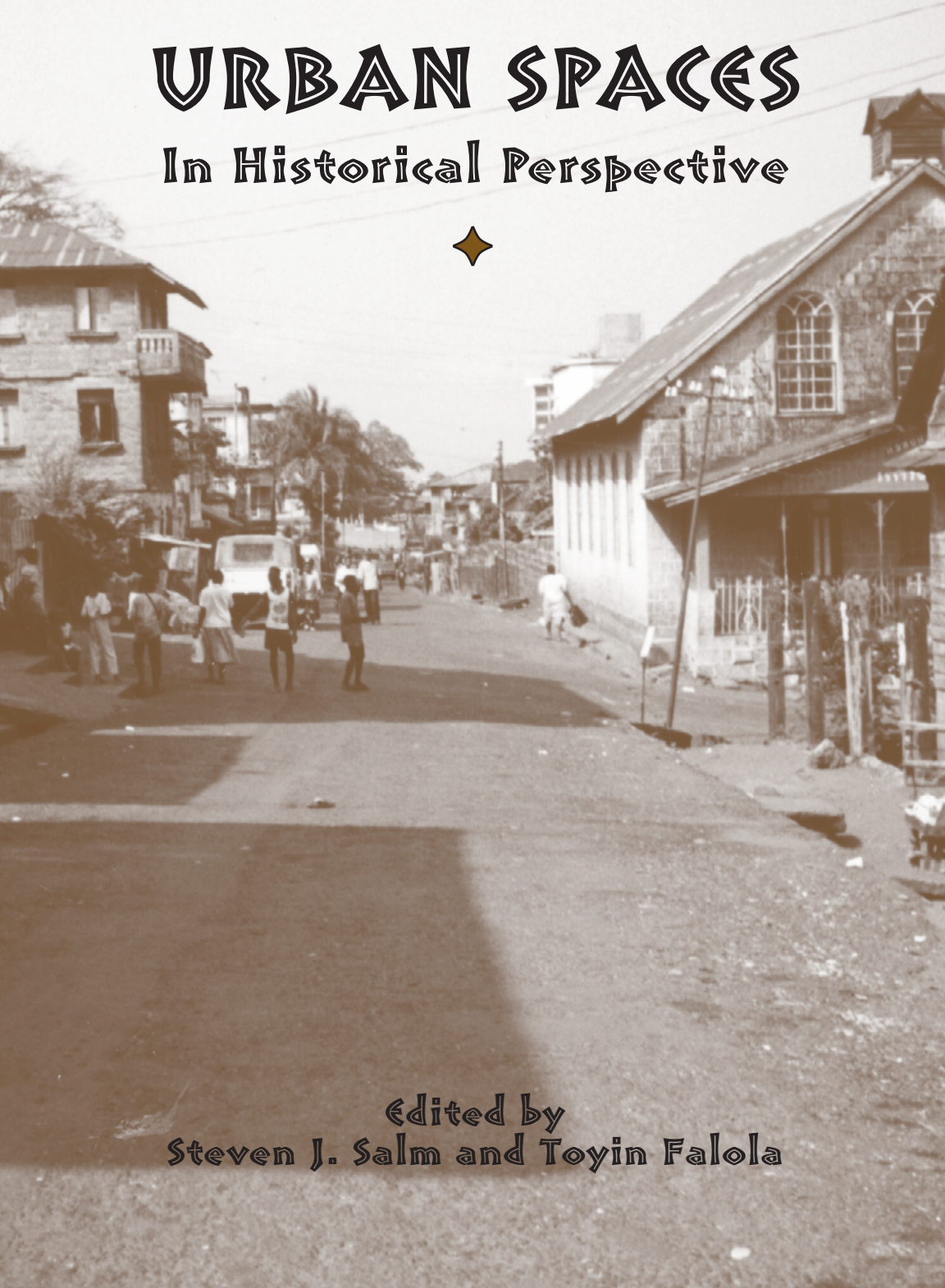


AFRICAN URBAN SPACES

In Historical Perspective



Edited by
Steven J. Salm and Toyin Falola

**AFRICAN URBAN SPACES IN
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**



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Steven J. Salm and Toyin Falola



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For David Henige,
editor of *History in Africa*,
for his contribution to African Studies

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PREFACE

Africa has a long and rich history of urbanization dating back thousands of years. Cities in ancient Egypt, the Western Sudan, Nigeria, Ethiopia, the East African City States, and Southern Africa appeared long before the arrival of Europeans to Africa's coasts. Since the Second World War, however, the pace of urban growth has increased rapidly, ensuring that studies of the political, social, economic, and cultural systems of the urban environments would follow close behind. Since the dawn of African history as a scholarly field in western universities, the urban historiography of Africa has progressed from a myopic view of specific groups in city centers to a larger inter-relational approach that explores actions and interactions within particular urban settings.

The urban environment is complex. One cannot analyze urban space without also incorporating that of the periurban and nonurban areas. Economic factors cannot be studied without giving thought to social conditions, nor can an analysis of political ideologies emerge without allowing for intellectual and cultural considerations. In the densely populated and more cosmopolitan urban space, cultures, politics, and economics mingle on a regular basis. Urbanization in Africa is a complex process, and studies of it must attempt to grasp the clusters of relationships that form around class, ethnicity, race, occupation, religion, and generation. Researchers must take into account residential neighborhoods, market places, mosques, churches, sports fields, and other meeting places. In other words, we must attempt to develop a picture of the entire political, economic, social, and cultural urban landscape.

This book presents new and interdisciplinary approaches to the study of African urban history and culture. It presents original research and integrates historical methodologies with those of anthropology, geography, literature, art, and architecture. Moving between precolonial, colonial, and contemporary urban spaces, the articles cover the major regions, religions, and cultural influences of sub-Saharan Africa. Themes include

Islam, Christianity, traditional religion, architecture, migration, globalization, social and physical decay, identity, race relations, politics, development, and the struggle for control of urban space. The book not only elaborates on what makes the study of African urban spaces unique within the modern global cultural climate, it also offers an all-encompassing and up-to-date study of the subject and inserts Africa into the growing discussion of urban history and culture throughout the world.

The introductory article by Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, "African Urban Spaces: History and Culture," provides an overview of the state of urban scholarship today and depicts the major themes and arguments contained in this work. She also compares the different perspectives that scholars have taken regarding Francophone and Anglophone urban centers and suggests areas of deficiency that might be filled by future scholarship. The remainder of the book is divided into four sections. If we remain true to the multidisciplinary and complex nature demanded of African urban studies, we can make the argument that many of the articles would fit well in any of the sections. The order, however, has been selected to emphasize important and sometimes neglected themes in African urban scholarship and to present new and creative ways of accessing and expanding on those themes.

Part I deals with the concept of built space and how religious factors, colonial ideologies, and conceptions of urban areas as more "modern" spaces shaped the development of urban environments in the Sokoto Caliphate, the French Sahara, French West Africa, and Namibia. These articles show how the organization and navigation of built space involved not only physical arrangement and architectural patterns, but also the movement of people within the spatial voids that occupy the areas between the physical dimensions.

