

## Special Thematic Section on "Decolonizing Psychological Science"

# Stages of Colonialism in Africa: From Occupation of Land to Occupation of Being

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### Abstract

This paper draws primarily on my own scholarship, supplemented by the limited academic resources available in the "peripheries" of the world where I live and work (namely, Somali society and Darfur, Sudan), to consider the relationship between colonialism and psychology. I first consider the history of psychology in justifying and bolstering oppression and colonialism. I then consider the ongoing intersection of colonialism and psychology in the form of metacolonialism (or coloniality). I end with thoughts about decolonizing psychological science in teaching, social, and clinical practice. To decolonize psychological science, it is necessary to transform its focus from promotion of individual happiness to cultivation of collective well-being, from a concern with instinct to promotion of human needs, from prescriptions for adjustment to affordances for empowerment, from treatment of passive victims to creation of self-determining actors, and from globalizing, top-down approaches to context-sensitive, bottom-up approaches. Only then will the field realize its potential to advance Frantz Fanon's call for humane and just social order.

**Keywords:** coloniality, decolonial, metacolonialism, Franz Fanon, Africa

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When the editors invited me to contribute an article to the special section of JSPP devoted to decolonizing psychological science, I jumped at the opportunity to do so. The article presents me an opportunity to join in academic discussion on the psychology of oppression to which I was an early contributor (Bulhan, 1985b), but which I had abandoned for more urgent and focused work on trauma treatment, conflict resolution, and social reconstruction in the widely publicized Somali disaster and the Darfur conflict (see Bulhan, 2008; 2013a, 2013b).

With no access to libraries or viable internet links to journals, I have worked mostly in isolation to make the best of a dilemma that an individual of my background encounters. The dilemma is this: either to stay in academic centers in the West and obtain the most current information, but remain practically irrelevant to African needs; or to jump into actual frontiers of oppression in Africa and work toward change, but become cut off from academic circles and resources. Given my choice of the latter option, I therefore do not know how much I can contribute to

an ongoing academic discourse that has developed while I worked and lived in “peripheries” distant from Western academia centers. However, my current work and life in Africa affords me the possibility to *under-stand*—i.e., to comprehend from *below*—how the colonized peoples in these distant peripheries live, rather than speculate about them from lofty heights of academia abroad. I want to share here some of the benefits I gained from this *under-standing* of colonial heritage while I worked and lived in Africa during the past sixteen years.

Psychology, like all other disciplines and human endeavors, has emerged, developed, and today operates in economic, political, social, and cultural contexts. Neglect of these contexts by establishment psychologists—and their role in oppression generally and European colonialism particularly—has been one of the hidden and not often recognized dangers of a discipline that claims to specialize in the science of the mind and behavior.<sup>1</sup> Decolonizing psychological science cannot therefore proceed unless we first understand the history of colonialism—the precedents instigating it, its underlying motivations, the transformations it has undergone, and the consequences that followed. I review in this article not only the history of colonialism, but also how establishment psychology continually maintained symbiotic and mutually supportive relations with colonialism. I first highlight the origin and early stages of colonialism, before focusing later on its contemporary form that I call *metacolonialism* because it shows that colonialism did not end; on the contrary, colonialism in its metacolonial form continues to influence the thought, behavior, and being of colonized peoples even more than did earlier forms of colonialism. I conclude with proposals for decolonizing psychology.

## Colonialism and Coloniality

Colonialism in its classical form began in the Americas with European invasion, occupation, and exploitation (Quijano, 2000). Its driving motivation was and is not only pursuit of material exploitation and cultural domination, but also European self-aggrandizement to compensate for gnawing doubts on the wholeness and integrity of the self that, in different ways and intensity, assail people everywhere. Colonialism from the very beginning was therefore economic, political, cultural, and psychological. Its economic and political motives were most obvious at the beginning; the cultural and psychological motives integral to it all along became more intense and manifest later. Moreover, the fallout of colonialism is multiple and pervasive; its development and expansion affected the thought, behavior, and generally the life of colonized peoples. The methods and agents of colonialism changed, as did its primary foci of assault.

Colonialism is often misunderstood or narrowly defined. Some mistakenly confine it to either a geographic area or an era. Others, convinced that colonialism is outmoded and passé, view it a system no longer operative in Africa and generally in the world. Still others narrow it to a system imposed by and serving only inhabitants and descendants of Europe, ignoring that colonialism would not succeed or sustain in the past and present without local collaborators, minions, and conveyor belts essential for all forms of oppression to take root and persist. No wonder then that discussion on colonialism turned stale in Africa during the last several decades after most African countries attained independence. Euphoria swept through the African continent before and soon after African territories hoisted flags, sang national anthems, and celebrated the rise of African leaders to power. Africans believed then that the Europeans had left for good, that therefore Africans could move forward unhindered to enjoy the freedom and prosperity they thought in immediate grasp. This was not so. The euphoria and rising expectation soon gave way to disappointment and despair because colonialism left behind enduring

legacies—including not only political and economic, but also cultural, intellectual, and social legacies—that keep alive European domination.

A critical legacy of colonialism not sufficiently analyzed is the way formerly colonized peoples acquire knowledge, understand their history, comprehend their world, and define themselves. Latin American scholars (e.g. [Dussel, 1985, 1996](#); [Mignolo, 2000a, 2000b](#); [Quijano, 2000](#)) have presented fascinating analyses on colonized ways of knowing, behaving, and being. Particularly valuable contributions of these Latin American scholars are the concepts of *coloniality*, *coloniality of power*, and *colonial difference*. These concepts illuminate not only economic and political consequences of colonialism, but also the Eurocentric epistemology, ontology, and ideology emanating from, supporting, and validating European monopoly of power, hegemonic knowledge, distorted truth, and deformed being of the colonized. Their writings emphasize that colonialism is not identical or coterminous to coloniality. The former refers to political and economic relations by which one nation dominates and exploits another; the latter denotes enduring patterns of power as well as a way of thinking and behaving that emerged from colonialism but survived long after its seeming demise. [Mignolo \(2000a, 2000b, 2003\)](#) in particular underscores that coloniality rests on epistemic and ontological biases that promote validation of European hegemony and superiority while invalidating, marginalizing, and eroding the knowledge, experience, and rights of colonized peoples (see also [Alcoff, 2007](#); [Maldonado-Torres, 2007](#)). We cannot understand well why the quest for African freedom and expected prosperity did not materialize after independence unless we understand the historical precedents that gave rise to colonialism, its social and intellectual foundation, its enduring as well as changing aspects, and the cascading disasters that followed.

Discussing the multifaceted, complex, and paramount problems of colonialism can be of necessity brief and sketchy in an article such as this. I highlight below the antecedents of colonialism and quickly review early forms of it before the emergence and lingering on of metacolonialism, the latest and most pervasive of colonialism.

## Antecedents of Colonialism in Africa

I mention here three antecedents of the adversarial and exploitative violence of colonialism for succeeding generations.

### Crusades

The material greed, cultural domination, and self-aggrandizement characteristic of European colonization—as well as the use of religion and racism to justify the pillage and massacre of non-Europeans—are evident in the Crusades. The Crusades started in 1095 when Pope Urban II appealed to all Christians to defend the Eastern Orthodox Christians against Muslims, liberate Jerusalem, and enable Christian pilgrims' safe passage. This was the stated goal; an unstated goal was that the Catholic Church, then the most powerful and wealthiest institution in Europe, faced pressure from competing kings and warlords who threatened the Church's hegemonic authority and land monopoly in Europe. Similarly, European kings sought to unify their people and enlarge their power by joining the Crusades against Muslims. The European public too found opportunity for personal wealth and glory in the pillage of Muslims. They believed the Pope's promise of forgiving their sins if they killed Muslims. They thought that they would return to Europe with a clean slate from sin, wealthy and glorious (see [Graham, 2006](#), for a succinct account).

In short, the diverse motives for the Crusades included desires for power, wealth, spiritual salvation, personal glory, and especially a need to construct coherent European identities against an external and convenient enemy.

The massacre and pillage of Muslims and Jews alike during the Crusades unified Europeans with the myth of superior race waging a “just war” on behalf of God.

### Colonization of the Americas

The colonization of the Americas subsequently offered Europeans new opportunities for material exploitation, cultural domination, and self-aggrandizement through claims of religious and racial superiority (see Quijano, 2000). Not only did the distinction between Europeans and Non-Europeans become more concrete in the Americas, but also the distinction of *races* became a convenient justification for exploitation. This distinction of races and associated claim of natural superiority enabled Europeans to carry out three cataclysmic assaults by use of maximum violence (including genocide) that later became global. The first assault was on *the world of things*, particularly the land of conquered non-European peoples to exploit gold, silver, and other commodities. The second assault was on *the world of people* for obtaining free labor and carrying out sexual exploitation. The third assault was *the world of meaning* by changing indigenous religions, knowledge, and identities.

### African Slave Trade

The colonization of America subsequently fueled the capture, transport, and enslavement of Africans in the Americas and the Caribbean. The Atlantic Slave Trade represents the largest importation of slaves in the history of the world. This trade not only caused immense suffering for persons forced into slavery, but also enabled Europeans to expand their settlement in the New World and earn substantial capital for Europeans to finance the industrial revolution (cf. Williams, 1966).

At least three outcomes of slavery seem certain. Firstly, slavery pauperized and depopulated the African continent, stealing its young and productive members and derailing the political history and economic development of its people. Secondly, this system of slavery consolidated the dominant-dominated relations between Europeans and non-Europeans, making racism the primary justification for colonial exploitation that continues to the present in different guises. Thirdly, Europeans and their descendants reaped more than economic benefits from slavery. Fed better, their population increased. With new wealth and industry, they developed better technology with which to further conquer and exploit others (cf. Rodney, 1974). The Atlantic Slave Trade therefore intensified the mix of different motives—greed for material possession and consumption, combined with racism and self-aggrandizement—that began with the Crusades.

Slavery ended when it no longer was economically productive because the burgeoning Industrial Revolution made it inefficient and dispensable. Yet the European pursuit of profit, racism, and self-aggrandizement did not end. Instead, it grew more with the development of industries that required more raw materials, more cheap or free labor, and more markets for manufactured goods. Classical colonialism provided a convenient alternative to satisfy these needs.

### Classical Colonialism

Classical colonialism in Africa started in the nineteenth century. Like the colonization of the Americas and the Atlantic Slave Trade, it was *systemic violence*—organized, continuous, methodic, and willful. It was not only integral to capitalism, but also coexistent with racism, cultural domination, and European self-aggrandizement.

Whereas slavery focused on exploiting isolated and captive *individuals*, the submission and exploitation of entire *populations* required sophisticated methods and numerous agents. The first point of colonial assault was *occupation*

of land by force of arms. Land contained not only the world of things, but also the world of people. Taking control of the land provided colonizers the raw materials they needed and geopolitical advantage in the competition among them for colonies. After occupation of the land, *control of the population* followed to acquire not only cheap or free labor and market for manufactured goods, but also gradual erosion in the world of meaning. Thus, instead of exploiting defenseless individuals in alien lands as in slavery, classical colonialism held *populations captive in their own land*, forcing them to serve the same economic, racial, and self-aggrandizing motives that gave rise to and sustained the Atlantic Slave Trade.

Lasting occupation of land, exploitation of human and material resources, and quelling resistance required the *erosion of social bonding, indigenous beliefs, values, identities, and indigenous knowledge*. Colonialists achieved this by using different agents including missionaries, anthropologists, physicians, and journalists. Since violence and outsiders' propaganda alone cannot sustain oppression, colonizers resorted to local agents to carry out the colonial mission. The most important of these were individuals educated in colonial schools or serving as subordinates in the colonial system. These so-called local elites inherited the colonial state whose function was not to serve the colonized but to exploit them. Classical colonialism ostensibly ended when these local collaborators demonstrated, through training and internalization of colonial values, their proclivity to serve as auxiliaries of neocolonialism.

### Neocolonialism: Return by the Back Door

The ostensible demise of classical colonialism in Africa began in 1957 when Ghana became independent, followed by the formal independence of other African countries in the 1960s and 1970s. The world wars were a critical historical juncture in stimulating the ambition for freedom because they showed three essential facts. Firstly, Europeans did not share the solidarity they previously projected; instead, they fought one another with shocking brutality. Secondly, the war revealed to Africans that the White man was not superhuman; in the battlefield, he too panicked, bled, and died like Africans. Thirdly, Africans realized that they could challenge Europeans in armed struggle in the quest for freedom since they had risked their lives during the world wars to defend European freedom. Recognizing these three facts initiated—firstly in the mind, subsequently in action—the demise of classical colonialism.

The African public found new inspiration in hearing from their children the rhetoric of freedom and call to end of colonialism. Not surprisingly, their anticolonial rhetoric focused on *liberating the land*—that is, to kick out the colonizer. Neither they nor their leaders gave much thought beyond that specific and narrow goal. It turned out that the so-called local elite wanted only to replace the former rulers and govern in the same way, using the same laws and institutions. After independence, the flawed colonial state turned into a neocolonial machine that not only oppressed the people, but also worked to the advantage of former colonial powers and their allies (Bulhan, 2008).

A number of African politicians and intellectuals focused attention on *neocolonialism* (Amin, 1973; Nkrumah, 1965): ways in which former colonizers (joined by the United States and the USSR) controlled behind the scene economic and political power. They also presented evidence on how European countries continue to plunder material resources of the former colonies and dictate flawed policies serving European interests. Similar to the dependency theorists (Frank, 1970; Prebisch, 1960), these writers on neocolonialism shed light on the methods and consequences of European economic and political domination in Africa. However, most analyses held that

economy is the substructure of neocolonialism; hence, they did not discuss the role of culture and psychology in the perpetuation of colonialism.

## Metacolonialism: Latest Stage of Colonialism

The latest modification in the previous form and presentation of colonialism is *metacolonialism*. According to the *Random House Unabridged Dictionary* (1993, 2nd Edition), the prefix *meta* in Greek translates to *after, along with, beyond, behind, or among*. I therefore mean by *metacolonialism* a socio-political, economic, cultural, and psychological system that comes *after, along with, or among* the earlier stages of colonialism that I described in the preceding pages. One can also define it as a colonial system that goes *beyond* in scope or *behind* in depth what classical colonialism and neocolonialism had achieved.

