in 1985 as a result of the rising spate of chieftaincy conflicts. As a result, the Chieftaincy (Amendment) Law, 1985 (PNDCL 107) was promulgated which recognised chiefs only after their names had been gazetted. Subsequently in 1987, the Chieftaincy (Membership of Regional Houses of Chiefs (Amendment) Instrument (LI 1348) was promulgated. Eventually, the 1989 Chieftaincy (Specified Areas) (Prohibition and Abatement of Chieftaincy Proceedings) Law (PNDCL 212) sought 'in the interest of peace and public order' controlled any chieftaincy issue that could create disturbances. The 1992 Fourth Republic Constitution had many correlations to the 1979 constitution in that Article 270 prevents parliament from meddling in chieftaincy affairs.

Thus, the relationship between the political and traditional power structures in governance at the local government level have evolved gradually from the state of rivalry characterised by divided legitimacy and sovereignty to that of cooperation and coexistence in meeting the needs of citizens. This is not to say, however, that no such rivalries exists anymore, but the recognition given to, and the clear definition of the role of the traditional power structures as against the political structures by the 1992 constitutional provisions, have greatly enhanced and improved upon the existing chasm, especially in the decision-making processes and local governance issues. The calibration of this sometimes tense but manageable relationship have contributed to shaping local government policies and activities, as well as managing disputes whenever they occur.

Relevance of Traditional Power in Local Governance

How does traditional power and authority structure contribute to local governance processes? According to Ray (2002:102), 'traditional leaders have been involved in rural and urban local government right from the start of the colonial state through to the present in the post-colonial state. The *degree* and *nature* of that involvement of traditional leaders in rural and urban local government has varied considerably, but it has continued'. The critical question though is what form and shape has this involvement taken? The following section discusses the manner in which traditional authority and power is now recognised in Ghana to perform particular local government functions.

In the 1992 Fourth Republican Constitution, the House of Chiefs consists of three levels of authority: the National House of Chiefs, the 10 regional houses of Chiefs and the more than 160 traditional councils at the district and sub-district level.

As argued earlier, the National House of Chiefs was established in 1971 by an Act of Parliament (The Chieftaincy Act, 1971, Act 370) and repeated in the 1992 constitution under Chapter 22, Articles 270 - 273.

Under this constitution, seven major functions are given to the House of Chiefs. First, this is to act as an advisory body to the state including all government bodies under the constitution that 'deal with any matter relating to or affecting chieftaincy'; Secondly, it is to develop and codify a unified system of customary law and also codify the rules of succession for every chieftaincy institution in Ghana; Thirdly, it is empowered by the constitution to evaluate traditional social practice in terms of determining which customary practices are outmoded and socially harmful and also to develop and implement strategies to eliminate such harmful practices; Fourthly, should determine those who should be chiefs; Fifth, making final decisions on chieftaincy issues; Sixth, undertake various tasks that Parliament refers to the House. It has the mandate to advise the House but also carry out actions as Parliament requests; and seventh, chooses members to represent them on various governing bodies like the Council of State. Judicial Committees have also been put in place to assist the House of Chiefs in their jurisdiction on chieftaincy and other relevant issues.

Given the prominence and importance of chieftaincy institutions in local government processes, chiefs are not allowed by the 1992 Constitution to take part in active politics but can only do so when they abdicate their 'stool' or 'skin'. The rationale in this regard is to reinforce the role of chiefs as custodians who are expected to be impartial and neutral in their governance, as well as serve as personalities who unify rather than cause division among their subjects.

Issuing from this constitutional provisions, traditional councils and for that matter chiefs in particular, have played various prominent roles beyond chieftaincy issues in the development of communities and the traditional areas over which they govern. The current practice in this respect are for chiefs to undertake specific thematic projects aimed at creating employment avenues, establishing educational funds for the underprivileged, and generally developing communities through other developmental activities or projects. In two of such instances, two prominent chiefs, Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II and Okyehene Osagyefuo Amoatia Oforipanin have established an educational fund (for the under privileged) and an environmental protection scheme/HIV AIDS awareness programme respectively for the benefit of their communities.