Part II turns to racial and ethnic factors in the formation of African urban spaces in Kenya and South Africa. Colonial discourse in Kenya employed racial stereotypes of Africans and Indians to justify segregation, pass laws, and the exploitation of non-whites, and left a legacy that impedes the development of urban areas today. In South Africa, racial categories were complicated by class, occupation, and age, factors that set Afrikaner miners apart from other Afrikaners and a younger generation of radical colored elite apart from their parents.

Part III explores the development of complex and cosmopolitan urban identities within African cities and the global nature of colonial rule that encouraged new movements of goods, peoples, and ideas. As they grew in size and stature, African cities began to stand out in sharp contrast

to the rural areas. We begin to see the development of distinct African identities and particular views of urban spaces. Foreign arrivals, including Christians and Muslims, Europeans and Asians, added to the increasing heterogeneity of African cities. Africans, too, began to move from all over the continent to new cities and regions, contributing to urban diversity but also creating new residential and occupational patterns.

Part IV focuses on the problems of urban society, perhaps an overemphasized but still important area of study within African historiography. The articles depict the historical roots of poverty, crime, overcrowding, and general urban decay in Nigeria, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, and Somalia today, but they also show how an understanding of the origins of these urban problems can suggest ways in which they can be alleviated.

This book grew out of a vibrant exchange between scholars of African urban studies at a conference held at the University of Texas at Austin in 2003. The conference brought scholars of African urban studies from throughout the world together to discuss important issues in the field today. The multidisciplinary nature of the participants and their research is characterized eloquently by Coquery-Vidrovitch in her Introduction. Undoubtedly, the conference was a success, and we hope that this work can build on that productive dialogue and contribute to the growing interest in African cities. We would be remiss, however, if we did not thank the many people who played important roles in making the conference and this book a reality.

African studies is thriving at the University of Texas at Austin, and the number of graduate students with interests in Africa continues to grow. The conference marked the culmination of many hours devoted to organizing papers, transportation, housing, venues, etc. Everyone looked forward to the conference with great excitement and relished the opportunity to engage in academic and social dialogue with the many participants. The energetic graduate students included Ann Cooper, Tyler Fleming, Ann Genova, Matt Heaton, Christian Jennings, and Kirsten Walles, as well as future graduate students Elizabeth Day, Roy Doron, and Ashley Rothrock.

Many other people also had important responsibilities and performed them admirably. Undergraduate students helped with organizational matters and attended many of the panels. Friends and significant others, including Susan Ranheim, Bisi Falola, and Stacy Kidd, also deserve special thanks. People who work behind the scenes often go unnoticed but

are instrumental in managing monetary affairs and logistics. They include Laura Flack, Martha Gail Moore, and the staff of the Texas Union. People created the character of the conference but finances made the idea a reality. The organizations and departments that supported us financially are too numerous to mention, but all must know that neither the conference nor this book would have occurred without their support. Those that deserve special mention are the Departments of History and English, the Center for African and African American Studies, and the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, the Office of the Vice President, the LBJ School of Public Affairs, the University Co-Op, and the Urban Issues Program. Last but certainly not least, Sam Saverance and Peter Siegesmund contributed their technological skills and worked diligently to manage the website, produce a beautiful conference program, and enhance the graphics for this publication.

Of course, it is to the contributors of this volume that we owe our greatest debt. After enduring the unease and the great expense of traveling to Austin, Africanist scholars of urban history and culture engaged in lively discussion to advance the state of African urban studies. The papers in this volume represent revised versions of only a select few, but the gathering of a large group of scholars around this specific theme created links that will undoubtedly enhance the field of African urban studies for years to come.

The opportunities provided by the urban milieu are endless. Physical encounters, such as the sharing of ideas by scholars from a variety of disciplines at a conference, and textual encounters, such as those contained in the following pages, push research forward and help to fill some of the voids in African urban studies. They also, however, open new potential avenues of research. This book explores some of those avenues and lays the groundwork upon which new studies can build.

Steven J. Salm and Toyin Falola
New Orleans and Austin
July 2004

INTRODUCTON

AFRICAN URBAN SPACES

HISTORY AND CULTURE

Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch

An historical fact is sometimes forgotten: African urban history is a very old and complex affair. Cities existed in Africa in ancient archaeological times and during the age of medieval Islam. The Indian Ocean, Mediterranean Sea, and Atlantic Ocean trading systems spurred urban development, as did autochthonous processes. Early on, urbanization was made possible, as elsewhere, by the agricultural so-called neolithic revolution, which allowed noncultivating urbanites—men of power, priests, craftsmen, and merchants—to be fed by their rural partners.¹

Another common point is that, from these varied and sometimes contrasted urban realities, a new urban revolution occurred from the very beginning of the nineteenth century. It resulted from an early (precolonial), even if often mediated, diffusion of European Industrial Revolution impulse into a westernized “modernity”; African modern cities were cities that politically and/or economically accepted or later were forced to adapt (as, in Yorubaland, Abeokuta or Ibadan). From that moment onward and still more than beforehand, cities proved to be main political and cultural focuses. Urban cultural processes probably are the most difficult to study, while they certainly were among the most decisive tools for change.

In time and space, African cities expressed a social and cultural evolution resulting from the interrelationship between urban people and their environment, structured along given political and social factors, and ecological, technological, and ideological constraints. Urban chronology, periodization, and events were diverse: in Southern Africa, a network of colonial cities were at work as early as mid-nineteenth century, from Cape Town to cities in Transvaal and Natal; in most coastal locations all around

the continent, creolization began long before the eighteenth century, especially in Portuguese, Dutch, or Danish areas, and especially in Swahili cities; Islamization began in desert ports from the very beginning of the Middle Ages; Bantu capital cities of Central Africa were fitted with military and kinship social structures of local kingdoms and chiefdoms. Most of these elements progressively mingled and combined, giving birth to a complex and contrasted cumulative history. Therefore, urbanization south of the Sahara was, as elsewhere, a *longue-durée* process, expressing as much continuities as changes. Most of the time, these changes were not sudden, but resulted from long and often imperceptible adjusting processes, the accumulation of which resulted in revolutions of mind and society: urban spaces came to embody urban minds. These cultural trends were all the more decisive because they diffused from city centers to the whole of African societies. In short, cities, which in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries became the major locations for labor markets and political struggles, were definitely decisive places for cultural and social change.²

Nowadays, African urban history is well developed, especially in Nigeria. Nevertheless, this is a recent trend in English. A paper written in 2001 went as far as questioning why South African urban history was so little studied (I would rather say so recently studied) while urban population has long been higher than rural population (if we take into account how biased were population statistical data proposed by the *apartheid* regime).³ Urban studies were dominated, as late as the 1950s and 1960s, by urban anthropology. Historians did not really emerge before an international conference held in London (School of Oriental and African Studies) in 1996. The meeting gave birth to a collective book known since its publication in 2000 as a foundational start.⁴