Metacolonialism revives an old system of colonial exploitation and oppression that masquerades in the more savory euphemism of *globalization*. Many analysts write about globalization in glowing terms, often extolling it as a system of worldwide innovation that shall bring great advances to humanity. Yet these writings seldom answer this question: Who actually benefits from this new craze, and who suffers because of its global effects? We find the answer not directly from the words of its promoters and defenders, but in the structures of power and global locations where its decision-makers concentrate. Specifically, metacolonialism emanates from the same geography and societies as did the Atlantic Slave Trade, classical colonialism, and neocolonialism.

Unlike earlier forms that were national or regional, metacolonialism not only grows globally and penetrates deeper in the psychology and social relations of all peoples, but also exercises its global power of hegemonic mystification that blurs to some degree previous distinctions of social class, ethnicity, and race. Although writers on colonialism used dichotomous distinctions between colonizers and colonized or between White and Black races to draw attention to the drastic contrasts of the two groups' unequal fortunes and history under colonialism (e.g., Fanon, 1967, 1968), such Manichean distinctions are no longer adequate. Metacolonialism brings about a wide spectrum of beneficiaries and victims. Some of the formerly colonized elites are today material beneficiaries of metacolonialism (especially in comparison to the mass misery of their societies), flaunting trivial material benefits while ignoring their subjective victimization. Even the traditional beneficiaries of colonialism—namely Europeans and their descendants—are today in some respects victims of metacolonialism in ways they neither realize nor wish to critically examine. Accustomed to racial hubris—exaggerated pride and inflated self-confidence—passed on to them by earlier generations, they remain stuck in the old Manichean division of the world associated with myths of racial superiority. Our concepts, formulations, and analyses must therefore keep pace with the dynamic and sophisticated changes of metacolonialism.

## The Psychology of Metacolonialism

Metacolonialism manifests in both objective and subjective domains to a far greater degree than the classical colonialism and neocolonialism that preceded it. I illustrate below some of its manifestations, realizing that space of an article permits neither extensive listing nor detailed discussion (but see Bulhan, *in press*).

I begin this review with a discussion of the contest over reality and memory. Much writing exists about colonial onslaught on the worlds of things and people, but not much about its assault on the world of meaning and associated contest over defining reality and preserving memory. Although less obvious than the contest of arms and political

control, the contest over reality and memory plays a central role in the objective and subjective lives of the colonized. What do I mean by contest over reality and memory?

## Contested Reality and Memory

Much of recorded history is partly mythology, partly a product of selective recall, and partly interpretation of what transpired. What is recorded is seldom that which actually took place because the events that transpired have gone through different recall, interpretation, and retelling by people who experienced them, people who heard about what had transpired, and (generations later) people who write about those events. Even participants of the same historical events differ in their account and interpretation of what actually took place. Each generation modifies written history according to its needs and interpretation, building on selective recall and distortion.

The contest over reality and memory becomes most intense in conditions of oppression where both reality and memory distort to preserve the *status quo* of domination and exploitation. Metacolonialism in the way I define it enlarges the distortion of events in memory because written history is mostly about the valor and benevolence of the European colonizer. Students continue to learn this history in schools, libraries preserve it, statutes freeze it in time and place, and public and professional media disseminate it. In short, the worlds of things and people exude, reflect, and perpetuate the story of the European colonizer. This story valorizes the colonizer and turns into a potent weapon of domination while it invalidates and vilifies much about the colonized, including their culture, their epistemology, their ontology—indeed their very existence as human beings. The colonizer's reality and memory under these conditions take the status of the only valid knowledge worth preserving and disseminating while the colonizer's self-aggrandizement entails the diminution or negation of the colonized.

Accordingly, the colonized do not exist except for the needs and convenience of the colonizers; they are no more than appendage and fodder to the history of colonizers. The story of the colonized remains untold due to censorship and social amnesia enforced in crude or subtle ways. If writers of this story are not directly harassed, the media industry seldom publishes their alternative story; professional journals winnow it out; publishers reject manuscripts; and tenure review committees consider it a sign of radicalism or proof of idiosyncratic obsession to excavate a long forgotten past too uncomfortable to recall. Not surprisingly, then, many avoid such adventures, making vague the distinction between enforced censorships and self-censorship.<sup>ii</sup>

There is another problem. If one endeavors to tell the story of the colonized, the teller is from the start stuck neck deep or totally submerged in the maelstrom or disaster the colonizer had created.<sup>iii</sup> Not only does one wade in the dissimulated history and scholarship of the colonizer's metacolonial systems of education, but also the world in which one lives—including institutions for which one works—contradict one's story about the colonized. Moreover, any work that one manages to publish will be in media inaccessible to the people the story is about.

One who writes critically on colonialism in the peripheries distant from Europe and North America faces a different problem. The writer does not have the latest information and technology, or even a reliable internet connection, to keep abreast on the work of others or to participate in exchange of ideas with them. This state of isolation diminishes critical engagement conducive to scholarship. What is more, life in that part of the world presents two other perils. On the one hand, local tyrants find threat in ideas unfamiliar to them, assuming that what they do not know or understand is necessarily subversive. On the other hand, security agents of those who control global power are likely to apply the label "terrorist" or "terrorist sympathizer" if the writer is non-European or especially a Muslim who lives in the distant frontiers that contests of reality and memory provoke atavistic religious radicalism.

Either way, whether in the West or outside of it, imposed censorship and self-censorship limit discourse on colonialism and coloniality.

I start with these remarks to underscore four points. First, a key indicator of domination is the power to name the world and the self, interpret the past, and preserve memory of it. In usurping that power, the colonizer finds a more insidious and potent psychological advantage than use of lethal arms. Second, because of the lost contest over the defining and naming of reality, the experience and story of the colonized await documenting and telling. Not hearing or reading about either, people assume they do not exist. Third, the forgotten or distorted past leaves the colonized in a state of ignorance and confusion, with no lessons learned to understand the present or chart a new future. Fourth, establishment psychology historically played a significant role in the contest of reality and memory, serving as a potent tool for concealing the violence of colonialism and distorting the experiences of the colonized. To this day, the Eurocentric and reductionist roots of establishment psychology prevent even well meaning researchers and practitioners from exposing the ravages of colonialism or acknowledging the experience of the colonized.

### Manifestations of Metacolonialism

I turn now to manifestations of metacolonialism. To begin with, metacolonialism established the dollar and (recently) the euro not only as the primary currencies of exchange, but also as measures of human worth. This is colonization of economics, wealth, and self-evaluation. Metacolonialism also dictates that international laws promulgated by Europeans are just and essential laws for 'civilized' conduct in national and international relations. This is colonization of individual and group behavior, nationally and internationally.

Europeans and their descendants today enjoy *freedom* and *opportunity* in space not only in their land but also beyond.<sup>iv</sup> Indeed, after nearly denuding resources of the earth, they endeavor to colonize outer space (including the Moon and Mars) for more resources. In contrast, space increasingly represents *unfreedom* and *constraints* for the metacoloned in ways worse than described under classical colonialism by earlier writers—like [Nkrumah \(1965\)](#), [Amin \(1973\)](#), and [Rodney \(1974\)](#). For example, urban communities in Africa have become concentration camps of disease and death—with profuse shantytowns, crowded hovels, open sewers, pervasive poverty and filth. In addition, their lands and coasts are dumping sites for the West's toxic waste—including nuclear and medical wastes—with devastating and enduring consequences for the fauna, flora, and human health. This is colonization of space.

Home too is no longer a place of intimacy and security for the metacoloned. Economic forces beyond the control of individuals invade it to instigate conflict among members, caught as they are between confused needs and increasing wants, neither of which they can satisfy. Meanwhile, radio and TVs programs bombard them at home and other private places with metacolonial propaganda, mesmerizing people with images of material rewards and ostentatious display of European models of beauty. Children bring to the home metacolonial ideas contradicting their culture and identity while their parents live in crushing frustration in the workplace or more likely suffer chronic unemployment. Their governing state, often a tool of metacolonialism, invades homes at will, usually after midnight, to capture anyone suspected of sedition, terrorism, and the like with no due process of law. The minority of Africans with access to internet and mobile phones are also subject to external controls without their knowledge. These new technologies permit agents of metacolonialism near and far to snoop what they say, do, and think. This is colonization of place.

Metacolonialism also surfaces in the colonization of time since most people today believe that *real time* is only the way Europeans define, interpret, and measure it. In reality, time has no single or universal meaning, and cultures vary in how they understand and interpret it (e.g., Bulhan, 2013a; Mbiti, 1970). The dominant conception of time in the world today rests on a Newtonian paradigm and global capitalism that not only equates time with money, but also divides, manages, and manipulates time and human energy for productivity and profit contradicting the culture and interest of the colonized. Today, almost everyone in the world, regardless of culture, wears watches based on European conception of time and pegged to a location in Europe. In short, European conceptions of time today regulate energy, work, and therefore lives of peoples in the world. This is not only colonization of time, but also metacolonized regulation of human energy.

Metacolonialism also affirms that Europeans and their descendants are superior to all other human beings in intelligence, power, beauty, and wealth. This is colonization of values. Related to this is the notion that Europeans and their descendants represent the ideal or personification of beauty. People of color increasingly internalize this self-defeating notion. They use chemical and electrical means to lighten their skin, turn smooth their kinky hair, or simply wear imported wigs to hide their natural hair texture and color. This is colonization of beauty. Metacolonialism, like its antecedents, also glorifies Western education and knowledge as the tickets to enlightenment and the 'good life,' while vilifying and eroding indigenous education and knowledge. This is colonization of knowledge. Using modern telecommunication equipment and the internet, Europeans have the right to monitor communication and information of all people, including who talks to whom, how often, where, and for what purpose. This is colonization of digital information. Metacolonialism also sets the Europeans and their descendants as the sole dispenser of aid and compassion for victims of violence and oppression in Africa. Yet, this compassion is primarily self-serving since the countries and organizations delivering the aid gain indirectly or directly by selling products of their farmers and manufacturers or by collecting hefty overheads for service rendered (Maren, 1997). This is colonization of compassion, reaffirming simultaneously the incompetence and dependence of aid recipients, while reasserting and further inflating the self-aggrandizement of Europeans (Bulhan, *in press*).

Promoters of metacolonialism also affirm that one finds the good and moral life by embracing Europeans as demigods and assimilating their culture while eroding the religious heritage of non-Europeans. Advocates of Global Western Culture do not mince words or hide their mission. They malign and deprecate the lives of non-European peoples. This is colonization of not only culture but also religion. Moreover, western education in non-European societies erode or change indigenous languages. For instance, Africans schooled in neocolonial educational systems choose to speak English or French to show sophistication and so-called modernity, gradually abandoning their indigenous language. They even change their indigenous first names to European names like Peter, James, and Joseph. If they speak to their people in the indigenous language, they sprinkled English or French terms in their statements to achieve the same impression of sophistication and modernity even if their people do not understand the full meaning of their remarks. This too is colonization of language and identity.

Metacolonizers also claim that only their classifications, their diagnoses, and their treatment of physical and psychological disorders are most scientific and effective when they turn a blind eye to the *oppressive social conditions* that cause or contribute to hunger, disease, premature death, depression, trauma, and psychosomatic disorders. In the name of advanced treatment, they also manufacture potent drugs that silence the rage of injustice and they erect institutions with high walls that sequester victims. Instead of healing victims, the forced silence and incarceration condemn them to psychological and social death. Cut off from society and inter-subjectivity with others, those identified as mad have become less accessible to ordinary human contact and social bonding; therefore

less psychologically and socially alive. If truly scientific and socially responsible, their metacolonized healers and caretakers would contribute to change the historical and social conditions producing these symptoms and afflictions. This too is colonization of medicine and madness.

## Metacolonial Motives and Goals

As successor and culmination of earlier forms of colonialism, metacolonialism likewise serves Euro-American material exploitation, cultural domination, and psychological self-aggrandizement. These motives persist by inertia of history, residual social and political structures of domination, and collective socialization through effective media and schools. Metacolonialism added to these factors its potent methods: conditioned mass passion for consumer goods imported from abroad and an effective dissemination of the belief that this stage of colonialism (globalization) represents a great advance in human history. What therefore changed are not the motives but the methods and tactics of satisfying those motives.

By focused assault on the world of meaning, metacolonialism also penetrates deeper than classical colonialism and neocolonialism into the psyche and social relations. It occupies and controls the *self* or *being* of the metacolonized both in their psychological and social existence. After subjective occupation and control, the metacolonized automatically cooperate without need for the crude methods used by previous forms of colonialism. Nonetheless, metacolonialism, true to its colonial roots and essence, resorts to outright violence when necessary. It has in store efficient and deadly violence in case of resistance to it, including modern tanks, deadly missiles that seldom miss their target, drones controlled from distance, war robots that neither bleed nor die, and nuclear bombs capable of complete annihilation. Because the *Being* of the metacolonized is occupied and possessed, they also come to believe that they are materially better off than ever, even when they see in TVs and newspapers only the alluring images of the consumer goods (like cars, flashy clothes, and electronic equipment) by which metacolonialism entraps and mesmerizes. If few of them get only a small number and cheap imitations of these goods, they believe that they too share in “the good life” of the European—a belief reinforced by the admiration and envy of the less fortunate majority around them. While starving for lack of food, these less fortunate compatriots continue to be enthralled by the shared delusion of metacolonial material opulence and redemption supposedly coming to them in the near future by magical means.

There is indeed more to metacolonialism than the consumer goods or the desire to satisfy constantly invented and therefore insatiable wants. At its highest advance not yet achieved, metacolonialism aims to establish a “New World Order” which already shows its telltale signs. This New World Order will for instance do away with the colonially formed nation-states, as we know them today, and replace them by a central authority managed by Euro-Americans and local allies they select. It will use one currency, one international court, and one mega-military establishment like the expanded NATO or its successor supposedly to ensure world peace. It will “homogenize” cultures into Universal European Culture, as stridently advocated by neo-liberals for “Global Western Culture.” Most languages will die as will indigenous knowledge in non-European societies. Religions will gradually erode in substance and meaning, but devotees may retain rituals that do not threaten the new world order. If they present threat, as do some Muslim fundamentalists, most of whom use Islam for self-serving political aims, metacolonial powers and their regional allies will jointly organize themselves to clobber them to total submission or eliminate them using a sophisticated technology of death. Computers based in the United States and Europe will store personal details of individuals, wherever they are in the globe, monitoring their movements, their human connections, and their communications.