These initiatives complement and build upon local government activities at the various districts and regions in Ghana.

Recommendations/Conclusion

Traditional power structures in Ghana have undoubtedly stood the test of time through the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era, backed by the values, norms and practices handed down from one generation to the other. The strengthening of state over traditional power bases during colonial and post-colonial eras, however, succeeded in usurping part of the power, authority and legitimacy that traditional power structures wielded in pre-colonial times.

This notwithstanding, the concept of 'resurgent heritage' has translated the chasm between political and traditional power structures into a 'marriage of convenience', reflected in the role given to traditional power structures in local governance in the 1992 Constitution, and the non-interference of the legislature in the confirmation or the withdrawal of recognition from a traditional leader.

These developments have engendered the prominent role of the traditional councils and institutions in conflict prevention, management and resolution processes, as well as promoted local governance through a mix of local customs and traditions (mainly unofficial processes) and official or state-led mechanisms and process.

Given, however, that some challenges still remain in terms of rivalries between the traditional power structures on the one hand, and state and traditional power structures on the other, *traditional power and local governance* has not been the best. Some recommendations are made to first, enhance and improve upon endogenous capacities in conflict prevention, socio-political regulation and governance, and secondly, intensify and make coordination between the two power relations more effective for more credible local governance in the country. This is intended to contribute to adapting governance strategies and principles in the socio-cultural and West African policy context.

First, traditional power structures exist and gain their recognition and legitimacy from both subjects and the state through the Constitution. However, numerous conflicts within traditional councils, and by extension chieftaincy institutions, have undermined the functions and effectiveness of these traditional power structures especially at the local government level. Hence the National and the Regional House of Chiefs should take concrete steps towards building capacity within their research outlets to facilitate an efficient evaluation of the entire chieftaincy system. This should focus on the root causes of the numerous chieftaincy disputes and practical ways of resolving these disputes (possibly through an alternative dispute resolution system).[38] An effort in this direction will lead to addressing the intractable chieftaincy disputes and other root causes of conflicts likely to destabilise activities at the local government and eventually national levels.

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[38] A conflict vulnerability assessment study undertaken in Ghana by the African Security Dialogue and Research, a security think tank, in 2003 revealed that over 250 chieftaincy disputes exists in all forms and at various stages of eruption if not properly managed.

Secondly, the lack of documentation or codification of local norms, values and practices has impacted negatively on the institutional memory and tradition or cultures in Ghana. This has in a way facilitated the manipulation of laid down values, norms and practices by influential and ill-intentioned individuals in the various communities in the country. Hence the various House of Chiefs should begin, or improve upon existing initiatives in this regard to rectify this problem.

Thirdly, there is the need to institutionalise the traditional ad *hoc* conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms into a much more structured and permanent process by keeping records of judgements and agreements reached during mediation processes. This can feed into future peace-making processes and also clarify misunderstandings over crucial agreements brokered between ancestors.

Fourthly, state and traditional power structures should begin to engage more and coordinate their activities to avoid rivalry on issues of legitimacy, sovereignty and political and legal pluralism. These undermine decision-making process and retards progress in the local government areas. Members of Parliament/District Chief Executives and traditional leaders (mainly chiefs) should not only co-exist but cooperate and join resources in areas of commonality with regard to community development. This will avoid duplication and waste and rather reinforce developmental activities in the area.

Finally, the state, though an abstraction, has the final authority and jurisdiction over the territorial confines of the country. This attribute should thus be construed as a positive tool for bridging the chasm that exists between *modernity* and *tradition*, by reinforcing the role of the traditional power structures and avoiding unnecessary interferences in chieftaincy matters. Local governments play a crucial role in the success of the entire governing structure of a country, and this will only be made possible by a credible nexus between all state and traditional power structures.