We can mainly quote the earlier pioneering role played by Akin Mabogunje's study on Nigerian urbanization (1968).⁵ African urban history was mostly developed by the French school, starting with another fundamental book, sociologist Georges Balandier's *Sociologie des Brazzavilles noires* (1965).⁶ While urban history was developed by a number of articles, books were very few. Only 20 years later did an Ivoirian historian, Pierre Kipré, offer the first comprehensive historical study, with a dissertation (published in 1985) on his country's urban history.⁷ In France, African urban history produced a series of good monographs: an unusual case, especially considering the many studies comparing Francophone and Anglophone cities.⁸ In English, only one author, an architect and art historian, devoted a book to comparing colonial architectures of Francophone cities, but she did not consider sub-Saharan Africa.⁹

By happy chance, another book has recently been published that begins to connect these two main streams, written either in English or in French, strengthening urban research in Africa. *Under Siege: Four African Cities* was recently published by a cluster of mainly African scholars gathered thanks to their pan-African bilingual network: the Committee for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA).¹⁰ Anglophone and Francophone urban literatures started differently. Ironically, while the first social scientist in Nigeria interested in African urban history was a geographer, and the first in France was an anthropologist, the reverse is the rule. Formerly, Francophone literature was initiated by geographers rather than by anthropologists; the spatial components of a city were therefore stressed more than its social components (housing more than housed). The French school investigated how a city might exist, maintain, and grow, rather than looking after urbanites' changing minds. As for Anglophone urban history, it found a major exception at the very beginning with Akin Mabogunje, whose proposals as early as 1968 remain today the most convincing theoretical framework to study urban spaces—all urban spaces, the buildings and the people.¹¹ Nevertheless, in the late 50s, 60s, and early 70s, Anglophone literature was a flourishing of cultural anthropological urban studies, pointing out the importance of endurance and/or change in African minds as they moved from a rural environment to an urban environment, the keyword then being “adaptation.” I summarized this broad literature in an overview essay published in 1990.¹²

While comprehensive books on African urban history still remain few,¹³ papers collected from the brilliant conference held in March 2003 at the University of Austin, Texas, were many and new. That is the reason why, before coming to the papers included here, which account for only ten percent of those presented, I will briefly comment on the important corpus proposed for this large meeting. The total number of papers announced by the posted abstracts reached 140, quite an impressive number, among which more than one hundred were eventually completed and submitted.

Of course, Nigerian cities were well represented for two main reasons: the first is the strong personality of our main organizer, Toyin Falola, and the second, no less important, is the well-known exceptional development of urban history and culture in Nigeria. Nevertheless, papers given on Nigerian urbanization did not represent half of the abstracts; there were 60 of them out of 140: that means more or less 44 percent. If we add the other number of papers dealing with West African cities (17), just a little more than half of the papers dealt with West African

urbanization: 54 percent of them. The rest were fairly well balanced, either concerning locations or linguistic areas: thence the possibility to offer here a balanced regional choice. South African cities, not surprisingly, were the second main focus of the conference. Twenty-six papers dealt with South African cities, or one paper out of five. Eight papers concerned Central Africa (only one on Congo, but 3 on Angola, 2 on Uganda, 1 on Gabon); 11 papers concerned East Africa, out of which 5 were on Kenya and 3 on Tanzania. As for Southern Africa, there were three papers on Zimbabwe and two on Namibia. There were even 3 papers on North Africa (1 on Morocco, 1 on Algeria and 1 on Tunisia)—but surprisingly none on Egypt: that means that the largest city in the continent, Cairo, was not addressed, while Khartoum in Sudan was.

The Anglophone world is prevalent (at least if we take into account the official languages of the given States). One hundred out of 140 papers dealt with English-speaking cities (85 on Nigeria and South Africa, and 15 for others). Around 16 papers dealt with Francophone cities, only 4 with Lusophone cities. Other languages (such as Arabic, Swahili, Somali, or even Tamachek) accounted for 9 papers.

Twenty-five states were covered, including Capo Verde: that means more or less half of the total number of African States. This obviously was quite a satisfactory result. This realization is all the more important as African urban history still remains neglected as far as urban globalization is approached: a recent book published by Cambridge University Press, *The City in Time and Space*, offers, out of 473 pages dedicated to all historical cities all over the world, only 4 pages to cities south of the Sahara, including one monograph on Lagos;¹⁴ in this survey, the totality of African cities of today are proposed as “the cultural decay” of a “pathological and incoherent urban reality.” Papers from the present conference make these kinds of comments no longer acceptable.

Another excellent point was the successful interdisciplinary meeting of various social sciences. Obviously, historians are the great majority; this must be stressed, as, in the field of African History, urban history was not as developed. We also find a number of anthropologists; a few geographers, lawyers, and architects; very few political scientists, but a number of linguists and also an interesting number of African literature specialists, novelists, artists, musicians, film makers. Many of their papers are presently published by Carolina Academic Press in a twin book to this one, entitled *Urbanization and African Cultures*. In it, the artistic side of the question was well documented: this mostly enriched discussions on cultural processes of urban spaces.

The historical time is delimited. Quite clearly, precolonial urbanism appears as a minor focus; papers were few but precious and new. One paper dealt with Swahili urban culture and two others on archaeological issues. There was one monograph on Benin City and another on Yoruba frontier cities in premodern history from the 1600s to the 1850s. Otherwise, nearly all papers dealt with modern cities. A number of them focused on the nineteenth-century past or heritage. Most of them are concerned with colonial and postcolonial cities—which of course does not mean that authors do not pay attention to the inherited past: most papers discuss the encounter, connections, and exchanges between autochthonous inherited features and so-called westernized modernization. Obviously, most contributors are strongly concerned and moved by huge difficulties and contradictions in urban Africa today: at best, they try to solve the problem through their historical investigations.

We face an apparent contradiction: on one hand, urban studies today are little concerned with reports on single cities; on the other hand, few comparisons are explored. Definitely, the mere single-report “genre” is no longer being emphasized. This is an obvious change for historical urban research. That means more or less the end of what was, for example, so largely developed by Nigerian urban history. These existing reports are extremely useful for further thinking and theorizing, as they brought the practical material necessary for it: a history of a city from its origins to the present. Globally, this first step is now over. There were not more than a dozen reports on single cities out of 140 abstracts. And these reports deal with medium-sized or small cities, rather than with capital cities or megalopolises. Among them three are presented here, exemplifying three different moments: the story of the city of Victoria in Cameroon from precolonial times, the case of Isiolo Town in Kenya created and captured by the colonizers, and the recent evolution of Mogadishu (1991–2001), the only report concerning a capital city studied at the conference. But we also heard about Gwelo in Zimbabwe, Biskra in Algeria, and Mindelo, the Cesària Évora’s town on San Vicente island, Capo Verde. These few reports are used not just as city stories, but to exemplify larger processes: Victoria (Limbe) turned from a local religious center into an administrative station; Isiolo did not succeed in evading its former colonial configuration; Mogadishu denied its inherited function of a capital city to embody the contradictory interests of the clustering diverse warlords.