These metacolonial prospects and plans are not far-fetched; we are already in the throes of metacolonialism. However, the most devastating application and consequences of it fall on Non-European populations who—by culture, politics, and behavior—are on the fringes of the envisaged New World Order. That is too why institutions like the IMF and World Bank focus their work on these societies. This is why the International Court in Hague investigates or tries more Africans dictators than American or European perpetrators of similar or worse crimes against humanity. It is also in Africa that the largest numbers of “international peacekeeping forces” operate, because people of color once again occupy the lowest rung in the hierarchy of human rights and expected norms of equal treatment.

## Psychology and Colonialism

The emergence and growth of psychology as a discipline took place not only at a time of social change and conflict in Europe but also while Europeans and their descendants carried out violence in search for profit and self-aggrandizement of a cultural, social, and psychological character. As Europeans conquered much of the world, imposing themselves in action and ideology as the only honorable model of humanity, the discipline of psychology emerged as a specialty and arbiter of human experience. Never emerging in a social vacuum, psychology (and its medical counterpart, psychiatry) played their part in the history of European colonialism serving as its agents in its different stages (Bulhan, 1980, 1985b, 1993). They also benefited funds and prestige from the conquest and exploitation of the rest of us. They justified slavery, as did missionaries, journalists, biologists, and anthropologists. For instance, some declared severe psychopathology in slaves who ran away from plantations. Soon after emancipation, others declared that emancipation of slaves would bring their extinction with “unerring certainty”. Still others insisted that emancipation already brought former slaves severe and manifest deterioration in mind and body because they were innately incapable of living freely.

During classical colonialism, psychologists and psychiatrists embarked on racial comparisons of the size of the brain, concluding from biased measurements that Africans belong to a lower evolutionary phase. Studying Africans “in health and disease,” Carothers (1953) concluded from a small sample of patients in a Kenyan psychiatric hospital that Africans were akin to “lobotomized Europeans” or at least to neurotic Europeans. Other researchers measured IQ pegged to their culture and affirmed that Africans and their descendants show lower intelligence in comparison to Europeans (e.g., Croizet, 2008; Croizet & Dutrévis, 2004; Kamin, 1974). Taken together, these works justified colonialism and perhaps assuaged the troubled conscience of Europeans about colonial violence.

The contribution of psychologists and psychiatrists in justifying colonialism did not end with classical colonialism. After 1960 when Africans attained formal independence, the Eurocentric psychological and psychiatric literature shifted from affirming the innately incompetent Africans to asserting alarming rates of mass depression and other psychiatric disorders (Bulhan, 1985b; Prince 1967). This recalls earlier claims that Black slaves were innately incapable of living free or sane without a White master. In the era of metacolonialism, the psychological and psychiatric literature is more subtle and refined, as is the case with its other covert applications. Actively incorporated into control of the mind and the market are new ‘technologies’—subliminal programming of TV broadcasts, psychological techniques of interrogation and torture, and a wide range of potent psychiatric medications with little discussion of the social causes of distress or disorders caused by the ravages of colonialism.

In spite of this sordid history, psychologists and psychiatrists often show a convenient social amnesia, ignoring their complicity with colonialism both in its crude and subtle forms. For two disciplines that claim commitment to study and unmask repressed psychological experience, such neglect and avoidance about evidence of service to colonialism is curious indeed. In moments of idealistic reverie, a person sharing professional affinity might hope that psychologists and psychiatrists would be different from colonial soldiers and administrators. Yet studies of the history of colonialism, as well as knowledge of psychologists' and psychiatrists' role in colonialism, lead to this conclusion: Economic self-interest, political allegiance, defense of delusional superiority in race, and wish for self-aggrandizement take precedence over commitment to reason, objectivity, and justice in scientific thought and behavior.

## Decolonizing Psychology

Social and political systems seldom die or dismantle easily; they often reinvent themselves for three chief reasons. Firstly, the economic and political interests they served in the past continue to prevail in subsequent generations. Secondly, the institutions—schools, law enforcement agencies, courts and others—that served those interests do not readily change. Thirdly, those who grow up under these systems—beneficiaries as well as victims—get so indoctrinated through childhood socialization, schooling, and adult experiences that they do not seek or accept alternative ways of looking at the world. Turned into true believers or acting as programmed robots, they defend the oppressive structures as if life would be impossible without them. In fact, they would (and often do) sacrifice life to defend and perpetuate these systems, however unjust.

As I described in detail elsewhere (Bulhan, 1985b; Chap. 4), several conceptual problems of establishment psychology derail it from its declared mission of advancing the well-being of people and push it toward unquestioned service to colonialism in its different stages. The first of these problems is *Eurocentrism* that not only infuses cultural bias and errors in establishment psychology, but also makes it a ready tool for European exploitation, racism, and global self-aggrandizement. Related to this is its assumptive, methodological, and experiential *solipsism* that predisposes Europeans to believe that their experience is the most valid in the world and provides the only model of humanity. The *positivist foundation* of psychological inquiry also limits and distorts human experience as it seeks to measure, control, and predict human behavior not only by emulating the basic sciences, but also by remaining loyal to the colonial project of measuring, controlling, and predicting the colonized. Positivism also brings with it other problems—like establishment psychology's analytic-reductionist bias, its trait-comparison bias, and stability-equilibrium bias—all of which exclude holistic, contextual, and dialectical perspectives. Decolonizing psychology requires abandoning these flaws in theory and practice incorporating the following steps.

### From Individual to Collective Well-Being

Establishment psychology rooted to capitalism and the resulting culture of misanthropy gives priority to the fetish of individualism instead of advancing collective well-being. In theory and practice, its diagnostic classifications, narrow definition of liberty, and positivist method of inquiry rest on individualism. Individuals do indeed count and deserve focused study, care, and liberty. However, exclusive focus on individuals—shorn of their historical, cultural, and social context—reveals avoidance or disregard of the fundamental truth that human beings are above all social beings and that individual well-being or liberty means little without collective well-being and liberty. Only when collective well-being and liberty are secure can questions and comparison of individual difference have

meaning and value. Better still, study and treatment of individuals must work from the perspective of advancing the well-being of the collective on the one hand and reducing tyranny of the collective on individuals on the other.

### **From Obsession With Instinct to Promotion of Human Needs**

Since its beginning, establishment psychology was obsessed with instincts. Theories of instincts seldom led to valuable and lasting insight on human behavior. Instead, such theories not only postulated fixed traits, but also reified characteristics of people in ways that afforded justification of slavery, colonialism, racism, and sexism. (For instance, McDougall [1908] catalogued numerous instincts and attributed “instinct of submission” to black people.) Focusing on human needs introduces a different outlook and outcome. Individuals cannot state their presumed instincts, but they can affirm their *needs* and *wants*. Thus, while theory about instinct exists in the mind of its proponent who claims institutional authority and professional credibility, study of human needs forces one to shift the line of inquiry and predisposes one to engage in *dialogue* with the persons concerned who can explain what they *need* and *want*. In short, emphasis on needs and wants may reduce the scourge of solipsism and Eurocentrism in establishment psychology.

### **From Adjustment to Empowerment**

The promotion of adjustment to oppressive structure and alienated living often occur in psychotherapy or the larger industry called mental health whose overriding aim is to change persons referred to as “patients” rather than enabling them (if not joining them) in changing the conditions (economic, political, cultural, and social) that primarily caused or contributed to the distress, mild or severe. Emphasis on adjustment not only decontextualizes the problems of the oppressed but also burdens the “patient” with inordinate degree of patience to an oppressive system, including the obvious hierarchy of power in the doctor-patient relationship replicating the colonial situation. Moreover, traditional therapy begins with a subtle process of Eurocentrism, racism, and victim-blame, all affirming or implying that the “patient” caused or contributed to his or her problem. Little wonder then, that patients from oppressed communities seldom seek therapy unless brought under duress by relatives, the police, or by court order. If they seek therapy on their own, they frequently drop out at very high rates because of the adjustment-orientation, power-relations, decontextualization, and victim-blame of Eurocentric psychology (Bulhan, 1985a, 1985b, 1993).

### **From Passive Victims to Self-Determining Actors**

No doubt, oppressive systems produce countless victims subjected to hardship and injury. Yet a perspective promoting change avoids freezing people in the status of victims who only deserve sympathy and charity. Even when people experience hardship, danger, and injury, they make choices. Albert Camus said that even a person forced to the gallows chooses *how* he or she faces certain death—to weep, scream, shake, or die with dignity. People always make choices by rationally calculating their prospects of winning or losing in war, business, and other human encounters. In each case, they consider the resources and means available to them as well as the conditions favoring them or not.

Slaves and the colonized must choose between two impossible options: *die*, thereby avoid oppression altogether; or *live*, marking time until ready to regain freedom and perhaps turn the table on the so-called victor of today. Just as the person forced to gallows makes choices, enslaved and colonized people also make choices, whether or not they make them out of ignorance, fear, rational miscalculation, or a combination thereof. To overstate their victimization prevents critical analysis of choices and freezes them in permanent incompetence, dependence,

and hopelessness. It also reinforces their belief, internalized under oppression, that they have no choice but to continue life in misery from one generation to another.

At the same time, to affirm that the colonized *have choice* not only declares that they can transcend their present condition, but also prepares and empowers them to make choices. Frederick Douglass, a former Black American slave, stated that power concedes only to a *demand* and that *refusal* to endure oppression sets the limits of tyrants. Decolonized psychology analyzes the conditions that victimize people, making them objects or minions of others; it also affirms that they are self-determining actors—if not immediately, then at least in the future. It educates them about self-defeating strategies, explores with them how best to set limits to tyranny, and prepares them to make necessary and effective demands for change.

## From Top-Down to Bottom-Up Approaches

Fifthly, decolonized psychology pursues change using *bottom-up* rather than *top-down approach*. The top-down approach is not only imperialistic and arrogant but also it seldom works, neither at the level of the individual nor that of the collective. Many therapeutic interventions or programs of social change fail because they are imposed top-down by individuals or groups who claim superior authority and knowledge, often supported by threat or exercise of violence. The change they claim to bring about is also minimal, superficial, half-hearted and self-serving. Not only do they affirm or imply that they alone know best what is good for the individuals or groups they claim to help but also they devalue and infantilize them by their approach that actually replicates the situation of oppression. They also show that the project of change is theirs, claiming victory for all successes and blaming the recipient of help for all failures. These characteristics of the top-down approach often breed resentment and subversion among those supposed to be recipients of help. That is why traditional approaches to therapy and international peacekeeping missions fail with people caught in colonial oppression and associated devaluation.

The bottom-up approach requires patience and humility as well as openness to learn the experiences, thoughts, and perspective of the other. In this approach, one abandons the hubris and imperialism of the top-down approach. The bottom-up approach forces the self-declared helper to examine motives, question dominant theories, and be open to learn the experiences, thoughts, and traditions of those one seeks to help. The bottom-up approach also affirms that the so-called recipients of help own the process and product of change; that success and failure are shared; and that change is reciprocal because the supposed “helper” learns, gets healed, and grows alongside “the recipient” of help (Watkins, 2015, this section).

## Conclusion

A broad consideration of colonialism suggests that this system of domination entails contest of reality in three worlds: *the world of things*, *of people*, and *of meaning*. Driven firstly by economic motives, colonizers attacked the world of things to obtain raw materials and markets for manufactured goods. To obtain cheap or free labor, they not only occupied the land but also assaulted the world of people to force submission. Once they conquered the people and occupied the land, they assaulted the world of meaning because no system of oppression lasts without occupation of the mind and ontology of the oppressed.

The old and crude forms of colonial rule have changed to the more subtle and sophisticated (also more intense and expansive) form that I have called metacolonialism: a consolidation of capitalism, liberal democracy, and

Western Culture into a unified and globalized force for economic, political, and cultural domination. In metacolonialism, the primary target of domination is *the total being of the colonized*—economically, culturally, socially, and psychologically. The governing values, ethos, and ideology of metacolonial ways of being include a connected and interdependent world with a shared set of international laws, markets, and monetary standards formulated and governed by supposedly “neutral institutions” like the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank. The prime indicators of metacolonial well-being are the quantity and quality of the imported material goods people consume, the houses they live in, and the gadgets they own. Their common denominator is crass materialism in a world of power and wealth inequity confirming the being of a minority, partially confirming that of an intermediary minority (called local elite), and totally disconfirming that of the majority.

In this context, the analyses and insights of Frantz Fanon (1967) in *Black Skin, White Masks* are more relevant today than they were in the heyday of classical colonialism and neocolonialism. Clearly, there can only be occupied, distorted, and shriveled being (versus wholesome and healthy being) when so much of objective and subjective life—the economy, the political order, space and time, culture, knowledge, beauty, and even reason—are occupied. When the colonized believe they are happily marching toward prosperity and redemption, it makes liberation far more complicated and difficult.

In short, colonialism is today more entrenched objectively and subjectively than it was in the past. Effective and sustainable change can come only when those within the center of the metacolonized world and those in its peripheries work together both to *deconstruct* metacoloniality in its different forms and jointly *reconstruct* a more just world on the ruins of the old. The call for collaboration is not appeal for sympathy or generosity; those at the centers of metacolonialism also pay heavy but hidden costs for injustice and dehumanization of others. I therefore see the project of decolonizing psychology as a means toward broad-based critical thinking and collaboration on what to *deconstruct* and how to *reconstruct* for the benefit of all.

I endeavor to contribute to systemic and peaceful change in the meta-colonized part of the Africa in which I live, trying to make a difference in Somali society that has experienced more than its share of colonial violence and metacolonial mystification. To this end, I started Frantz Fanon University in Somaliland so that a new generation of African students can learn and advance decolonized psychology, medicine, and social sciences. This is no doubt a small step in the global project of decolonizing psychology that requires larger, coordinated, and sustained work by people in different parts of the world. Frantz Fanon University welcomes collaboration of individuals and institutions in that respect. I also hope this issue of *JSPP* devoted to decolonizing psychology will inspire such collaborative work.