3.8 *Traditional power and local governance: the Nigerian experience (Momoh Lawani Yesufu[39], Ph.D. fwc)*

[Original English]

Introduction

This workshop on "Capitalising on Prevention and Governance Indigenous Capacities Initiative" is timely, particularly coming at a time the world is "…finding answers to the old question of how best to manage and mitigate conflict over language, religion, culture and ethnicity…" (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2004:v). I am highly appreciative of the honour given to me to provide a Keynote Paper as a way of contributing to finding ways to be pro-active on security issues and governance demands in the African sub region. My paper is on the theme: "Traditional Power and Local Governance: The Nigerian Experience". The purpose of traditional power and local governance is to improve the well being of the people at the grass root with the hope that in totality, there will be development in the areas of longer life expectancy at birth, higher literate adult population and good standard of living based on the performance of Gross Domestic Product per capita in the nation.

This paper therefore posits that positive initiative at the local level to solve issues of security and social welfare could yield vital dividend, particularly when traditional power is not eroded. Where things are not done in orderly and stable manner the likelihood is the loss of shared norms and values. These losses could generate conflict leading to under development and insecurity in the society. Traditional power comes from a social position occupied by an individual within a given locality. As is usually the case, such power could come out of status associated with biological factors in the case of male, or female, among others. Fixed status exists in Nigeria like any other part of the world.

Conceptualising Traditional Power and Governance

Power is a subset in social relationships. Its application is most often limited to the acceptance of its actions as legitimate and lawful by the subjects. Traditional society is impinged on all facets of the people's life; namely: mode of dressing, food, marriage, religion, and governance, among others. Those who ensure that people adhere to the traditional behaviour must have the people's power to do so. The acceptance of traditional power in any society is therefore based on trust and accountability. From a sociological perspective, power could be used in two forms known as authority and coercion. Authority is accepted by majority of people as legitimate and lawful. Coercion on the other hand is power viewed as not legitimate by "those subject to it" (Haralambos, 1995:98). In spite of lack of its legitimacy, people might still obey such coercive power as authority to avoid punishment or torture until they can have a way out.

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In the Nigerian traditional setting, power is one of the facilitators for getting things done and for solving social problems within the community. It is also what provides authority for decisions taken within the traditional ambit on individual issues or collective interest within the locality. Apart from human beings, a fruit like the 'Kola Nut' has been and is being used by Nigerians as an element of power in solving problems at local level and as a unifying factor in social relationships. At local level, issues like friendships, inter-marriages and inter-community quarrels are easily dealt with using "Kola Nuts".

Governance

On the other hand for governance at any level to be regarded as good, it must work towards the resolution of economic and social problems. It must raise the quality of life of the people. In other words, whether the governance is at Federal, State or Local level, the fundamental issue must be the building of states where most needs of the people are possible based on individual's talent and competence. This is in spite of the fact that such government may not take care of all desirables within a short time except the provision of relatively guaranteed economy and security for the well being of the populace.

Historical Perspectives of Traditional Institutions

Learning from history is very important since it allows policy makers to "use the experience, whether remote or recent, in the process of deciding what to do today about the prospect of tomorrow" (Neustadt and May, 1988:xxii). This is where given the historical perspectives of the traditional institutions become very relevant. The traditional institution's existence and influence at governance level dates back to history. It exists with its own various style of governance based on the peoples' customs and tradition. It is similarly based on the concept of assimilation where citizenship inclusiveness is the norm. Since its existence is at the local level of governance, it has to be accepted by their subjects to produce positive results. It should therefore not be surprising that during the British era, traditional rulers were used to govern the people. This was popularly called the 'indirect rule' system of government, a system that existed up to Nigeria's independence in 1960.

After the attainment of independence, these traditional institutions initially had parallel lines with those voted into political power (offices) using the results of votes cast based on the universal adult suffrage. The future does not always follow the blind. In this arrangement, there were Houses of Chiefs and the National and State Assemblies based on the adopted Westminster Parliamentary form of government. This was the arrangement up to the adoption of the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Report of the Political Bureau (1987:76) observed that such a system was "cheaper to run and less sophisticated for a developing country like Nigeria". In particular, the system to them, appeared to have allowed room for "consensus politics" unlike the "…confrontational politics under the executive presidential system" (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1987:76). Since 1979, Nigeria chose to operate the executive presidential system at three on (Federal, State and Local Government) levels of governance. These 3 tiers constitute democratic governance institutions in Nigeria.