Conversely, comparisons are few. Most papers focus on a single point, topic, and space—this space being a general space, such as Islam in the Sokoto caliphate, or Muslim towns in Senegal (both papers published

here), or precisely located in a given city. Very few papers compare processes and evolutions between two cities or more (as does here Laurent Fourchard's comparison of violence in Lagos and Ibadan in Nigeria). Ironically, two different papers questioned the same two cities in Senegal: Dakar, a modern political metropolis, and Touba, a modern religious capital. Another paper compares three cities located in different areas: Douala in Cameroon in Central Africa, Dakar in Senegal in West Africa, and Johannesburg in South Africa. Finally, only one paper investigates a comparison between East African and South African urban architecture so as to decipher the various possible mixtures born from the encounter between a precolonial Omani architecture and the colonial change that affected it. Fortunately, the large number of papers presented at the conference made it possible to effectively compare similar phenomena, such as Islamization, across African historical cities.

Another point is treated only slightly—partly because it has been recently explored in several books. Only eight abstracts out of 140 were specifically concerned with the interrelationship between a city and its rural environment: is the city feeding the countryside or the countryside feeding the city is a question that was almost entirely ignored, given this double direction: does ruralization inside cities reveal, or not, changing urban-rural linkages and interdependence? What were, what are the factors and results of this interrelationship? This may be studied through cultural exchanges, but it is very little studied through human exchanges—I mean rural/urban migrations and commuting—and still less through economic and trading exchanges. Most rural-urban migrants maintain significant ties with their communities of origins, contrary to modernist assumptions that these ties would fade away. They often continue to be strong, and even stronger as “modernization” proceeds; and this urban-rural connection has important consequences for rural-urban migration, for urban-rural return migration, for the rural *and* for the urban economy, and for the political process, including sites of struggle.¹⁵ Urban and rural history must be considered simultaneously, because many people live in both places. In spite of this fact, most of the time, cities are looked at as specific milieus, apparently taken as relatively isolated in the midst of nothing. We should come back to this point. For a city, most of the time, exists as leading to or incorporated into a network of paths, roads, railways, rivers, etc., resulting in a network of other cities: what we call in French *tissu urbain* (urban cloth), or urban networks: made of the field of influence of a given city compared to and competing with the fields of influence of other neighboring cities. This may be expressed by various flows: flow of people,

flow of goods, flow of capital, flow of ideas and culture. What is the respective role of metropolises, of medium-sized cities, of small cities that are part of the same urban network? Are there differences in the expression of marketplaces, of housing, and of cultures? For example, are the expressions of violence the same at the center of the urban network or in remote parts of it? This direction of research remains to be investigated more fully.

As they are, the papers presented were very revealing, very rich, very new, and very fruitful. Their major characteristic, and this is a major point, is that they focus on themes more than on stories. Here a city, or a group of cities, is not studied for itself, we do not read a city's story. We are given a city's problem to study. Urban history now adopts a problematic approach, and this is excellent. Through the major examples proposed here, the readers will have the pleasure of feeling the great wealth of the conference. To enhance it, my comments are centered on themes rather than on areas.

At the start, I begin by expressing a few regrets; a few problems were paid little attention to: sometimes rightly, and sometimes not, at least to my mind. Ironically, in spite of the conference title, what was lacking most were discussions of urban space (without an "s"), while spaces (with an "s") are properly treated in the present book. Undoubtedly, historical spaces and cultural spaces (i.e., spaces as announced by the title of the conference) were here. How to say this? "Spatial Space" was barely there. Most of the papers dealing with it are presently published, making the selection relatively easy (although only six papers actually deal with urban space as physical, while three or four focus on urban space as thought). We come again to a major difference which used to lie between the Anglophone (sociological) and the Francophone (geographical) ways of thinking about African urban history: a difference once more stressed here, as the two articles dealing with French cultural trends are written by Anglophone historians.

Another difference is that Francophone studies have investigated more what made cities in the past: a history of economic exchanges, a history of marketplaces, a history of banking, and most of all, and more important: a history of urban land tenure which may help understand the history of the urban built spaces—as well the modern white in contrast to the so-called native part of former colonial cities. Therefore, these studies have helped us understand how a history of slums, of shantytowns, of most of the poor neighborhoods resulted from the existence, management, and distortions of urban land laws.

Of this aspect of the study—urban spaces as dependent on land rules, land speculations, land manipulations of all kinds—little appears

here. Two main explanations may be proposed: on the one hand, cultural trends today do not favor such studies. On the other, mostly in Anglophone colonies, land tenure problems were apparently solved, and dissolved, by racial residential segregation, which was not legally ordered as such only in West Africa. Urban consequences of racial segregation are studied here mainly through three examples in Kenya: Maurice Amutabi examines colors of urban Space, Omar Eno studies racial urban management, and Godwin Murunga reminds us of the “hygienic” origins of racialism in colonial Nairobi; let us remember that hygienic racialism—which was a “scientific” belief from the end of the nineteenth century¹⁶—was used as much in cities that were not segregated (such as Dakar or Lagos) as in legally segregated ones.¹⁷

Although residential segregation was supposed to avoid the problem, urban historical spaces can be well understood only if you do not neglect the land aspect of the affair. Only two papers out of 140 directly addressed the topic; the first paper, on Port Harcourt, attempted to decipher the complex involvement of customary laws and British laws to help understand the chaotic urban land market in South Nigeria. The other paper was a lawyer’s look at the same question in South Africa: how customary laws and British laws interfered to confuse the urban land status resulting from contradictory inheritance rules that were neither well known nor well understood. Surprisingly, the conclusion is that, similar to the “hygienic syndrome,” given the unceasingly growing racially mixed “grey areas,” differences in land ownership were not so fundamental between either segregated (in South Africa) or not segregated (in south Nigeria) urban areas.

This manner of investigation may be fruitful. In France, several dissertations have reconstituted the history of urban land ownership. This needs much patience from the historian, but it is quite manageable, because urban landownership was always registered by urban officials. Therefore, it is possible to reconstruct the whole land succession history from the beginning, at least in modern colonial downtowns. This allows us to investigate the origins of an urban African bourgeoisie from the very beginning of colonialism.

Several other papers dealt with the topic, in more or less direct ways. Two papers proposed quite a fruitful direction of research, the former on Jigani in Uganda and the other in South Africa: how the decline of former industrial towns, born from mining or other businesses encouraged by the nineteenth-century Industrial Revolution, left large deserted and decayed spaces of previous industrial areas, at the same time as thousands

of jobless young people emerged. These formerly industrial areas fell into dead time and dead space, leading to misery, delinquency, and violence.

Thus another question emerges: how subaltern people may survive in a city which was not, or is no longer made for them; such was colonial Freetown in the nineteenth century; such are many South African cities today. Is there an alternative modernity from below? We may add here an example: former factory barracks and warehouses located in Johannesburg's Newton district were not long ago deserted because of apartheid laws, and looked at by the whites as a dangerous popular district. Now they are being reconquered and rehabilitated by the youth, craftsmen, and artists, who are helped by local and/or NGO associations; these large decayed buildings are used by people who are not afraid at all, attracting in their turn visitors and tourists. This may become part of successful urban rehabilitations; it is not different from similar realizations in previously deserted and decayed centers of American cities.