## Notes

i) By *European*, I mean not only those citizens of Europe but also their descendants who settled in the Americas, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, or elsewhere and who promoted and benefitted from colonialism. I also mean by *establishment psychology* the discipline of psychology that first emerged in Europe, subsequently grew in North America, and today dominates psychological theories, method, and practice of psychology in the world.

ii) I learned this subtle censorship in academia while teaching at Boston University when a high-ranking administrator tried to block my tenure, approved at all levels of university committees and by six external reviewers, because the administrator found my book on Frantz Fanon too radical. As soon as I earned tenure with approval of the Board of Trustees, I took a year-long sabbatical leave and soon after resigned from Boston University. After several years running a thriving consulting firm I

co-owned with my former student, I returned to Africa to help in conflict resolution, social reconstruction, and treatment of trauma victims.

iii) I use male pronouns only due to limitation of language, not to suggest that the colonial experience is exclusive to men. I use these pronouns to represent both men and women.

iv) For these definitions and a fascinating discussion of space and place, see Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, St. Paul, Minnesota: the University of Minnesota, 1981. As he explained, space—a geographic unit, an interval between two points or objects precisely measurable—allows freedom of movement and transcending our present condition. Place (like home) is marked off space to which we endow value. While we universally associate space with *freedom and opportunity*, we associate place with *intimacy and security*.

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***Unfinished Business:  
Confronting the Legacies of  
Slavery and Colonialism in Africa***

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# UNFINISHED BUSINESS: CONFRONTING THE LEGACIES OF SLAVERY AND COLONIALISM IN AFRICA\*

## INTRODUCTION

The summary of my argument is that development remains elusive in Africa, not merely because of the misrule and warped personalities of many African leaders, but because Africa had been damaged severely, first by the slave trade, then by the colonialism which grew out of the slave trade. Further, that Africa cannot rejoin the development train in the world until the damage is repaired as much as possible. When that is done, it will be of immense benefit not only to Africa, but also to the whole world.

A lot has been written about the trans-Atlantic slave trade, mostly about the economic benefits it conferred on Europe and North America, and the injustice of the lives of the slaves in America. Little attention has so far been given to the devastating effect of the damage done to African peoples. African historians have themselves been reluctant to focus much attention on this period of African history. The attitude generally has been that slavery is a universal phenomenon. Other peoples have transcended their periods of slavery and oppression. Why can't Africans forget about theirs, turn their faces forward and get on with their lives? Because of this refusal to confront the slave trade and come to terms with it, both Africans and non-Africans surround the subject with various myths. The story is told of a Harvard Professor of African descent who was visiting Africa and confronted an Asante lady with the accusation that her ancestors had sold his ancestors into slavery. The issue of possible guilt feeling has only compounded the African malaise. There is a Yoruba saying that "my child is dead is better than my child is missing". When dead, the child is buried; an account is given to the ancestors, and the living can get on with their lives. Consider how many such bodies are unaccounted for in every single

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\* This paper was delivered as a Keynote Address at a conference at the Africa Centre, Covent Gardens, London on 4 December 2000.

community in Africa. Collective amnesia and deafening silence in the oral traditions have not enabled Africans to forget. A Nigerian writer has suggested the need for rituals to release the ghosts of the missing presumed dead. This conference may make its own contribution towards that ritual of purification.

#### THE UNIQUENESS OF THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

There are university courses on slavery as a universal phenomenon. Usually, such courses stress that there was slavery in Africa before the coming of the Portuguese. There was slavery, but not slaves as a commercial commodity. Then came the trans-Saharan slave trade which introduced a commercial element into African slavery. But the scale of the trade was such that the slaves were able to continue to be treated as human beings. Under strict Islamic law, a converted slave became a free fellow Muslim. The children of a slave concubine or wife were free members of the household. Various features of the trans-Atlantic trade made it very different from any other type of slave trade or slavery in history. It was capital intensive and competitive among several European nations. The factor of international competition perhaps did more than anything else to reduce the slaves from fellow human beings to purely commercial cargo. Laws were passed to deny the humanity of the slaves. Their eye-witness accounts were not admissible in court as evidence. They could not own any property. Their children belonged to their masters and not to themselves. On the Middle Passage, they were packed like lifeless cargo in ways in which dogs and horses would not be packed today.

There were two further consequences of this. One was that, in all that period, from the late fifteenth to the late nineteenth centuries, the trans-Atlantic slave trade was inflicted on such a large scale on black Africans alone, with the result that by the 18th century, slave had become synonymous with black, and black with slavery. No one remembered that the Romans had Greek slaves or that the Turks and Arabs had enslaved many Europeans. Because of the kind of slavery they endured, black slaves were no

longer accepted as normal human beings. The whole of Christendom, with all the religious fervour unleashed by the Protestant revolution of the 16th-17th centuries, clung to the argument that slavery is not condemned in the Bible as a sin. Because of the Apostle Paul's letter to ask the master of Onesimus to forgive him and his plea that slaves should be loyal to their masters, it was concluded that the Bible condoned the heinous crimes of the Middle Passage and the gross injustice of the life of slaves on the American plantations. Some writers even tried to justify the Atlantic trade with the argument that it took black slaves from heathen lands into Christendom, thus opening up the possibility of converting them and saving their souls. All the teachings of Jesus that we should regard others as our neighbours, especially the weak and the oppressed, and do unto others as we would want them to do unto us, were glossed over. When eventually the Evangelical re-awakening of the 18th and early 19th centuries triggered off the anti-slavery movement, it stopped short of declaring the Atlantic slave trade as a sin and a heinous crime against humanity. The anti-slavery movement was the first to perfect the organisation of mass rallies to force a change of policy on government and it did a marvellous job. But because of this failure to accept that the Atlantic slave trade was not compatible with the Biblical notion of neighbourly love, it was able to come to a compromise with the powerful West Indian planters in Parliament. Parliament voted 23 million pounds in 1834, now worth at least 23 billion to compensate the slave owners, but not one penny to compensate the slaves. Yet, slave owner and former slave were then to become fellow citizens competing in the same market place. Obviously, the anti-slavery movement left the task of emancipation as unfinished business. It has even been said that, what with apprenticeship schemes and all that, the slaves were not emancipated but ransomed. The passing of the Emancipation Act did not involve any change of heart in Europe or America about the evils of the Atlantic trade or the human qualities and capabilities of the black peoples involved. The Oxford Professor of Classics who examined Samuel Ajayi Crowther as he was being tested for ordination said he would like

to show his papers to his colleagues who maintained that black people were not capable of logical thought.

#### THE ANTI-SLAVERY MOVEMENT AND DOMESTIC SLAVERY

The anti-slavery movement focused its attention on stopping the trans-Atlantic slave trade. It was not designed as such to repair the ravages done to Africa by the slave trade. We could say that the missionary movement that grew out of the anti-slavery movement did attempt some reparation in its policy of combining Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation. But the effectiveness of the missionary movement was greatly compromised by its failure to accept the slave trade as a sin incompatible with the teachings of the Bible. The missionaries were, therefore, willing to compromise with slave owners once again. When they discovered that they needed to promote internal slavery and slave trade in order to promote agricultural production for European industries, they did not hesitate to make the compromise. From the 1840s to the 1880s, they promoted what they called legitimate trade by encouraging a wide expansion of the use of so-called domestic slaves for the production and transportation of palm produce and other commodities to exchange for imported ammunition to continue the wars that continued to yield the slaves. To legitimise this compromise, the missionaries argued that slavery was not the sin, but the custom of plurality of wives which had no doubt been heightened by the years of the slave trade which usually removed more men than women. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) authorities ruled that in the Bible, slave owning was a social evil that could be tolerated until changes in the economic situation led to its amelioration, but that polygamy was explicitly rebuked in the New Testament in spite of its widespread practice by the patriarchs in the Old Testament. The argument of Bishop Crowther that monogamy should be treated the way Paul treated circumcision as not an essential qualification for salvation, was firmly rejected. You may wish to contrast how some people in the same Anglican Church are today, in the name of showing love, trying to find a way round the explicit statements in the Bible condemning

homosexuality, the sin of Sodom, as unnatural and not acceptable. Archdeacon Crowther, the Bishop's son, took the argument against polygamy to its logical conclusion when he said that he was not worried about the fate of the wives of polygamists who were divorced so that their husbands could become monogamists and acceptable for baptism. The archdeacon said that he regarded the status of such 'wives' as comparable with slavery. Even when Lagos became a British colony, slavery continued to be tolerated. The majority of the congregations in the CMS churches of the Niger Delta were slaves. The missions on the Niger River could not have been established without the support of the commerce in palm produce, shea butter and other slave-produced and slave-transported commodities in exchange for ammunition. For most of the 1870s Bishop Crowther established a formal alliance with the rulers of the Nupe kingdom as the southern outpost of the Sokoto Caliphate which was ostensibly being erected on the basis of a slave economy. Yet, the abolition of slavery was used at the Berlin and Brussels conferences as the defining mark of civilisation, on the basis of which African states were excluded from the comity of nations who congregated to share African territories without the participation of the Africans. Abolition of slavery was to be the major definition of the civilisation that the Partition Powers were to confer on Africans as soon as they could make good the claims that they were in control. The armies they used consisted largely of freed slaves. Slave raiding was the commonest *casus belli* declared against African rulers they marked out for attack.

#### ALL WERE VICTIMS, NOT BENEFICIARIES

Inter-ethnic relations in Africa will for long continue to be affected by perceptions as to who collaborated with the slavers and who suffered most. This is largely a futile argument because in the end all Africans and peoples of African descent were victims, not beneficiaries of the slave trade. The technology, capital and competition that characterised the European participation in the Atlantic trade meant that no African peoples could

afford to stay aloof from it. Those who could, obtained whatever ammunition was available, so as to protect themselves. The chiefs who participated in the trade were victims at least of unequal exchange. They exported man and woman productive and re-productive power in return for ammunition, cheap gin, textiles, mirrors and others which the late Dr Dike called 'meretricious' goods. No black African could escape from the racist burden of being black. Consider also the opportunity cost of the trade that of necessity compelled you to be perpetually at war with your neighbours instead of trading with them. Consider the specific case of Benin. It is reckoned that in terms of what may be called the civilised arts and perhaps even technology over a wide range of issues, life in Benin was comparable with life in Portugal when the Portuguese arrived to trade at the end of the 15th century, and there was some mutual exchange to start with. When the Portuguese showed that their interest was thenceforth to consist solely in slaves, the Benin monarch expelled the traders and missionaries from his court. The Portuguese just moved down the river to Itshekiriland. Benin could of course not keep away from the trade for too long. They had to trade, if not with the Portuguese, then with the Dutch and the French. Imagine what Benin could have become by the 19th century if they had enjoyed an export trade in commodities other than slaves. Consider also the Yoruba. The Old Oyo empire, with a cavalry force, built up some hegemonic power in the southern Sudan belt in the 17-18th centuries. The Oyo ruled over Nupe, Bussa and others. They opened a corridor to the coast so as to participate in the Atlantic slave trade through Badagri, Porto Novo and Dahomey. Can we say the Oyo were collaborators and beneficiaries of the trade? See what happened to them in the 19th century. The old centre of the Oyo empire is today a forest reserve. The domino effect of the refugee problem involved triggered off the Yoruba Wars, which went on unabated till the British were able to impose peace in 1893. The wars continue to echo in Yoruba politics even today. Notice how in the Yoruba wars, the Oyo of Ibadan destroyed the Oyo of Ijaye in the struggle to survive. Notice from the account of many rescued slaves in Freetown how some Egba villages

joined Ibadan and Ife warlords to destroy other Egba settlements. Crowther, an Oyo, was enslaved in 1821 by Oyo Muslim warlords. Who, then, were the beneficiaries and collaborators? All were victims of the Atlantic slave trade.

#### FROM ANTI-SLAVERY TO RACIST COLONIALISM

In promoting Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation as anti-slave trade measures and not for the reparation of the damage done to Africa, not only was the task of emancipation left unfinished. The anti-slavery movement also unwittingly laid the foundations of colonial rule. It was as if the missionaries saw the legacy of the Atlantic trade on Africa, felt that they could not tackle it alone, and invited the colonial powers after them. At the time, they regarded colonial conquest and colonial rule as essential for African development.

It is important to emphasise that colonialism in Africa arose out of the unique features of the slave trade that we referred to above, and it was therefore unlike colonialism in other places. It is what may be called racist colonialism in which a people set out to rule and civilise other people whose humanity continued to be questioned in so many ways. Whatever may now be said about the motives of the colonial powers, they did not have normal human regard for the Africans they ruled. Nowhere else in history was colonial rule characterised by the use of so much violence to control the lives of the subjects on a day to day basis. They came to Africa so that they could continue to exploit African labour which stopped flowing to the Americas at the end of the Atlantic slave trade. It was not always clear whether African land or African labour was the priority. We have examples in which people were evicted from their land specifically to create a landless people who would have no choice but to work for cheap wages on European farms or mines. Remember Leopold's Congo in which the punishment for failure to produce enough rubber was to cut off the hands. How that was meant to stimulate productivity still beats the imagination. There were examples of policies of extermination as in the German Herero War, such that it seemed

some of the colonial powers would have been happy to see the Africans die off like the American Indians. Every teacher would know that you cannot train a student with whom you do not communicate and to whom you do not concede even a fellow human feeling. The idea of a Dual Mandate in colonialism was an afterthought and meant largely for propaganda. The clear evidence suggests that colonial powers had no enduring commitment to the development of Africa. Compare the legacy of Roman rule in Britain: Hadrian's wall, the road system, the baths and water resources, and administrative centres. The Romans stimulated productivity and exchange. Compare even the British legacy in India: the railways, the universities, the Indian Civil Service, and such monuments as the Victoria Railway Terminal in Bombay said to have been based on St Pancras in London which itself was based on the Salisbury Cathedral. The British went to India to trade and they had to stimulate existing trade. They may not have liked aspects of Hindu culture, but they did not harbour against the Indians the kind of contempt they showed for the Africans. The colonial powers in Africa did not hesitate to destroy existing trade, if only to divert attention to the production and export of crops for European industries and the importation of European manufactures. Dr William Baikie as Consul at Lokoja was impressed by the textiles he found in neighbouring markets, and which were said to have been widely distributed, as far as Kano. He sent samples of the textiles home to the British Museum. It is said that productivity declined when the producers found it more lucrative to turn to slave trading even before British manufacturers copied the designs and brought cheap imitations from India or Manchester to compete.