At this point it might be more appropriate to explain how the traditional rulers that exercise the traditional powers at local level are perceived. Who is a traditional ruler? To be a traditional ruler, one must be a person who through virtue of ancestry is allowed to occupy the throne or such office of an area. Similarly, one must have been appointed to it in accordance with the custom and tradition of the area by the Kingmakers and ratified by government. Before the colonial era, the offices were sovereign powers but down graded to mere exercise of power and influence. In their original concept of sovereign powers, the colonialist had to fight to dismantle these empires, caliphates and kingdoms they met. For example, the Benin Empire, which had spread up to the People's Republic of Benin, Delta areas and Lagos State respectively, was one of such empires where they fought and banished the "Oba" so as to take effective control of the situation. Their purpose was to install a system to serve their interest. During their era, the traditional ruler's specific roles were both executive and judicial. In modern Nigeria, traditional rule has stood the test of time and transcends political and military regimes. However, such powers have gone through stages of power reduction from sovereign to advisory role only.

Traditional Power

Traditional power is an authority exercised by traditional rulers. The acquisition of such power was initially through inheritance only, but due to politics of free association and agitation, the governments at various States level used the demand to create Chiefdoms stools according to the customs and traditions of the people seeking for self-determination at traditional level. The new creations of chiefdoms have severely down graded each traditional power's areas of influence. This is in addition to being the custodian of the people's culture, norms and traditions. In any way, not too many people can blame the government for such new creation considering that "…governments are more effective when they listen to citizens and work in partnership with them in deciding and implementing policy" on any issue that affects the people's welfare (World Bank, 1997:10). As earlier noted, it is important to state that the Nigerian State recognises their roles as advisory in the political system, particularly at the local government level of the 3 tier levels of governance.

Usage of Traditional Power

Power of the ruler and rulers cabinets have been used and still being used to:

a. Carryout conciliatory, traditional police functions and authority in same judicial matters.

b. Accept to settle subjects for peace through:
   i. Listening and hearing phase.
   ii. Evidence from others on issue to be settled.
   iii. Giving judgement and possible compensation.
   iv. Usage of dances and meals to celebrate peace in the community.

This method which is based on the author's personal experience as an Agbede Prince is further reinforced by Imobighe's (2003) position. He observed that "…different communities in Nigeria have their various traditional methods of managing conflict through the use of traditional rulers, council of chiefs, council of elders, prominent individuals within the affected society and age group systems" in other to achieve peace (Imobighe, 2003:293). It is logical therefore to say that outside local peculiarities, that the same or similar methods for achieving peace are being used in other parts of Nigeria.

The other traditional role is trying to encourage constant dialogue from family level through ward head and street head to ruler ship cabinet-in-council levels in the community. An example of such use of dialogue was the one on marriage brought before the Ward Head by two suitors asking for the hand of a girl in marriage; one of them was hard working and had the dowry to pay while the other without job wanted loan to pay his dowry. After the listening and hearing and evidence phases, the Ward Head and his ward members-in-council decided that in the interest of peace and stable family system came to the conclusion that the jobless suitor was playing the role of the devil and therefore advice to stay clear and allow the person who can look after a wife to marry the girl. The fact is that when there is relative peace at various communities, the State and the country will have peace. Traditional power provides local authority for listening and responding to people's interests and security, especially those affecting the minorities and the poor. Like the saying in Edo, "those who can talk to the 'Oba' have no garments and caps to wear," as a reason why they cannot be seen or heard.

Assimilation at the Traditional Level

Where assimilation concept is allowed, there is constant peace is place. Assimilation at the local level has led to inter marriages, trust in businesses, facilities that are common to all such as schools, dispensaries and people's town hall. The people of Edo, Ekiti and Sokoto States are good examples in this case. As a teacher who has taught at three top military (National War College and Armed Forces Staff College) and civil (National Institute for Policy & Strategic Studies) institutions in Nigeria, I have had the opportunity to visit not less than twenty states on study tours in the last twelve years. I found the peoples of those states to be very accommodating in that those who come to settle in these areas (states) for business were given lands to build their houses. They were also allowed to elect their leaders who attend either ward, or Palace meetings, where the community issues are discussed and problems resolved. They were also co-opted to participate during the phases/stages of reconciliation. By so doing, immigrants who by their actions, behaviour and responsibility who elect to stay were accepted as members of the community. Arrival of visitors are promptly report to authority and in particular, when there are strangers in town from the communities of these dual citizens, the first port of call is the residence of the street head who will in turn report visitors' presence within the community to His Royal Highness and the Cabinet-in-Council. One way or the other the populace is informed. This same method is also being applied in other states like Kano and Borno respectively.