This has to be connected to another point: the relationships between the making of an urban working population, the process of trade unionism, and the building of a city, with specific reserved districts, not necessarily by force but because of the social impact of industrialization: of course, white settlers, then the national bourgeoisie, always tried to settle far from these areas that were full of noise pollution, dirt, factory smoke, and locomotive steam, such as factory districts, docks, railway and bus stations, etc.; all these locations being thought of as the field for robbery, violence and incivility. Two papers questioned the connection between class struggles and the urban environment, while 15 or 20 years ago it used to be a common field of research, noticeably in South Africa. One is present here, interestingly questioning the Afrikaners' side of the question: how did their labor organizations help to shape poor white Afrikaners' cultural identity?

More generally, the relationship between the people and the built form is another path that deserves to be explored: a number of papers questioned the urban landscape, for example investigating the evolution of forms from a precolonial architecture to the present one. In the present book, two papers connecting Islam and architecture—Mark Delancey's on cities in the Sokoto Caliphate, and Eric Ross's on Mouride urban planning—establish a direct connection between the city as built and the city as thought. It might be interesting to go further, questioning urban globalization: were previous architectures more varied? Can we really compare how a city, such as Kano or Jenne, was built in the Sahel and how architects and city planners nowadays conceptualize modern capital cities, such

as Abuja in Nigeria, Yamoussoukro in the Ivory Coast, or Tema in Tanzania, according to globalized models? No paper focuses on these new capital cities, or more generally compares downtown modern business centers among diverse metropolises, such as Abidjan, Nairobi, or Cairo, and their distinctive features. Nevertheless, a few papers precisely question the relationship between the housed and the built, as Tony King so acutely proposed it a few years ago: the idea is that people sometimes were allowed to build their houses as they could—given their few means—or as they wanted, or more often people were forced to be housed in buildings built by colonizers, then by city planners. But conversely, once people are housed, their home and mode of living influence their behavior; therefore there is a fascinating interrelationship to be studied between the built and the people: people build as they think, but they also think as they build.¹⁸ That is part of the reason why urbanites do not think the same as rural people. This is demonstrated here in the example of Mouride urban planning: the city of Touba reflects its inhabitants' wills and minds, configuring at one and the same time urban civic order and religious authority.

Urban space as a spatial process is exemplified by two studies: one in precolonial times, when urban planning developed along the premodern central Ghanaian coast; and the other on the case of Zimbabwean cities, where the colonial model still persists in rules, regulations, habits, and practices in the postcolonial era. Apart from this case, little is said on urban management and rules. As we will see below, many papers evoked and deplored the urban mess. Many assert that day-to-day urban life becomes more and more difficult and probably intolerable for a growing number of poor. But if a few papers questioned the possibility of finding a remedy, no paper dealt with what has been explored more by Francophone literature. As a matter of fact, in France, unfortunately, for a long time the “rural/ethnic” stream was very strong among experts and politicians, where the ideology of the “urban bias” still underlies a series of approaches. Nevertheless an idea has now appeared, stressing the leading “revolutionary” role played by cities in politics and power.

During the conference, there were very few examples of case studies that tested a structure of governance and asked how and why it did or did not succeed. In other words, the conference, while it was a multidisciplinary conference, attracted few experts in the field of urban governance. We rather faced here a general statement: city governance is ill and even desperate. This statement allows us to ask a true and crude question: is governance, and good governance, a right concept dealing with most African cities? Is the concept of governance of cities adequate to the

African cases? In spite of its extended use by political scientists, French scholars traditionally prefer the idea of urban *management*: for example, the organization of a city council, the rules of urban accounts and of an urban budget, the expenses dedicated to developing urban infrastructures such as roads and crossroads, health care or schools, all are part of “*gestion urbaine*,” translated as “urban management.” The largely used concept of *urban governance* is supposed to go further, to be more precise and complex than *urban management*. In this case, the question here is very serious: why did nearly no paper deal with urban governance? Is it to say that it does not, or it did not historically exist in African cities? Or if it does exist, is it of no use to historians in understanding how or why an African city functions?

The topic is an important one. A history of urban governance may indeed be written, and fortunately it has been. Supposing that the concept of governance was used for former periods, before the term was invented by political scientists of the World Bank, at least thanks to historical anthropologists we know much about how precolonial cities were organized and ruled. Thanks to geographers of the time, and also thanks more and more to historians, we know more about how colonial cities were managed or governed. More precisely, we know perfectly how colonizers intended to manage and govern cities. We also know whether people in the city were or were not concerned by this management, even more so when only the white part of the city was actually covered by these colonial rules. We also know how and why, in a few cases, such as for Freetown in Sierra Leone, former customary laws were used and adapted and transformed, giving birth to a relatively efficient administrative organization ruled by so-called headmen who were in charge of the various districts and services in the city. This has been studied several times for Freetown, the most recent and most thorough of these studies being a comparative and comprehensive analysis by Odile Goerg.¹⁹ It has also been studied elsewhere for a series of cities, such as Lagos (several times), Timbuktu, Cape Town, or Ouagadougou. In his article in this book, Kefa M. Otiso discusses the challenge of urban management in colonial Kenya. All in all, this city governance, given the political system chosen, worked relatively well; i.e., it answered what the colonial power asked it to do and what the urbanites were supposed to expect both from this given political system and from city authorities. This means, for example, that, in a segregated city the white settlers were, all in all, happy enough with their urban management. As for the black people, they expected very little from city management and made relatively little demand for what they knew was not made for them.

Therefore a history of precolonial and colonial urban governance is possible and feasible. But what about a study of urban governance today? Obviously, the tones of these papers say that it does not work. It no longer works. This is precisely the reason why developers created and imagined the concept of urban good governance: what recipes to apply to make that which does not work, and possibly cannot work, work nevertheless in spite of everything. To my mind, it is what in French we call the *quadrature du cercle*: the way in which one can make a circle become a square. Impossible of course! at least as long as today's mathematical logical rules are applied.

Therefore, I make a provocative proposal: good governance is in Africa today something of an imposture, a deception. Good governance means nothing if you cannot make a series of impeding factors, such as corruption, clientelism, patrimonialism, distortions of human rights, robbery, violence, and so on, disappear. It means that good governance is impossible if the basic rules of democracy are not adopted, assimilated, protected and claimed to be the rule accepted and understood both by the rulers and by the ruled, by the people and by the State at one and the same time. In short, governance is not a problem of good management. It is a political problem. As long as the political problem itself is not solved, good governance may be but a delusion. Historians know it, because they always found it so in historical times. They know that technical means cannot play the same role as political choice and struggle. This is the true reason why historians, who by their job know that they cannot play with words and concepts, are not interested in the analysis of urban good governance, except to explain why, for the moment, it probably proves to be a dead end in African cities. It is especially true in big cities, which are most in question here. These metropolises nowadays reveal the best African political minds. For, on average, more than half of African people live in cities, including Senegal, where it is skewed by statistical data,²⁰ and in a few cases nearly half or at least one-third of the total population lives in the capital city of a state, such as Libreville in Gabon, Brazzaville in Congo, or Luanda in Angola. Therefore, cities are the very centers for political life, for political choices, and for political behavior. Good governance implies first a fair, honest, clear, and, therefore, efficient administration. Of course this is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. The main condition is not a question of management, it is a question of political will. Good governance goes along with fair government, but it cannot do it by itself. The opposite is more realistic: a fair government needs and therefore involves good governance. If it is strong enough, it enhances it.