Those who are busy trying to rewrite the history of colonial rule in Africa, so as to paint a more attractive picture of colonialism rarely mention the enforced contribution of African colonies in manpower during the two World Wars. The number of French Africans involved in World War I was over half a million. This is another example of colonialism being an extension of the slave trade because many of those who went perished in the trenches, and suffered almost as much inhuman treatment. That

was besides the contribution of money and the production of commodities.

#### DECOLONISATION: UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Eventually, as in the case of slavery, the international community woke up to the evils of racist colonialism as practised in Africa. The Germans were relieved of their colonies in 1918, and these were shared out between Britain, France and Belgium to some extent. The anti-colonial movements, at the Pan-African level and at the level of individual countries began to be noticed, especially after World War II. Within a more conducive international environment, Britain and France agreed to move towards negotiating conditions for political independence, except in areas of European settlements. The decade 1950-1960 has thus been called the decade of decolonisation.

Notice that there was no possibility or intention to restore independence to the pre-colonial states. The Partition boundaries which had been criticised as often arbitrary became the title deeds of the new countries that began to emerge in the 1960s as independent states. These were colonial states, colonial creations. It was during the decade 1950s-1960s that the rudiments of state institutions in terms of the executive, legislative and judicial patterned after the metropolitan institutions and suitably adapted began to be hurriedly put in place so that the outgoing colonial rulers could have new political elites to whom to hand over power. University institutions as campuses or colleges of metropolitan universities also began to be established. Thus, far from trying to decolonise, colonial powers deliberately created colonial states which were soon conferred with political autonomy. France had ruled two enormous territories of AOF and AEF in West and Equatorial Africa, but chose to decolonise them into 11 independent territories, some of which are not really viable, and with boundaries cutting across lines frequented by migrants. The French suggested to the British to follow their example and break up Nigeria, but the British rejected the idea. Boundaries fixed at the whims and caprices of colonial powers

has produced the phenomenon in which the founding President of Zambia, lost election after ruling for 12 years and suddenly found his right to Zambian citizenship being questioned. There is the similar case in Cote d'Ivoire where it was the leader of Opposition who was denied the right to contest for the Presidency on the grounds that he did not qualify as a citizen.

The main point we are making is that political independence came without any real effort at decolonisation. Political scientists were at pains to whitewash autocratic rulers claiming that one-party states were democratic and in accordance with African traditions by which pre-colonial monarchies did not recognise opposition parties. Such political scientists have since been recanting and admitting that One Party states simply bred autocracy and misrule by refusing to tolerate criticism and dissent. We are still witnessing the outcome of such misrule in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Kenya and other places. An African nationalist, Amilcar Cabral of Cape Verde once said:

The colonialists have a habit of telling us that when they arrived, they put us into history. You are well aware that it is the opposite. When they arrived, they took us out of our own history. Liberation for us is to take back our destiny and our history.

Such liberation or decolonisation, enabling the people to regain control over their own destiny and history remains unfinished business. Without decolonisation, we moved from colonialism to neo-colonialism.

#### NEO-COLONIALISM

The concept of neo-colonialism is often treated as a joke because the word is used with such looseness as if it has no real meaning. We therefore need to clarify what we are talking about here. The slogan of Pan-African nationalists like Nkrumah was to "seek ye first the political kingdom and all else will be added unto thee". Neocolonialism is the situation of dependence created by colonial rule, in which you are granted political independence only to discover that you do not have control over your economy and

cannot implement your own policies but must consult various powerful outsiders who directly or indirectly control the policies. Therefore, following the attainment of the political kingdom, nothing else was forthcoming to add to it and, usually, the political kingdom began to fall apart as peoples' expectations were frustrated. The nationalist leaders tried to get the best terms they could. Zimbabwe rejected the deal the British wanted to do with Muzorewa and waited for Mugabe. Urged on by students and younger partisans, the Nigerian leaders were forced to repudiate the Anglo-Nigerian Defence Pact. But these were not enough. The economies of the different countries were already integrated into the economies of the metropolitan countries during the colonial period and under colonial exploitative terms, and the colonial powers were unwilling to surrender their advantageous positions. Agents of the World Bank and the IMF began to replace former Residents and District Commissioners as supervisors of the dependent economies in the former colonial territories. Globalisation meant that the World Bank and the IMF could impose drastic devaluation of the currency and other measures of Structural Adjustment Programmes that impoverished the people and brought no visible economic returns. In pursuit of such policies, countries were encouraged to amass huge debts, and managing the Debt then became another weapon of control to compel continued compliance with policies of the World Bank and IMF. But it needs to be emphasised here that the debt of African countries is only a pittance compared with what the international communities owe to Africa, and debt relief is only the beginning, and not the end of the Reparation we seek.

The most notable examples of neo-colonialism are to be seen in Cold War politics where because of neo-colonial dependence, the US found it so easy to control and manipulate the economies of most African countries against the interests of the peoples of those countries in the name of containing the spread of communism. Take the example of Ethiopia and Somaliland. Decolonisation exacerbated border dispute between the two countries over the control of Ogaden. The dispute was exacerbated as it facilitated control from outside. Under Emperor Haile

Sellaisie, Ethiopian development was based on US aid and Somaliland therefore turned to the Soviet Union for assistance. When the Emperor was overthrown, and the Derge chose to embrace a socialist programme, the Soviet Union stepped into American shoes and the US became the new power over Somali development plans. Both neo-colonial powers exploited their position to extort substantial rewards and each was more interested to sell arms and to encourage the futile border wars than to improve the capability of their dependent peoples to control their economic development. Consider also the Congo, and the blatant murder of Patrice Lumumba, and the secession of Moise Tshombe, followed by the setting up of Sgt., turned General Mobutu Sese Seko as the agent of the US and NATO . All the iniquities of Mobutu against the peoples of Zaire were aided and assisted by the US in the name of containing the spread of communism. It is said that the US was privy to the fall of Nkrumah. Take the case of Nigeria, The discovery of crude oil was a major factor in the Nigera/Biafra civil war. Because of its existing economic links, Nigeria had to resist the temptation during the war to turn to the Soviet Union for assistance. The Western powers then had the policy to recognise Nigeria and provide support, but never enough to bring the war to a quick end. Indeed, both Nigeria and Biafra continued for the 30 months to get military supplies from essentially the same markets.

Consider also the cases of Angola and Mozambique. Faced with the armies of the Portuguese Fascist dictator, Salazar, the nationalist movements in Angola and Mozambique received military assistance from Cuba, the Soviet Union and China at a price. This turned them into the enemies of the US and NATO. As a result of their resistance, the Fascist regime became bankrupt and was overthrown. Democracy was born in Portugal which became a more worthy member of NATO, but the countries that paid the price were not allowed to enjoy their liberation. Dissident groups and civil wars have continued to be encouraged in the name of containing the spread of communism. Even when the Cold War came to an end, and Mobutu and the apartheid regime of South Africa no longer had the US Mandate to foment war in the

beleaguered countries, Jonas Savimbi continues to control diamond resources enough to continue the civil war. The cost of these neo-colonial wars to the people concerned are unimaginable. Yet before independence, both Angola and Mozambique found that their economies were already so integrated with the Portuguese economy that they had to end the Wars of Liberation by sitting at the table to negotiate independence with their former masters.

#### CONCLUSION: THE MEANING OF APARTHEID

Because of the long and intense campaign that had to be waged, the international community is well aware of some of the features of that evil system, perhaps more than any other in colonial African history. It may be helpful therefore if, in conclusion, we use Apartheid and South Africa to highlight some of the points we have been trying to make. The crucial factor is that it illustrates well the kind of exploitation to which Africa has been subjected by the Atlantic trade followed by racist colonialism. Unique as was the Apartheid regime, there was no feature of that evil system that could not be duplicated in the experience of other parts of black Africa. It was the racist colonial system that we have been discussing in other parts that made it possible for a few settlers protected by the force of the colonial power to erect such a system and operate it under neo-colonialism for so long because the Western world chose to regard white South Africa as their bulwark against the spread of communism. Another point to note is that the evil system arose out of the contempt bred by the Atlantic slave trade. The theology of the Dutch Reformed Church used to justify and sustain apartheid arose from the Unfinished business of the anti-slavery movement, and the failure to declare the Atlantic trade and racist colonialism as a sin incompatible with the Biblical notion of neighbourly love.

Notice also that, in spite of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee, the eradication of Apartheid mentality remains an unfinished business. We have in the constitution affirmative clauses to allay the fears of the privileged minority fearful of the possible revenge of the majority, but few concrete programmes to

repair the damage done to the majority peoples by all the injustice and the unjust enrichment of not only the settlers but their capitalist supporters also. Without such a concrete plan to redress some of the wrongs that could be redressed, we have to wonder what would happen when the expectations of the people remain unfulfilled and the saintly figures of Mandela and Desmond Tutu may no longer be around.

We are sometimes asked how Reparation is to be distributed if received. It is, of course, bad strategy to start sharing what we have not yet received. But I need to give some preview of the kind of thing we have in mind. Africa needs a kind of Marshall Plan that enabled war-torn Europe and Japan to recover so quickly from the devastating effects of the war. Consider what adequate resources at the disposal of an All Africa Railway Authority to plan, construct and manage a railway system could do to provide necessary infrastructure for development. Consider what misery and waste of resources an adequate system of public transportation would remove from the lives of people in the municipality of Lagos. What about a telecommunication system that will make it possible to call Accra from Lagos without going through London? What about resources to develop and maintain a network of first class universities and research institutes that could provide facilities in Africa that will stem the current drain of high level manpower from Africa? What about a few specialist referral hospitals so that we do not need to send every senior government official abroad for treatment? Not all the damage of the Atlantic trade and racist colonialism can now be undone. But the world owes Africa the resources to build the infrastructure so as to level the ground somewhat to make competition within the global economy a little fairer.

My concluding point is that it is such Reparation, not charity and aid, that Africa needs to jump start its development effort. And such Reparation will benefit not only Africa and peoples of African descent, but the whole world. Let me add that if the world can firmly confront the evil of racism, it will remove a burden not only from the back of black peoples, but also from the head and heart of white peoples as well.

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# ***Underdevelopment and Dependence in Black Africa— Origins and Contemporary Forms***

by SAMIR AMIN\*

CONTEMPORARY Black Africa can be divided into wide regions which are clearly different from one another. But it is more difficult to analyse these differences – and to study their nature, origin, and effects – than to see them.

The unity of Black Africa is, none the less, not without foundations. On the contrary, leaving aside the question of ‘race’ – in Africa, they are no more homogenous nor less mixed, since pre-historical times, than are the other ‘races’, whether white, yellow, or red – the common or kindred cultural background, and the striking similarities of social organisation, make a living unity of Black Africa. This physical reality, extensive and rich, did not wait for colonial conquest to borrow from, or give of itself to, the other wide regions of the Old World – the Mediterranean in particular, but also Europe and Asia. The image of an ancient, isolated and introverted Africa no longer belongs to this age: isolation – naturally associated with a so-called ‘primitive’ character – only corresponded to an ideological necessity born out of colonial racism. But these exchanges did not break the unity of Africa; on the contrary, they helped to assert and enrich the African personality. The colonial conquest of almost the whole of this continent strengthened this feeling of unity in Black Africa. Seen from London, Paris, or Lisbon, Black Africa appeared to European observers as a homogenous entity, just as the North Americans regard Latin America as a continent which extends south of the Rio Grande.

Looked at from the opposite point of view, that is to say from inside, Black Africa, like Latin America, evidently appears as extremely variegated. It is true that the present states are the result of an artificial carve-up, but almost nowhere does this constitute the sole or even the essential basis of their diversity. We would be wrong again to think that this pattern, however recent, has not yet left its mark on Africa and is not likely – for better or for worse – to consolidate itself, at least as far as the foreseeable future is concerned. Of even more significance, per-

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haps, are some 100 or 200 micro-regions, varying in width, which readily cross the frontiers of the present states. They constitute yet another aspect of the reality; they do not derive their definition from their geographical position alone, but above all because of the homogenous nature of their social, cultural, economic, and even political conditions.

Between these two extremes – African unity and micro-regional variety – the continent can be divided into a few wide macro-regions. I propose to identify three, and shall discuss the basis for such a distinction.

Traditional West Africa (Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, Togo, former French West Africa), Cameroun, Chad, and the Sudan together constitute a first macro-region, which I wish to describe as *Africa of the colonial trade economy*. I shall give a precise definition to this term, which, unfortunately, is too often treated lightly. This integrated whole is clearly divisible into three sub-regions: (i) the coastal zone, which is easily accessible from the outside world, and which constitutes the ‘rich’ area; (ii) the hinterland, which mostly serves as a pool of labour for the coast, and as a market for the industries which are being established there; and (iii) the Sudan, whose particular characteristics will be examined later.

The traditional Congo River basin (Congo-Kinshasa, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, and the Central African Republic) form a second macro-region, which I wish to define as *Africa of the concession-owning companies*. Here also it is necessary to explain how, over and above the difference in the policies and practices of the French and Belgian Governments, genuine similarities in the mode of colonial exploitation characterise the whole of the region, and this justifies its demarcation.

The eastern and southern parts of the continent (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Malawi, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, and South Africa) constitute the third macro-region, which I wish to call *Africa of the labour reserves*. Here also, apart from the varied nature of each country, the region was developed on the basis of the policy of colonial imperialism, according to the principle of ‘enclosure acts’ which were applied to entire peoples.

Ethiopia, Somalia, Madagascar, Réunion, and Mauritius, like the Cape Verde islands on the opposite side of the continent, do not form part of these three macro-regions, although here and there are to be found some aspects of each. However, they also display features of other systems which have played an important part in their actual development: the slavery-mercantilist system of the Cape Verde islands, Réunion, and Mauritius; and the ‘pseudo-feudal’ system of Ethiopia

and Madagascar. Obviously questions of frontiers between the regions remain: Katanga, for example, belonged to the area of the labour reserves, and Eritrea to that of the colonial trade.

#### TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF PERIODS IN AFRICAN HISTORY

My proposed distinction is deliberately based on the effects of the *last* period in the history of Africa: that of colonisation. It will be necessary to study how the dialectic reveals itself between the major colonial policies and the structures inherited from the past. To do so, we have to go back in time, and to distinguish four separate periods.