Traditional Language

The official language in Nigeria is English but traditional languages are taught to members of various communities from generation to generation. Language is a form of group identity. It can allow families to communicate without others outside the community understanding what is being discussed or said. Psychologically, it makes people feel belong. It acts as a unifying factor within the community. At a time in Nigerian's history, particularly during the civil war, understanding and speaking traditional language was a life saving phenomenon for intelligence gathering. The language of the talking drum is also used as a power of communication to achieve peace at local level.

Local Government

Local government is the third tier of government in Nigeria. By the Nigerian Constitution, those holding political offices at this level must be democratically elected by the people at their local government areas. Sadly, government at State levels have not allowed this to happen. Instead, they hand pick Chairmen for the council that most often are not representing the people but the governor's interest. They then call them Sole administrators instead of the officially designated title of Executive Chairman in line with the Presidential system of government. Considering the enormous functions for the Local government, the people must be allowed to select their representatives for peace to reign. Additionally, using the authority they have within the local government, the people must be mobilised to be security conscious at all times.

Functions of Local Government

The functions of a local government council in Nigeria as specified in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (Fourth Schedule, Section 7, pp. A 1088-A1090) are:

a. The consideration and the working of recommendations to a State Commission on economic planning or any similar body on:
   i. The economic development of the State, particularly in so far as the areas of authority of the council and of the State are affected, and
   ii. Proposal made by the said commission or body.
b. Collection of rates, radio and television licences.
c. Establishment and maintenance of cemeteries, burial grounds and homes for the destitute or infirm.
d. Licensing of bicycles, trucks (other than mechanically propelled trucks), canoes, wheelbarrows and carts.
e. Establishment maintenance and regulation of slaughterhouses, slaughter slabs, markets, motor parks and public conveniences.
f. Construction and maintenance of roads, streets, street lightings, drains and other public highways, parks, gardens, open spaces, or such public facilities as may be prescribed from time to time by the House of Assembly of a State.
g. Naming of roads and streets and numbering of houses.
h. Provision and maintenance of public conveniences, sewage and refuse disposal.
i. Registration of all births, death and marriages.
j. Assessment of privately owned houses or tenements for the purpose of levying such rates as may be prescribed by the House of Assembly of State.
k. Control and regulation of:
   i. Cent-door advertising and hoarding.
   ii. Movement and keeping of pets of all description.
   iii. Shops and Kiosks.
   iv. Restaurants, bakeries and other places for sale of food to the public.
   v. Laundries;
   vi. Licensing, regulation and control of the sale of liquor.

l. In addition to above mentioned functions, a local government council is further authorised constitutionally to participate with the State Government in:
    i.   The provision and maintenance of primary, adult and vocational education;
    ii. The development of agriculture, and natural resources, other than the exploitation of minerals.
    iii. Such other functions, which the State House of Assembly may confer on a local government crucial.

By these functions, a democratically controlled local government is a strong base for sustainable development. The 1999 Constitution stated clearly that, "function" includes power and duty (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999:1042). This tends to support all the functions outlined above but their implementations are being constantly checkmated by State Governments who do not allow democratic elections to take place at this level and at the same time collect taxes and revenues due to the local authority. Apart from the loss of revenue in the process, there is also lack of grass root support for the Executives so hand picked. Similarly, these actions create massive unemployment which makes the youth to be ready recruits for conflicts. As a preventive measure, the areas of conflict between the State and local government will require Constitutional amendment to correct. Bills need to be forwarded to National Assembly as necessary to enable them amend the Nigerian Constitution accordingly.