But, probably, to believe that the reverse is realistic is a dream: good governance cannot resist, cannot survive under a plundering government, therefore it probably cannot give birth to democracy by itself.

It is probably useless to study urban governance today without paying closer attention to the making of politics. Because few political scientists interfered here, few papers faced the political problem in itself, i.e., the possible modes of enhancing a path not to democracy—which usually still lies in the future—but to a struggling and vivid democratization. It is not surprising why few researchers study modern urban governance. Researchers try rather to perceive the realities from the bottom: the city dwellers, rather than from the top: the power. A recent book edited by Bill Freund explores the topic for Durban in South Africa. South African cities have strong traditions of forceful planning from above with considerable capacity to finance change. They witness deindustrialization and decentering as do so many Western cities, but they are also the site of massive squatter settlements and populations that fall outside the functioning of the “formal” economy.²¹ Freund’s book highlights the role of networks and the cooperation for survival by Durban’s newer citizens as they make space for themselves. This way of exploring a new mode of living in the city may help understand the true secret of democracy. Again, another recent book, by Gregory Frederick Houston, explores public participation in democratic governance in South Africa since universal franchise was introduced in 1994.²² These studies are valid, for, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the well-known philosopher of the Enlightenment era, explained long ago, democracy is a social contract: the people have to control the power for the power to be allowed to control the people.

Most of the papers dealt with urban realities of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, that is to say, urban problems of today. Periodization should have to be questioned: are precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods to be looked at as normal turning points when urban history is at stake? Nothing is less sure. As in mother countries, urban planning theorization and realizations started in colonies around the 1950s. Except for a few scattered programs before World War II, building programs for African civil servants and cheap rental housing were mostly undertaken between the War and 1972. The latter date (and 1973, with the former oil crisis) was the moment when new principles emerged, when new concepts were forged; such as the “informal sector,” a term invented by the International Labor Organization, and the “Urban Bias,” a term reinforced by the World Bank. Cities definitely became evil, and building the cities meant exacerbating rural migrations; therefore, after twenty

years of accelerating the rhythms of urban growth, a financial change occurred, and all of a sudden rural development took the floor. We may notice that this new trend was first adopted by the apartheid regime in South Africa, when urban building for the natives was brutally interrupted in the mid-1960s.²³ A similar tendency was adopted earlier by the colonial powers, for reasons which were not so different: we must remember that urban planning in South Africa, twenty years in advance at least, was looked at as a model by most colonial architectural teams of the time.²⁴ Therefore, the influence of the South African model is not to be neglected. Definitely, periodization for urban development, international financing programs, and urban welfare policies were less affected by the years of independence than by the decolonization trend ten years before and the rising world crisis ten years later.

Most of the time, the colonial period is nevertheless understood as a major rupture resulting in a series of contemporary difficulties, including the congestion of urban centers, new forms of violence, etc. What do most of the papers treat? The topic that obviously is the best developed is cultural urban spaces. Obviously, this marks major progress toward enlarging our knowledge of the above one: how to manage the cities correctly. First we have to understand what the cities of today are made of—what were the social forces that helped to create African cities, how were they borne, what do they express, and, eventually, how to deal with them to help the push towards democratization—rather than to look at cities as populated by misunderstood and deviant, and therefore dangerous forces and masses.

The more practical way to report on a specifically urban cultural space is the making of an urban popular language, which becomes the language of general use, and sometimes even a national language. Two major cases were well studied at the conference, illustrating the close collaboration between historians and linguists: Nigerian pidgin English (or NPE) in Ibadan and Lagos, made of a mixture of Yoruba, English, of course, and other local and foreign languages; and Wolof lingua franca, or Urban Wolof, in Dakar, made of a mixture of Wolof with a lot of other languages, including French, English, and Arabic. Some of these new languages are languages in the making, and some are already made. We may add another example—the Abidjan popular lingua franca (*nouschi*) created by the youth and now adopted by all Abidjanese people. We have to remember that in most African cities, youth younger than 24 years old make up at least three-quarters of the total urban population. Therefore, a language adopted by the youth quickly transfers to the whole population.

The emergence and growth of these new urban languages bring to historians' attention two factors: the first is that the process is not new. This is the origin of most so-called creole languages, so developed and so well studied by linguists all along the coastal ports of premodern Africa. The best example of these city-made languages is probably Swahili, which emerged at least from the tenth or twelfth century from the encounter in towns of Arab traders and local people, and above all Bantu-speaking women. Swahili basically is a Bantu language which progressively borrowed foreign vocabularies made of Persian words and, later, Arabic words. Swahili became a written language only in the sixteenth century. Therefore, this may be a useful comparison that invites us not to stress too much the novelty of the process. It is related to the very history of languages: cities are, and probably always were the major and best locations if not to create, at least to accelerate the making of new languages. Thus, Lingala, a trading language popularized in the lower Congo in Kinshasa and Brazzaville, was also probably born quite a while before colonialism. We may multiply the examples, and once more, it may be useful to compare the processes. This allows us to ask the question: why do we look at these new languages only as oral pidgins? Is it not just because they have to compete nowadays with recognized written and ruled languages, such as European ones? European languages also are developing and changing, as all languages are; but, mainly since the seventeenth century, they are controlled by a series of known rules, applied by dictionaries and Academies in charge of accepting and publicizing linguistic changes. When Swahili developed as a language, European languages were not yet as fixed as they are now, and the competition was more open. Now, African languages are written and fixed too, as Wolof is: this is the reason why "urban Wolof" is not officially recognized as "true Wolof," a normal evolution of the same living language.

People think as they build, but above all, people think as they speak. From this viewpoint, cities were, from the beginning, places of encounters of multiethnic and more generally multicultural people coming from all around, some of them coming from nearby, such as former peasants and farmers; others coming from farther away, such as traders; and others coming from very far, such as colonizers and their African employees (porters, traders, etc.) and collaborators (chiefs, etc.), and also their allies (such as Afro-Brazilians or Afro-Liberians coming back from the Americas). The emergence of modern cities preceded colonialism, especially when modern capitalism began to be felt. This was specifically the case for West Africa. That is the reason why this form of modern

urbanization emerged as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century, for example in Yorubaland; it also occurred on the eastern coast of Africa, where Swahili urbanism is very old. Urbanization in East Africa drastically increased throughout the nineteenth century with the international growth of the Sultanate of Zanzibar. From that time on, as beforehand but on an accelerated scale and rhythm, all these urban people met, sometimes struggled, but more often had no other choice than to accept or at least to tolerate one another and to live together, even if their residential housing was segregated. At least two papers demonstrate it here, one on the evolution of Harare population, and the other on the cultural influence of Senegalese and Vietnamese migrants in Libreville between 1860 and 1914.