The pre-mercantilist period stretches from the earliest days until the seventeenth century. In the course of this long history, relations were forged between Black Africa and the rest of the Old World, particularly from both ends of the Sahara, between the savannah countries (from Dakar to the Red Sea) and the Mediterranean. Social formations emerged which cannot be understood if they are not placed, here as elsewhere, within the context of all the multitude of other social systems and their relationships with one another. During that period, Africa, by and large, does not appear as inferior, or weaker than the rest of the Old World. The unequal development within Africa was not any worse than that north of the Sahara, on both sides of the Mediterranean.

The mercantilist period stretches from the seventeenth century to 1800. It was characterised by the slave trade, and the first retrograde steps date back to this time. It was not only the coastal zone which was affected by this trade: there was a decline in productive forces throughout the continent. There were two distinct slave-trading areas: the Atlantic trade (by far the most harmful, due to the great numbers involved), which spread from the coast to the whole of the continent, from Saint-Louis in Senegal to Quelimane in Mozambique; and the Oriental trade operating from Egypt, the Red Sea, and Zanzibar, towards the Sudan and East Africa. This second type of mercantilist activity was carried beyond 1800, because the industrial revolution which shook the foundations of society in Europe and North America did not reach the Turkish-Arab part of the world.

The next period lasted from 1800 to 1880-90, and was characterised by attempts – at least in certain regions within the influence of Atlantic mercantilism – to establish a new form of dependence with that part of the world where capitalism was firmly entrenched by industrialisation. These attempts, however, had very limited backing, as we shall see why later. The area of influence of Oriental mercantilism was not affected.

The fourth period, that of colonisation, completed the work of the previous period in Western Africa, took over from Oriental mercantilism in Eastern Africa, and developed with tenfold vigour the present forms of dependence of the continent according to the models of the three macro-regions mentioned above. The present throws light on the past. The completed forms of dependence – which only appeared when Africa was actually made the periphery of the world capitalist system in its imperialist stage, and was developed as such – enable us to understand, by comparison, the meaning of previous systems of social relations, and the way in which African social formations were linked with those of other regions of the Old World with which they had contact.

#### I. THE PRE-MERCANTILIST PERIOD: UP TO THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

During this time, Black Africa was not on the whole more backward than the rest of the world. The continent was characterised by complex social formations, sometimes accompanied by the development of the state, and almost invariably based on visible social differentiations which revealed the ancient nature of the process of disintegration of the primitive village community. The great confusion which arises in any discussion of traditional African society is due to a number of reasons, especially: (i) the scarcity of documents and remains of the past, leaving only the accounts of Arab travellers; (ii) the confusion between the concepts of 'mode of production' and 'social formation' which calls for clarification and a basic differentiation; (iii) the confusion between different periods of African history, particularly between the pre- and actual mercantilist periods – and the justifiable concern of scholars to relate history in all its continuous detail, enhances this confusion; and last but not least, (iv) the ideological prejudices against Africa, clearly connected with colonial racism.

This is why I have formulated three sets of propositions, so that we can see our way clearly through this history, without claiming to recast its evolution. My intention is to emphasise the main differences between the Africa of this period – the only true 'traditional' Africa, neither isolated nor primitive – and that which followed.

The first thing to make clear is that *a society cannot be reduced to a mode of production*. This is an abstract concept which does not involve the notion of a fixed historical sequence with regard to the progress of civilisation, from the first differentiated communities up to the capitalist form of society. It is feasible to distinguish five types: (i) the primitive

community mode of production, the only possible one to come first, for obvious reasons; (ii) the 'tributary' mode of production which involved the persistent parallel existence of a village community *and* a socio-political structure which exploited the former by exacting a tribute – this, the most common pre-capitalist mode, developed sometimes from earlier into evolved forms, when the village family community lost the right of ownership of land to feudal masters; (iii) the slave-based mode of production, which was less common but scattered; (iv) the small-scale trade mode of production, quite common but never likely to form the main structure of society; and lastly, (v) the capitalist mode of production.<sup>1</sup>

It is necessary to emphasise that social formations are *concrete* structures, organised and characterised by a *dominant* mode of production which forms the apex of a complex set of subordinate modes. Thus it is possible to have a small-scale trading mode linked to a dominant tributary ('early' or 'developed feudal'), and even based on a slave or a capitalist mode of production. Likewise, the mode based on slavery may not be of the dominant type, and this seems to be the rule when it is related to a dominant tributary mode of production (or even a capitalist mode, as in the United States until 1865); and only in exceptional cases does it become dominant itself, as in the classical societies of ancient times.

Modes of production, then, do not actually constitute historical categories, in the sense of occurring in a necessary sequence of time. On the other hand, social formations have a definite age, reckoned on the basis of the level of development of the productive forces. This is why it is absurd to draw any analogy between the same mode of production belonging to societies of different ages – for example, between African or Roman slavery and that of the nineteenth-century United States.<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, *social formations cannot be understood when taken out of their context*. Sometimes the relations between different societies are marginal, but often they are decisive. The problems connected with long-distance trade are thus very important. This is obviously not a mode of production, but a method of articulation between autonomous societies. This is the essential difference from internal trade, which is made up of

<sup>1</sup> For further details, see my *L'Accumulation à l'échelle mondiale* (Paris, 1970), especially pp. 31, 165–8, and 341–72; also my article on 'La Politique coloniale française à l'égard de la bourgeoisie commerçante sénégalaise', in Claude Meillassoux (ed.), *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa* (London, 1971), pp. 361–76.

<sup>2</sup> This idea of the cumulative nature of technological progress, and the importance of the age of the social formation in assessing the significance of a mode of production to which it belongs, is stressed by H. S. Michelina, 'The Economic Formation: notes on the problem of its definition', I.D.E.P. paper, Dakar, October 1971.

exchanges between dealers in a particular society. Such exchanges are characteristic of the simple trading mode of production or that based on slavery (in this case a combination of both), which are elements of the society in question. But internal trade may also be an extension of long-distance trade, if the goods involved penetrate deeply within that particular society.

Long-distance trade brings into contact societies unknown to one another – i.e. it involves the exchange of products for which each is unaware of the other's cost of production, 'rare' goods for which there are no substitutes in the importing country. As a result, the social groups engaged in that activity enjoy a monopoly position from which they derive their profits. Such a monopoly frequently explains the 'special' nature of these groups, often specialised foreign traders belonging to a particular caste or ethnic community, for example the Jews in Europe and the Dioula in West Africa. In this kind of trade, the subjective theory of value still had some significance – but it is meaningless when the cost of production of the goods is known to the respective trade partners, as in the capitalist system of exchange.

This long-distance trade could, in certain societies, become a decisive factor. This is the case when only a limited surplus is able to be extracted from the producers in a particular society by the dominant local classes. The reason for this may be the low development of the productive forces, and/or difficult ecological conditions, or the successful resistance by village communities to the extraction of this surplus. In such a case, long-distance trade makes possible, through its characteristic monopoly profit, the transfer (not, of course, the generation) of a fraction of the surplus of one society to another. For the receiving society, this transfer may be of vital importance, and may serve as the principal basis of the wealth and power of the ruling classes. Civilisation may then wholly depend on this trade, and any shift of trading centres can cause one region to fall into decadence, or create conditions for it to prosper, without bringing about either any regression or any noticeable progress in the level of its productive forces. This, in my opinion, is the explanation for the ups and downs in the history of the Old World and the Mediterranean, particularly with regard to the so-called Greek miracle, and the prosperity and decline of the Arab world.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, 'Recherches sur un mode de production africain', in *La Pensée* (Paris), April 1969, rightly emphasises the decisive role which long-distance trade played in the constitution of some African states. Cf. Ahmad El Kodsy, 'Nationalism and Class Struggles in the Arab World,' in the *Monthly Review* (New York), July–August 1970; and also Antoine Pelletier and Jean-Jacques Goblot, *Matérialisme historique et histoire des civilisations* (Paris, 1969), who suggest this for Greece.

The third point is that *the African societies of the pre-mercantile period developed autonomously*, although they followed a parallel course to that of the Mediterranean world, both Eastern and European. The semi-arid zone which stretches diagonally across the Old World, from the Atlantic coast to Central Asia, has always separated the regions which were ecologically conducive to a high productivity in agriculture: monsoon Asia, tropical Africa, and temperate Europe. This zone has seen the birth of some brilliant civilisations, almost all founded on long-distance trade, particularly Greece and the Arab Empire,<sup>1</sup> whose vicissitudes followed the course of this trade. On either side, autonomous societies – those of feudal Europe and, at least, some of those of tropical Africa, particularly in the Sudan-Sahel region immediately south of the Sahara – developed along parallel lines, precisely because of the long-distance trade which linked them all. Thus one can say that this part of Africa was already fully integrated, as much as Europe, into the history of the world.

This is why the trans-Sahara trade was so significant. It enabled the whole of the Old World – Mediterranean, Arab, and European – to be supplied with gold from the main source of production in Upper Senegal and Ashanti, until the discovery of America. The importance of this flow can hardly be adequately stressed. For the societies of tropical Africa, this trade became the basis of their organisation. The mining of gold under the orders of the king provided the ruling classes of the countries concerned with the means to obtain across the Sahara, on the one hand, rare luxury goods (clothes, drugs, perfumes, dates, and salt), and on the other, and in particular, the opportunity to establish and strengthen their social and political power by the acquisition of horses, copper, iron bars, and weapons. This trade thus encouraged social differentiation, and the creation of states and empires, just as it promoted the improvement of instruments, and the adaptation of techniques and products to suit local climatic conditions. In return, Africa supplied mainly gold, a few other rare products, notably gum and ivory, and some slaves.<sup>2</sup>

Some European historians, for obvious political reasons, have tried to confuse this trade between equal autonomous partners with the later devastating slave trade of the mercantilist period. The small number of black people in the southern areas of the Maghreb – a few hundred

<sup>1</sup> Except for Egypt and Mesopotamia, and hence the frequent mistake of speaking of 'Arab feudalism' criticised by El Kodsý, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> The role and the nature of this trade were highlighted for the first time by E. W. Bovill, *Caravans of the Old Sahara* (London, 1933), later revised as *The Golden Trade of the Moors* (London, 1958).

thousand compared with about a hundred million in America – shows the futility of this confusion. On the other hand, the stock of gold built up in Europe and in the East throughout these centuries, originating from tropical Africa, reminds us of the principal nature of this trade. After all, this is why the ideas which accompanied the traders were easily accepted – for example, the early adoption of Islam in the Senegal River areas. The important volume of this trade, its egalitarian nature, and the autonomous character of the African societies, are unambiguously described in the Arab literature of the period. Furthermore, one can understand the admiration expressed in the accounts of the Arab travellers if it is remembered that the development and structure of the societies of North and West Africa belonged to the same technological age, just as the place they occupied in the world system of the time was similar. The link between the royal monopoly of the mining of gold, and its marketing by Muslim traders, forms the basis of the structure of these societies. These traders were, as was very often the case, organised in a kind of caste system, and here belonged to a religious minority.

For centuries the Mediterranean societies and those of tropical Africa were united by a bond, for better or for worse. The vicissitudes of one area had quick repercussions on the other, just as wealth and glory reached them all simultaneously. Thus the gradual shifting of routes from west to east found a parallel shift in the civilisation and power of the nations both in North Africa and in the West African savannah lands – reflected, for example, in the successive might of the ancient Empires of Ghana and Mali, the Hausa cities, Bornu, Kanem, and Darfur. This also explains why there was a crisis in Africa when the centre of the newly born European mercantile capitalism moved from the Mediterranean towards the Atlantic. This shift, studied by Fernand Braudel with his usual talent and care for detail, heralded the decline, in the sixteenth century, of the Italian towns which, since the thirteenth century, had opened the way for a decisive evolution in the future history of mankind.<sup>1</sup> Similarly we can say that this change was to cause the downfall of both the Arab world and the Sudan-Sahel regions of Black Africa. Soon afterwards the presence of Western Europe along the coasts of Africa was to become a reality. This shift of the centre of gravity of trade in Africa, from the savannah hinterland to the coast, was a direct consequence of the change of commercial emphasis in Europe from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. But the new trade between Europe and Africa was not to play the same role as that of the

<sup>1</sup> Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (Paris, 1949).

preceding period; henceforth it was to take place under mercantile capitalism.

## 2. THE MERCANTILIST PERIOD: THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

As I have pointed out elsewhere, the mercantilist period saw the emergence of two poles of the capitalist mode of production: (i) the creation of a proletariat resulting from the decline of feudal relationships, and (ii) the accumulation of wealth in the form of money.<sup>1</sup> During the industrial revolution the two became united; money wealth turned into capital, and the capitalist mode of production reached its completed stage. During this long period of incubation covering three centuries the *American* periphery of the Western European mercantile centre played a decisive role in the accumulation of money wealth by the Western European bourgeoisie. Black Africa played a no less important role as the *periphery of the periphery*. Reduced to the function of supplying slave labour for the plantations of America, Africa lost its autonomy. It began to be shaped according to foreign requirements, those of mercantilism.

Let us finally recall that the plantations of America did not constitute autonomous societies, in spite of their slave-based form of organisation. As I have argued previously, this mode of production was here an element of a non-slave-based society, i.e. it was not the dominant feature of that society. The latter was mercantilist, and the dominant characteristic of the plantation economy was the trade monopoly which, under its control and for its benefit, sold the products of these plantations on the European market, thus quickening the disintegration of feudal relations. The peripheral American society was thus an element in the world structure whose centre of gravity was in Western Europe.

The devastating effects of the mercantilist slave trade for Africa are now better known, thanks to the works of several historians free from race and colonial prejudices. I wish here to mention a recent and brilliant study of the Kingdom of Waalo by Boubacar Barry,<sup>2</sup> from which two main points emerge.

First, while the pre-mercantile trans-Sahara trade, in which the Waalo participated, had strengthened state centralisation and stimulated progress in that autonomous Senegalese kingdom, the Atlantic trade which replaced it (as soon as the French settled in 1859 in Saint-Louis), did not give rise to any productive forces; on the contrary, this caused a disintegration of the society and of the Waalo state. This

<sup>1</sup> See my *L'Accumulation à l'échelle mondiale*, ch. 2, section 3.

<sup>2</sup> Boubacar Barry, *Le Royaume du Waalo, 1659-1859* (Paris, 1971, mimeo).

explains why force had to be used by the French to cut off the trans-Saharan links, to subjugate that region of Africa, and to alter its external relations to suit the requirements of the French trading post of Saint-Louis. African societies obviously opposed this worsening of their situation, and Islam served as the basis for their resistance.