Street Naming and Numbering of Houses as Security Preventive Measure

As a preventive measure, we examine as an example, one of the functions of a Local government in the area of street and house numbering. In 2001, Nigeria postal service introduced postcodes for various towns, villages and cities. While such postcode is to assist the sorting of mails and speedy delivery, the local governments in Nigeria have not really performed their role in this aspect. By this we mean the performance of functions of numbering houses and the naming of streets and roads within their areas of responsibilities. Executing this aspect will help in security watch and preventive measures. For example, a tenant moving from one house to another will change landlords, use transport to move his/her properties and perhaps even transfer land line telephone and effect a change of address for energy and water bills. The number of people involved in the process, coupled with the documentation done, will make it easy to track him/her should there be any increase in security problems within the new area of residence.

Debt Burden

Debt burden is becoming a major obstacle to development in Nigeria, particularly at grass root level. Without service delivery to the people, conflict prevention effort at any level will be naught. Nigeria's external debt burden as percentage of the DGP as at 2000 is 86.4(%). This is a major drain on Nigeria's resources that could have been used to provide social services and job generation to the people.

Table 1 — Nigeria's External Public Debt Outstanding (N million)

Year	Total Debt	GDP at Current Market Prices	Total Debt as % of GDP
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
1970	175.0	5,203.7	3.4
1975	349.9	21,558.8	1.6
1980	1,866.8	50,848.6	3.7
1985	17,300.6	72,355.4	23.9
1990	298,614.4	260,636.7	114.6
1995	716.865.6	1,960,700.0	36.6
2000	3,121,725.8	3,614,280.0	86.4

Note: This is apart from the internal public debt, which is also 24.9% of total GDP in 2000.

Sources: Central Bank of Nigeria. (2000). Statistical Bulleting Volume 11, No. 2. p 101; Central Bank of Nigeria. (2001). Annual Report and State of Accounts for the Year Ended 31st December 2001, Abuja: CBN, p. 123.

Table 1 shows how this debt burden has grown over the years since 1970 which was barely 10 years after Nigeria's independence. The campaign for debt forgiveness may not be the only way forward. There is need for the money either stolen or moved to banks in the developed countries to be repatriated as a way of helping Nigerian government to fight corruption as outlined in the "NEEDS" document.

Gender Role

The role of male is assumed to be different from that of female in a traditional society. It could be for this reason that boys use to farm and fetch firewood while the girls will fetch water and cook food for the family. Except for few examples like that of Emotan of Benin who sacrifice her life for peace in Benin Kingdom and Queen Amina of "Zauzau" who occupied traditional power, such office, particularly in Africa is mostly reserved for the male (the Prince) and not for the female Princess. In recent times, women have been made traditional rulers, a case in point is that of Akure (Princess) Regent. Similarly, they are also becoming senior members of the traditional councils of chiefs. An example that readily comes to mind is that of Ibadan in Oyo State where the succession process for the women is very smooth and conflict free. In that State, they have equally become a factor in the political equation of the state. To prevent or reduce conflict in gender roles, there is the need to strengthen the local level institution for women advocacy. This is particularly relevant in Nigeria where the household headed by female is on the average, 17% in 2004 (National Population Commission, 2004). This ratio, which is based on 24 States average out of 37, is less than what the female's house hold head is (58.5 to 66.4 males) in 1996 (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004:96).

Conclusion and Recommendations

For the people to benefit from traditional power management and local government, those in authority must endeavour to win the trust and commitment of most of the people in the local government area. The people must be mobilised to be security conscious at all times.

A Local government Chief Executive taking up leadership positions should be democratically elected and not hand picked by state governors. He must have a vision that involve strategic change based on joint forces of the elected, the traditional rulers and the community to map out how to deliver services based on set out council policies. Participation as a priority will provide better service delivery based on diverse perspectives. These are the recommended mechanism to be put in place as preventive measures for conflict management and for effective devolution of decision-making to the grass root. This will also allow for better service delivery to the people.

Two other areas for reforms include the need for government recognition of the existence and adoption of traditional model in conflict prevention in Nigeria. Similarly, since the traditional rulers are paid from public funds, their functions need to be included in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 through amendment.

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