During colonization, most African people had to commute from their compounds to the white district where the actual labor market was located. It has been calculated that, when colonial settlers arrived, every white individual was to create six to ten jobs for their African subjects. Therefore, except for the unusual case of Cape Town (where, during most of the nineteenth century, black people were forbidden to enter the Cape colony), African colonial cities were in fact populated with an average of at least ten times more Africans than Europeans; the percentage of Africans was still higher, as many workers were accompanied by families, especially women and girls in charge of their domestic needs which were not assumed by the colonizers: among others the main services to be assumed for this working population were providing food, cooking, washing, brewing beer, and sex. Therefore a popular urban culture emerged early.

This is not a novelty. Urban historians of ancient history were the first to assert, and to explain that, from the beginning of history, cities were the central focus for the emergence of new cultures and civilizations, precisely because they were melting pots where people, languages, goods, ideas, and arts mingled and gave birth to new complexes of cultures.²⁵ This is still the point in African cities of today, which are new centers of convergence, all the more so as urban growth has drastically accelerated in the last 40 or 50 years. Therefore, they necessarily are cultural melting pots in the making, more so than other places where this process had occurred earlier. In Europe, for example, industrial cities emerged in the nineteenth century and most North American cities exploded not long before the twentieth century. In Africa, in the 1960s, urban residents accounted for only fifteen percent of the population. Nowadays they are more than half, and sometimes, like in Congo, Gabon, Algeria, and South Africa, city dwellers account for 60 percent or more of the national population.

Therefore, I disagree with looking at urban growth and prevalence as an evil, that may be put right again only by pushing people back to the countryside. This was the well-known urban bias so much written about in the early 1970s, which no longer sounds convincing. Why would African people have to be the only ones in the world to be more rural than urban? All developed countries are extremely urbanized countries, where rural population accounts much of the time for less than 20 percent. This may be disappointing, but fortunately or not, it appears as unavoidable. We may all agree on the fact that urbanization, because it is dramatically recent, took place too quickly in Africa. Therefore, there is an unavoidable imbalance between population growth, urban population growth, urban population needs, and urban population infrastructure and governance. This is not a question of urban bias, but a question of time. Just after World War II, in Africa, birth rates were as high as they were before the war. Then, because of the introduction and relative improvements of health and welfare measures, death rates—particularly deaths due to major epidemics such as sleeping sickness, tuberculosis, and measles—fell drastically: the gap increased between births (which stayed high) and deaths, resulting in a tremendous acceleration of population growth starting in the 1950s and early 1960s. This was precisely the moment when decolonization began. No doubt part of the reason why colonizers accepted the independence idea for major African states so quickly was precisely the increasing weight of welfare expenses. For example, when the French decided in 1952 to adopt in French West Africa a set of social laws known in France as the *Labor Code*, colonization was no longer profitable to colonial business. If they had to pay African workers the same wages as in France and to assume the cost of health care, disease, labor accidents, paid leaves, etc., it became more profitable, because it was less expensive, to trade with former African colonies without assuming the charge of equipping these colonies with all sorts of welfare institutions, such as maternity wards, hospitals, or schools for this increase in new babies. These newly independent states, most of them with very poor budgets or at least very ill-organized state and administrative staffs, had to face this abrupt and rapid increase of social charges, the expenses of which were not immediately rewarding.

This may be looked at as a perverse result of the recent and previous good will of the Great Powers to improve their colonial methods. Colonial powers improved health care, which was quite necessary; but as early as the beginning of the 1960s, newly independent states had to build schools and train teachers. In the early 1970s, they had to find jobs for the ever-growing mass of jobless youth. This first occurred in cities, because urban

populations, made up largely of young people rushing to cities to find jobs, were younger than rural populations. That is the reason why urban growth nowadays is due to the so-called natural population growth rate much more than to urban migrations. Urban migrations may sometimes be important, in the case of civil wars or of severe droughts. But they are occasional, and now much less common than half a century ago. Nevertheless, urban growth continues, because the population growth rate cannot be stopped at once. Again, it is a question of time. The so-called demographic transition, when birth rates begin to decline, has now begun, and it is declining faster in towns than in the countryside, but it will need 20 or 30 years from now for the results to be felt.

Therefore, the main problem is not that cities are too large, or the urban growth rate too high. It is that the challenge cannot be solved quickly. It may appear daunting, but it is probably unavoidable. Few presenters addressed this question of urban population growth and of its possible evolution, except to deplore its consequences. Nevertheless, some presenters asked why this urban growth is in itself also a promise of hope: cities were and remain at the core of higher education, as a paper demonstrates here for the case of South Africa just before apartheid. Cities are locations where, all over the world, at any time, education has been more developed. Cities are the spaces where education progressed, where intellectuals met and discussed, therefore where, among other things, politics also progressed, because cities are centers where so-called civil societies emerge, develop, become more and more complex, and at last make their influence felt. Politics and the city go hand in hand.

The fact is that city spaces are contradictory. Cities are both spaces of hope and spaces of despair, spaces for crimes and spaces for creativity. How to explain this contradiction in known terms is beyond our imagination, but it excites the imagination of artists and writers. There was at the conference a beautiful glimpse on all these possibilities, through papers proposed by artists, painters, musicians, and novelists. For example, one presenter investigated how the urban environment favors the creation of new forms of music. The same may be said for painting, sculpture, theater, or movies. Several papers evoked the role of an evolving architecture. This undoubtedly is a fascinating part of urban history.

But cities do not go it alone. As I said before, a single city is part of a network of cities, and this involves exchanges between the city and the countryside. What is fascinating is that culture is not one-sided. Cultural streams go both ways. A city diffuses a new culture made of all it receives, including folk influences, either in dancing, cooking, language, or any

other cultural form. There is a folklorization and a ruralization of the city as well as a stream of influences diffusing from the city to rural areas.

Urban cultural cross-fertilization, born of the encounter of so many heterogeneous influences, is a fabulous wealth. One paper had an excellent idea: to evoke the story of a small city, Mindelo in San Vicente island, part of Capo Verde, well known today as the birth city of the international singer Cesária Évora. This small town, which did not emerge before the mid-fifteenth century, is now a kind of a global cultural city in the midst of nowhere. As for Lagos, this huge city is a stupendous cosmopolitan cultural melting pot, a melting pot that has grown stronger with the arrival of the Saros, the Europeans—themselves colonial officers or traders or missionaries or anything else—and of course a multitude of diverse Yoruba and other African people. The same process occurred in Libreville, which has grown of a mixture of varied local peoples and languages, of Europeans, and also of Asiatic migrants, who played a relatively important role at the beginning of the twentieth century in shaping architectural and cultural features still felt today. These metissages may be very old, as in precolonial Kano, or Timbuktu, or even Khartoum (founded by the Egyptian ruler Mohamed Ali). This cultural melange is part of the urban imaginings which made it possible for the one city to contain apparently opposed conceptualizations of an African city, such as in the case of Dakar in Senegal, which is on the one hand enriched by its rural roots—as seen by Léopold Sédar Senghor, or on the other hand made modern by its intellectual new openings—as seen by Alioune Diop and the team of his periodical *Présence Africaine* (as suggested in another paper). In the present book this idea is illustrated by two papers: Michael Ralph's "Poetics of French Colonial Advantage," and James Genova's "*Africanité* and *Urbanité*."