The traders of Saint-Louis paid with weapons for the slaves they bought from the king (*Brak*). This ruptured the former balance of power between (i) the *Brak* who maintained a permanent army of captives (*tyeddo*) under crown control, (ii) the council of elders (*seb ak baor*) which nominated him, and had a system of prerogatives superimposed over the collective clan-ownership (*lamanat*) of lands in the village communities, and (iii) the village communities themselves, based on the *lamanat*. The customary dues paid by the traders of Saint-Louis encouraged a civil war which involved the *Brak*, the *tyeddo*, and the *kangam* (leading notables), and a ransacking of communities to obtain slaves. The muslim priests (*marabouts*) tried to organise a resistance movement: their aim was to stop the slave trade, i.e. the export of the labour force, but not to end internal slavery. Henceforth, Islam changed its character: from being a religion of a minority group of traders, it became a popular movement of resistance. The first war led by the *marabouts*, 1673-7, failed in its attempt to convert the people of the Fleuve region and to stop the slave trade. A century later, in 1776, the Toorodo revolution in Toucouleur country overthrew the military aristocracy and ended the slave trade. But in the Waalo Kingdom, being too near to Saint-Louis, the attempt by Prophet Diile in 1830 failed in the face of French military intervention in support of the *Brak*.

Secondly, a study of the Waalo case is of special interest because the slave trade took place parallel to the trade in gum. However, the latter did not have the same impact on African society. The export of goods (instead of labour) does not necessarily have a devastating effect and may, on the contrary, lead to progress. This type of export was not characteristic of the mercantilist period for Africa as a whole, which almost exclusively supplied slaves. But here, rather exceptionally, it played an equally important role, because the slaves, like the Galam gold, mainly followed the road to Gambia. However, gum was supplied by the Waalo, and also in particular by the Trarza Moors. They could export this either via Saint Louis to the French alone, or via Portendick which was open to competition between the English and the Dutch. To cut off the Portendick route, the French helped the Trarza to settle in the Fleuve region, and to cross it during the 'Gum War', in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Such circumstances thus introduced

a contradiction of secondary importance between the Waalo and the Trarza. It was this which explains the failure of the 'War of the *Marabouts*' in the seventeenth century, led simultaneously by those who were hostile to the slave trade, and by the Moors who put increasing pressure on the Waalo in order to monopolise the gum trade.<sup>1</sup>

The mercantilist slave trade had similar devastating effects on all the regions of Africa where it took place. Along the coast, from Saint-Louis to Quelimane, it affected almost the whole of the continent, except the north-eastern area of the Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, and East Africa. The similarity between the history of the Waalo and that of the Kongo Kingdom should be recalled.<sup>2</sup> The slave trade here also brought about the disintegration of the central authority, and led to anarchy which opened the way for the Yaga raids. Such examples abound. There were wars and anarchy almost everywhere on the continent, and the flight of peoples towards regions of shelter which were difficult to reach and also very often poor – such as those of the paleo-negritic peoples in the over-populated mountains of West Africa. It all ended with an alarming decrease in the population. The processes of integration were stopped, as well as the construction of large communities, begun in the pre-mercantilist period. Instead there was an incredible fragmentation, isolation, and entanglement of peoples, and this, as we know, is the root cause of one of the most serious handicaps of contemporary Africa.

It is necessary to conclude this section with the question of the Oriental mercantilist period. I have certainly hesitated to define in this way the relations of the Near East (Egypt and southern Arabia) with Africa of the Nile and the eastern coast, from the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean as far as Mozambique. Neither the Ottoman Empire, nor Egypt under Mohammed Ali, and still less the southern Sultanates, were mercantilist societies similar to those of Europe from the renaissance to the industrial revolution. The disintegration of pre-capitalist relations – the necessary condition for the formation of a proletariat – was almost non-existent. This was the obstacle which Mohammed Ali attempted to overcome by setting up an entirely new state apparatus. I do not propose to study this here, except to bring out the main trends in the evolution of the Sudan, which Egypt was to conquer in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> It was during the pre-mercantilist period

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> See Jan Vansina, *Introduction à l'éthnographie du Congo* (Brussels, 1967), and G. Ballandier, *La Vie quotidienne au royaume du Congo du XVI au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1965).

<sup>3</sup> See, inter alia, R. Hill, *Egypt in the Sudan, 1820–81* (London, 1959), P. M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881–98* (Oxford, 1958), and J. S. Trimingham, *Islam in the Sudan* (Oxford, 1949).

that two Sultanates were established here, based on long-distance trade with Egypt and the East: the Sultanate of Darfur, still powerful at the time of the Egyptian conquest, and the Sultanate of Fung, between the two Niles, weakened through the wars waged by Ethiopia. Mohammed Ali's aim was very simple: to loot the Sudan of gold, slaves, and ivory, and to export them in order to intensify the industrialisation of Egypt. This was a process of primitive accumulation similar to that of the European mercantilist period, and this is the reason for speaking of Oriental mercantilism. The industrial revolution had already occurred, and this was known to the Pasha; consequently the pre-mercantilist period and that of the capitalist system were mixed up in an attempt to industrialise Egypt by raising finance through state taxation of the peasants, the monopoly of foreign trade and, whenever possible, the looting of the colonies.

Up to 1850 it was the Egyptian army itself which hunted for slaves and robbed the Sudan of local products. After that date, the soldiers handed the job to Sudanese nomads, particularly the Baqqara, who sold the slaves they seized to Turkish, Copt, Syrian, and European merchants established under the aegis of the Khedive. These operations quickly entailed changes in the social system of the nomads concerned; their clan organisation was succeeded by 'nomad feudalism', founded on a territorial basis, and dominated by warrior nobles. In the zones of agriculture that had been thoroughly conquered, the Egyptian army destroyed the old chiefdoms and subjected the villagers to a tax in kind – livestock and grain – for the purpose of feeding the administration and the army of the conquerors. *Sheikhs* were created by the Egyptians and made responsible for the collection of taxes; they rapidly became rich by this means. Moreover, the best lands were taken from the communities and given to Egyptian *beys* and to some Sudanese *sheikhs*. Peasants were taken from their villages and attached to these lands as half-slaves and half-serfs; the proceeds of their commercial farming went to swell the Egyptian Treasury. Other peasants, hunted by the nomads and impoverished by the *sheikhs*, flocked into the market towns, established by the army at cross-roads, and on the borders of the slave-raiding areas. A craft industry grew up, distinct from agriculture, while on the land given to the *beys* and *sheikhs* Egyptian farming methods were introduced with higher productivity. By 1870 it was feasible to replace the tax in kind with a money tax, because of the increased marketed surplus. The Sudan was becoming unified, Islamised, and Arabised.

The Mahdist revolt, 1881–98, was a rebellion of those oppressed by that system: the people of the village communities, the slave-peasants of

the estates, and the craftsmen, slaves and beggars of the market towns. The successful revolt drove out the Egyptian army, the *beys* and the *sheikhs*. But after the Prophet's death, Khalifa Abdullahi changed the power structure of the Sudan. The military leaders of the revolt, whose origins were in the people, and the Baqqara warrior chiefs who joined it, reorganised to their advantage a state similar to that of the Egyptians; they seized the estates and levied taxes on their own account. It is true that the export of slaves was prohibited, but this had largely lost its old importance at the beginning of the conquest, because that labour force was now used on the spot. But the new state intended to continue exploiting the masses to its advantage and, for that purpose, destroyed the popular elements surrounding the Prophet. His family was imprisoned and several of the people's military leaders were executed. Furthermore, the Mahdist state resumed the export of slaves, but this time for its own benefit: the Khalifa organised slave raiding among the neighbouring peoples of the Upper Nile, Darfur, and Ethiopia; he kept a large number to strengthen his army and his economy, but authorised Sudanese merchants to export some of them. The Khalifa's army, which had lost the popularity which made up its strength at the time of the revolt, did not resist the British colonial expedition at the end of the century.

The slave trade organised from Zanzibar in the nineteenth century certainly falls within a mercantilist framework. For centuries, Arab trade on the coast was carried out in a pre-mercantilist context, which brought these regions of Black Africa into contact with India, the Indian archipelago, and even China. Here products were more important than slaves, as is shown by the very small black population of southern Arabia and the countries bordering the Indian Ocean. There would seem to be one exception, at the time when the Khalifa of Abbasside was organising sugar-cane plantations in Lower Iraq for which he imported black slaves. This short period ended with the Qarmat revolt.

From 1850 the slave trade suddenly became much more intense. There were in fact two new markets: the island of Réunion which was supplied in this way – although the slaves were disguised as 'contract labour' since the British had abolished the slave trade – and the island of Zanzibar itself. In 1840 the Sultan had transferred his capital from Oman, and gradually established a slave plantation economy producing the cloves for which European trade now offered a market. Zanzibar, hitherto a trading post, now became a plantation on a model very similar to that of the West Indies, Réunion, or Mauritius – the Arab West Indies. Thus we once again see that integration into the world capitalist

system was responsible for a devastating slave trade which had no resemblance to the long-distance trade of the pre-capitalist period.

### 3. INTEGRATION INTO THE FULL CAPITALIST SYSTEM: THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The slave trade disappeared with the end of mercantilism, that is to say essentially with the advent of the industrial revolution. Capitalism at the centre then took on its complete form; the function of mercantilism – the primitive accumulation of wealth – lost its importance, and the centre of gravity shifted from the merchant sector to the new industry. The old periphery of the plantation of America, and its African periphery of the slave trade, had now to give way to a new periphery whose function was to provide *products* which would tend to reduce the value of both constant and variable capital used at the centre: raw materials and agricultural produce. The advantageous terms under which these products were supplied to the centre are revealed by the theory of unequal exchange.<sup>1</sup>

However, central capital had only very limited means of achieving that goal, until the end of the nineteenth century. It was only when monopolies appeared at the centre that large-scale exports of capital became possible, and when henceforth central capital had the means of organising directly in the periphery, by modern methods, the production which suited it under appropriate conditions. Until then the centre could only rely on the ability of local social systems to adjust ‘spontaneously’, ‘by themselves’, to any new requirements. The Americans could do this in their own country; the British imperialists could impose this in India, as could the Dutch in Indonesia. In certain Eastern countries, notably the Ottoman Empire and Egypt, the joint efforts of ‘spontaneous internal adjustment’ and external pressure produced some results. This is not the place to trace that history. Even in tropical Africa some new crops were produced, exclusively due to the internal adaptation of African societies. There are a number of studies which are highly informative on the mechanism of these adjustments.

I wish again to refer to the exciting research work of Boubacar Barry. The project of establishing a colonial agricultural settlement in Waalo, making plantations for cotton, sugar cane, and tobacco, was first formulated by the British Governor of Saint-Louis at the end of the eighteenth century; but it was put on the agenda again after the French Revolution, as a consequence of the slave revolt of Santo Domingo.

<sup>1</sup> For further details, see my *L'Accumulation à l'échelle mondiale*.

When Waalo was 'bought' in 1819 by Governor Schmaltz, the experiment began. Barry analyses the causes of failure: the resistance of the village communities to their dispossession in favour of European planters, which had been agreed to by the aristocracy in return for extra 'customary' benefits; and the lack of manpower, since there was no reason why the peasants should leave their communities and become proletarians on the plantations. The *Brak* provided some warriors who to all intents and purposes were slaves – long-term recruits, *engagés à temps*. But the French settlement could only use 'tinkering' methods. It was not until the colonial conquest that ample resources enabled a proletariat to be created: by taxation, by pure and simple dispossession, and by forced labour – in short, by all the methods used in Africa after 1880, which were similar to those used earlier by the British in India, the Dutch in Indonesia, the French in Algeria, and the Egyptians in the Sudan.

The fact remains that the Waalo agricultural settlement ended in failure in 1831. But the attempt had accentuated the people's hatred of the aristocracy, and had prepared the way for their conversion to Islam: outside the official authority, Muslim communities organised themselves defensively around the *sérigne* to whom they paid tithes. When Faidherbe conquered the Waalo between 1855–9, with the intention of restarting the agricultural settlement, and at last procuring for French industry the cotton it needed, the vanquished aristocracy embraced Islam.<sup>1</sup> A new chapter opened, and we shall see later how the new production came to be organised in accordance with the requirements of the centre. Thus Islam changed its structure a second time since instead of being a resistance ideology, it was now to become a powerful means of integrating the new periphery and subordinating it to the design of the centre.

Other African societies made an effort to adjust themselves to this project, even before they were conquered. Walter Rodney points out that throughout the Benin coast the slaves who were still raided, but who could no longer be exploited, were put to work inside the society to produce, among other things, the exports which Europe demanded.<sup>2</sup> Cathérine Coquery-Vidrovitch has analysed in these terms the prodigious development of Dahomean oil-palm groves.<sup>3</sup> Onwuka Diké shows how another society, that of the Ibo, unable to have recourse to

<sup>1</sup> Boubacar Barry, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Walter Rodney, 'African Slavery and other Forms of Social Oppression on the Upper Guinea Coast in the context of the Atlantic Slave Trade', in *The Journal of African History* (Cambridge), III, 3, 1966.

<sup>3</sup> Cathérine Coquery-Vidrovitch, 'De la traite des esclaves à l'exportation de l'huile de palme et des palmistes au Dahomey, XIXe siècle', in Meillassoux, *op. cit.* pp. 107–23.

slaves, nevertheless adapted itself, again for the production of palm oil for export.<sup>1</sup> Here again many more examples could be cited.

The constitution and subsequent destruction of Samory's Empire reveals another aspect of the mechanism of integration. The collection of products for export, and the conveyance of imports received in exchange, strengthened the position of the Dioula Muslims, a minority inherited from the remote days of pre-mercantilism. The 'Dioula revolution' enabled them to establish a state which they controlled.<sup>2</sup> But this late episode occurred just at the beginning of the colonial period. The Empire had scarcely been founded by Samory, when it had to face the conquerors who destroyed it; they reorganised the channels of trade in the direction which suited them, and reduced the Dioula to the subordinate functions of colonial trade.

#### 4. INTEGRATION INTO THE FULL CAPITALIST SYSTEM: COLONISATION

The partitioning of the continent which was completed by the end of the nineteenth century multiplied the means available to the colonialists to attain capital at the centre. We must remember that their target was the same everywhere: to obtain cheap exports. But to achieve this, capital at the centre – which had now reached the monopoly stage – could organise production on the spot, and there exploit both the cheap labour and the natural resources, by wasting or stealing them, i.e. by paying a price which did not enable alternative activities to replace them when they were exhausted.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, through direct domination and brutal political coercion, incidental expenses could be limited by maintaining the local social classes as 'conveyor belts'. Hence the late development in Africa of the peripheral model of industrialisation by import substitution. It was not until independence that the local élites who took over from the colonial administration constituted the first element of a domestic market for 'luxury goods', according to inter-linkage relationships which I have discussed elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> Hence also the markedly bureaucratic nature of the 'privileged classes'.

However, although the target was the same everywhere, different variants of the system of colonial exploitation were developed. These

<sup>1</sup> K. Onwuka Diké, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830-85* (Oxford, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> See Yves Person, *Samori* (Dakar, 1970), 3 vols.

<sup>3</sup> This problem of the looting of natural resources is beginning to be studied with the present-day awareness of 'environmental problems', although the term is ambiguous.

<sup>4</sup> See my paper on 'Le Modèle théorique de l'accumulation dans le monde contemporain, centre et périphérie', I.D.E.P., Dakar, 1971.

did not depend, or only slightly, on the nationality of the coloniser. The contrast between French direct and British indirect rule, so frequent in the literature, is not very noticeable in Africa. It is true that a few differences are attributable to the nationality of the masters. British capital, being richer and more developed, and having additionally acquired the 'best pieces' of land, carried out an earlier and more through development than French capital.<sup>1</sup> Belgium, which had been forced to come to terms with the Great Powers, and had to accept the competition of foreign goods in the Congo, did not have the direct colonial monopolies which France used and abused to her advantage. Portugal similarly agreed to share her colonies with major Anglo-American capital.

In the region which I have called 'Africa of the labour reserves', capital at the centre needed to have a large proletariat immediately available. This was because there was great mineral wealth to be exploited (gold and diamonds in South Africa, and copper in Northern Rhodesia), and an untypical settler agriculture in the tropical Africa of Southern Rhodesia, Kenya, and German Tanganyika. In order to obtain this proletariat quickly, the colonisers dispossessed the African rural communities – sometimes by violence – and drove them deliberately back into small, poor regions, with no means of modernising and intensifying their farming. They forced the 'traditional' societies to be the supplier of temporary or permanent migrants on a vast scale, thus providing a cheap proletariat for the European mines and farms, and later for the manufacturing industries of South Africa, Rhodesia, and Kenya.<sup>2</sup>

Henceforth we can no longer speak of a traditional society in this part of the continent, since the labour reserves had the function of supplying a migrant proletariat, a function which had nothing to do with 'tradition'. The African social systems of this region, distorted and impoverished, lost even the semblance of autonomy: the unhappy Africa of *apartheid* and the Bantustans was born, and was to supply the greatest return to central capital. The economists' ideological mythology of the 'laws of the labour market' under these circumstances, formulated by Arthur Lewis,<sup>3</sup> has been subjected to merciless criticism, and Giovanni

<sup>1</sup> Thus the structures established in the Gold Coast in 1890, which have characterised Ghana up to the present day, made their appearance in the Ivory Coast only from 1950, after the abolition of forced labour. See R. Szereszewski, *Structural Changes in the Economy of Ghana, 1891-1911* (London, 1965), and Samir Amin, *Le Développement du capitalisme en Côte d'Ivoire* (Paris, 1967).

<sup>2</sup> See Ralph Horwitz, *The Political Economy of South Africa* (London, 1967); Richard Gray, *The Two Nations* (Oxford, 1961); Serge Thion, *Le Pouvoir pâle* (Paris, 1969; and above all, Giovanni Arrighi, *The Political Economy of Rhodesia* (The Hague, 1967).

<sup>3</sup> Arthur Lewis, *Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour* (Manchester, 1954).

Arrighi has restored the role of political violence to its true place.<sup>1</sup>

Until recently there was no known large-scale mineral wealth in West Africa likely to attract foreign capital, nor was there any settler colonisation. On the other hand, the slave trade was very active on this coast, and caused the development of complex social structures which I have analysed above. The colonial powers were thus able to shape a system which made possible the large-scale production of tropical agricultural products for export under the terms necessary to interest central capital in them, i.e. provided that the returns to local labour were so small that these products cost less than any possible substitutes produced in the centre itself.

The net result of these procedures, and the structures to which they gave rise, constituted what I have called 'Africa of the colonial trade economy' or, *l'économie de traite*.<sup>2</sup> These processes were, as always, as much political as economic, and included the following: (i) the organisation of a dominant trade monopoly, that of the colonial import-export houses, and the pyramidal shape of the trade network they dominated, in which the Lebanese occupied the intermediate zones while the former African traders were crushed and had to occupy subordinate positions; (ii) the taxation of peasants in money which forced them to produce what the monopolists offered to buy; (iii) political support to the social strata and classes which were allowed to appropriate *de facto* some of the tribal lands, and to organise internal migrations from regions which were deliberately left in their poverty so as to be used as labour reserves in the plantation zones; (iv) political alliance with social groups which, in the theocratic framework of the Muslim brotherhoods, were interested in commercialising the tribute they levied on the peasants; and last but not least, (v) when the foregoing procedures proved ineffective, recourse pure and simple to administrative coercion: forced labour.

Under these circumstances, the traditional society was distorted to the point of being unrecognisable; it lost its autonomy, and its main function was to produce for the world market under conditions which, because they impoverished it, deprived the members of any prospects of radical modernisation. This 'traditional' society was not, therefore, in transition to 'modernity'; as a dependent society it was complete, peripheral, and hence at a dead end. It consequently retained certain 'traditional' appearances which constituted its only means of survival. The Africa of the colonial trade economy included all the subordination/

<sup>1</sup> Arrighi, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> I have analysed this colonial trade in my *L'Afrique de l'Ouest bloquée* (Paris, 1971). See also Osende Afana, *L'Économie de l'ouest africain* (Paris, 1966); and André Vanhaeverbeke, *Rémunération du travail et commerce extérieur* (Louvain, 1970).

domination relationships between this pseudo-traditional society, integrated into the world system, and the central capitalist economy which shaped and dominated it. Unfortunately the phrase 'colonial-type trade' has been used so frequently that its meaning has been reduced to a mere description: the exchange of agricultural products against imported manufactured goods.<sup>1</sup> Yet the concept is much richer: it describes analytically the exchange of agricultural commodities provided by a peripheral society shaped in this way, against the products of a central capitalist industry, imported or produced on the spot by European enterprises.

The results of this colonial-type trade have varied according to different regions of this part of Africa. To give honour where honour is due, it was British capital which initiated a perfectly consistent formulation of aims and procedures. At the beginning of colonisation, when Lever Brothers asked the Governor of the Gold Coast to grant concessions which would enable them to develop modern plantations, he refused because 'it was unnecessary'. It would be enough, the Governor explained, to help the traditional chiefs to appropriate the best lands so that these export products could be obtained without extra investment costs. Lever then approached the Belgians and obtained concessions in the Congo, as we shall see why later.

I have analysed elsewhere the conditions for the success of this colonial-type trade,<sup>2</sup> but these may be summarised as follows: (i) an 'optimum' degree of hierarchy in a 'traditional' society, which is exactly the case in those zones formed by the slave trade; (ii) an 'optimum' population density in the rural areas of 10–30 inhabitants per square kilometre; (iii) the possibility of starting the process of proletarianisation by calling upon immigrants foreign to the ethnic communities of the plantation zone; (iv) the choice of 'rich' crops, providing a sufficient surplus per hectare and per worker, at the very first stage of their development; and (v) the support of the political authority, making available to the privileged minority such resources – political and economic, especially agricultural credit – as would make possible the appropriation and development of the plantations.

The complete model of this colonial-type trade was achieved in the Gold Coast and German Togoland by the end of the nineteenth century, and was reproduced much later in French West and Equatorial Africa. This lateness reflected that of French capitalism, and was attributable to the attempts at quasi-settler colonisation even under

<sup>1</sup> As Suret Canale does in *L'Afrique noire, l'ère coloniale* (Paris, 1960).

<sup>2</sup> See my *L'Accumulation à l'échelle mondiale*, pp. 347–8.

unfavourable conditions – for example, French planters in the Ivory Coast and in Equatorial Africa – and the corresponding maintenance of forced labour until the modern period, after World War II.

This colonial economy took two main forms. Dominant in the Gulf of Guinea, where conditions enabled this kind of trade to develop, was the *kulak* class of indigeneous planters of rural origin, who employed paid labour, and secured virtually exclusive appropriation of the land. On the other hand, in the savannah zone from Senegal through Northern Nigeria to the Sudan, the Muslim brotherhoods permitted another type of colonial trade: the production and export of groundnuts and cotton in vast areas subject to a theocratic power – that of the Mourid brotherhoods of Senegal, the Emirates of Nigeria, and the Ansar and Ashiqqa in the Sudan. They kept the form of a tribute-paying social system, but this was integrated into the international system, because the surplus appropriated in the form of tribute levied on the village communities was itself marketed. It was the Egyptian colonisation in the Sudan which created the most advanced conditions for the development of this type of organisation, which in that country tended towards a pure and simple latifundia system of large estates. The British merely gathered the fruits of this evolution. The new latifundia owners accepted the colonial administration after 1898, and grew cotton for the benefit of British industry. Powerful modern techniques were made available to them, notably large-scale irrigation in the Gezira.

There was a ‘second transformation of Islam’ in West Africa, after the colonial conquest opened the way to the same kind of evolution, although less definite and slower. We have already seen that Islam in this region underwent a first transformation: from being the religion of a minority caste of merchants in the pre-mercantilist period, integrated into an animist society (hence similar to Judaism in Europe), it became the ideology of popular resistance to the slave trade in the mercantilist period. This second transformation made Islam – ‘restored’ by the aristocracy and the colonial authorities – the guiding ideology of peasant leaders for the organisation of the export production which the colonisers desired. The Mourid phenomenon of Senegal is probably the most striking example of this second transformation. The fact that the founders of the brotherhood, and some short-sighted colonial administrators, felt hostile to each other for some time, does not matter. Ultimately the brotherhood proved to be the most important vector for the expansion of the groundnut economy, and for the submission of the peasants to the goal of this economy: to produce a large

amount, and to accept very low and stagnating wages despite progress in productivity.

To organise this colonial-type trade it was necessary to destroy the pre-colonial pattern, and to reorganise the flows in the direction required by the externally orientated nature of the economy. For there had been, before, regional complementarities with a broad, natural forest-savannah base, strengthened by the history of the relations between the West African societies. The domestic trade between herdsmen and crop farmers, and in kola and salt, as well as the outflow of exports and the dissemination of imports, constituted a dense and integrated network, dominated by African traders. The colonial trading houses had to gain control of these flows and to direct them all towards the coast; that was why the colonial system destroyed African domestic trade and then reduced African traders – when they were not eliminated – to the role of subordinate primary collectors. The destruction of the trade of Samory, like that of the people of mixed blood in Saint-Louis, Gorée, and Freetown, like that of the Hausa and Ashanti of Salaga, and of the Ibo of the Niger delta, bear witness to this other crippling socio-economic effect of *l'économie de traite*.

Thus the colonial trade necessarily gave rise to a polarisation of dependent peripheral development at the regional level. The necessary corollary of the 'wealth' of the coast was the impoverishment of the hinterland. Predisposed by geography and history to a continental development, organised around the major inland river arteries (thus providing for transport, irrigation, electric power, and so on), Africa was condemned to be only 'developed' narrowly along the coast. The exclusive allocation of resources to the latter zone, a planned policy of colonial trade, accentuated this regional imbalance. The mass emigration from the hinterland to the coast forms part of the logic of the system: it made cheap labour available to capital where capital required this, and only 'the ideology of universal harmony' can see in these migrations anything other than their impoverishment of the departure zones.<sup>1</sup> The culmination of the colonial trade system was a balkanisation, in which the 'recipient' micro-regions had no 'interest' in 'sharing' the crumbs of the colonial cake with their labour reserves.

<sup>1</sup> Elliot J. Berg, 'The Economics of the Migrant Labor System,' in Hilda Kuper (ed.), *Urbanisation and Migration in West Africa* (Los Angeles, 1965), reflects better than anyone else this non-scientific ideology. The conventional assumption is that migrations 'redistribute' one factor of production (labour) which originally was unequally distributed. If that were so, migrations would tend to equalise the rates of growth of the economies of the various regions. But we can see that they are everywhere accompanied by a growing disparity between rates of growth: the acceleration of growth *per capita* in the immigration zones, and its reduction in the emigration zones.

Thus the bounties of the colonial trade were highly relative. However, it was impossible to implement this system in Central Africa, the third micro-region of the continent. Here, ecological conditions had to some extent protected the peoples who took refuge from the ravages of the slave trade in zones unlikely to be penetrated from the coast. The low density of population, and the lack of sufficient African hierarchies, made the colonial-trade model non-viable. Discouraged, the colonial authorities gave the country to any adventurers who would agree to try 'to get something out of it' without resources – since adventure does not attract capital. The misdeeds of the concessionary companies have been duly denounced: between 1890 and 1930 they ravaged French Equatorial Africa with no result except a trivial profit. As for the Congo, it will be remembered that Levers Brothers were welcomed by the Belgians, after the firm's unsuccessful attempt to establish itself in the Gold Coast. But it was only after World War I, when the solution was adopted of having industrial plantations established directly by the major capitalists, that a small-scale colonial-type trade infiltrated as an extension of the plantation zones belonging to foreign capital.<sup>1</sup> As for French Equatorial Africa, this area had to wait until the 1950s before seeing the first symptoms. Thus the negative impact of this period, still omnipresent, justifies the name which I have given to the region – 'Africa of the concessionary companies'.

In all three cases, then, the colonial system organised the African societies so that they produced exports – on the best possible terms, from the point of view of the mother country – which only provided a very low and stagnating return to local labour. This goal having been achieved, we must conclude that there are no traditional societies in modern Africa, only dependent peripheral societies.

<sup>1</sup> Cathérine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Le Congo française au temps des compagnies concessionnaires, 1890–1930* (Paris, 1971, mimeo); and R. Merlier, *Le Congo, de la colonisation belge à l'indépendance* (Paris, 1965).