Some of the dangers of African cities are real. But historians have also to remind us that part of it is inherited from the past, and precisely inherited from the colonial past. We have to reverse the following proposal: it is not the Africans who were strangers to the city, as a well known anthropologist entitled his Jos history.²⁶ The colonizers—British, French, Portuguese, and Afrikaner—were definitely strangers to the African city. They proved it by thinking that only the colonized part of the city, the portion of the city that reflected the colonial order, was the "true" city: here, the paper on the history of Harare urbanism supports this view. The African part of the city embodied disorder for colonizers. I am not sure whether or not, for this question, our common colonial library, as Valentin Mudimbe would say,²⁷ does not still lie somewhere in the back

of our minds. Here, “our” means us all, Western and Westernized people of today and tomorrow—European, American, and African urban planners as well—because we all learned the same models from the same books, from the same teachers in the same universities and the same libraries. Therefore “Just Build It Modern,” as Fatima Müller-Friedman’s paper is entitled, has become the rule. This was not the rule in African historical cities.

Meanwhile, another paper rightly described Dar es Salaam suburbs and settlements as the focal point of British anxieties and misunderstandings concerning African modes of living and of thinking. All that does not belong to a clarified and often oversimplified view of what is or rather what has to be a city in our globalized world may appear dangerous: it threatens the social order, the global model, and rationalized governance. Therefore, everything in the city that does not appear as well known and understood, everything moving, ephemeral, often secret or even clandestine, at least not commonly known as belonging to the public sphere, may appear abnormal and therefore potentially dangerous. As a matter of fact, many elements in a city, and especially in African cities, seem ephemeral, secret or clandestine. Are they necessarily evil? The question needs to be investigated. Life in a city is made of the interrelations and the processes of change, as well as the exchange between, on the one hand, public spaces, such as the central square in front of the palace, market-places and open buildings and squares, and, on the other hand, private spaces, which may be just limited to inner courtyards at home, and occasionally include a few specialized cafes and bars, or other places of greater or lesser privacy. Cities are imagined as much as they actually exist. A paper gave a good example of imagining a city: the way in which tourists of today interpret as “authentically African” the rehabilitation of Southern African “shebeen routes,” which were, not so long ago, illicit drinking places resulting from prohibition, segregation, and apartheid. Two already quoted papers in the present book question “imagining the city” from the case of Francophone colonial urbanism: michael ralph’s, on the poetics of this French colonial urbanism, and James Genova’s, on the place of the urban in imaginings of African identity.

Important also is the so-called informal or parallel or marginal sector, or, more simply and correctly put, the popular sector, which is both visible and profitable. Everybody knows that this popular sector has today invaded South African downtowns that were not so long ago carefully protected from any deviance by the apartheid police and policy. Two papers directly questioned the “informal sector” topic. One emphasized

that these so-called informal activities operate as legitimate answers and coping mechanisms of formerly marginalized people. The other questioned how this sector may play a role in order for it to contribute to sustainable development of a city, as they already obviously do for the poor urbanites. But a rather global appreciation, especially on South Africa, resents the danger of the crowd more than it questions the meaning of such a shift in this new mode of investing previous urban spaces. Would Francophone African cities be safer than Anglophone ones, or rather do Francophone and Anglophone perceptions of the city differ? I pretend, for example, that downtown Conakry is at least as dangerous as Durban today. May we dare present an explanation: French influence dominated in Western Africa, where (including British colonies) racial segregation was never legal. Of course, social segregation was the colonial rule for private space, but note for public space: therefore a series of colonial cities never knew legal residential segregation (such as Dakar Plateau, Conakry, Ouagadougou, and a series of other colonial metropolises). This was truer still in middle-sized cities. The process of “gated cities” is new and still unusual in Francophone cities. This also means that the “security” question is possibly not looked at in the same way.

Everybody knows that cities, and especially big cities, are full of danger. But is there more danger in Johannesburg or Lagos today than in New York City, let us say, at the end of the 1970s? One of the papers seriously disputed the question, arguing that statistical data tend to prove that Johannesburg, in spite of its reputation, is far from being the most dangerous city in the world. I remember my first visit to New York City, in October 1968. Fear was extreme; the city was not secure at all. I could not find any people to accompany me in Harlem, even just driving through it in a closed car. Therefore I decided to go by myself, using a crowded subway, where I was the only white person, and I quietly walked around a few blocks. It was 4 o'clock in the afternoon and everything was absolutely normal. There probably were drug dealers and a few jobless people as in any populous (and even not populous) urban district in the world, but most of the people were walking, chattering, and living like you and I. When I later came back by the same way to South Manhattan, the train was empty, because no black people had to go to Broadway theaters after work in the late afternoon. Nevertheless it was a time when you could not find a taxi along Central Park to take you back from any theater or concert hall. They were too afraid. Of course, with people not daring to walk along the streets, deserted streets were more dangerous than if they were crowded. Obviously Johannesburg, or Ibadan, or Lagos are

dangerous cities: but they also are dangerous because night has become dangerous for a few mad individuals who nevertheless intend to go out.

African big cities are not so different from many other metropolises in the world. This is a modern problem, not an African one. I agree with Laurent Fourchard's paper, when he proposes, as an explanation, the entering of African cities into our globalized world: new forms of urban poverty and violence are connected with new forms of westernized urbanization. Poor African districts or poor Parisian *banlieues* and neighborhoods face similar problems. So-called gated cities, where wealthy people create their own golden jail to protect themselves from possible thefts, hold-ups, and other crimes, were neither invented in African cities nor by apartheid, but in Los Angeles. Read Mike Davis's *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster*²⁸ to understand what may be the future of global cities. Violence and insecurity are not created by the poor. They are created by the growing gap between the poor and the wealthy. The more the city is developed, the larger the gap becomes and the greater the danger. Therefore do we have so much to focus on the poor, on the hooligans, on the youth as the core of the problem? Rather, we may, in a certain way, admire how they manage to survive in such an environment, or, better said, to explain how and why their strategies, usually looked at as strategies of survival, certainly are more than that. They may be used and understood as parts of these new forms of imagination developed to deal with modern urban life. We have to focus on the gap, the reasons for the immensity of the gap, the factors to be affected to try to fill it; once more, to understand the whole, we have to focus not only on the relationship between the poor and the city, but to question interrelationships between popular politics, urban politics, national politics, and international politics. The city is the privileged place where the poor and the wretched of the earth may express themselves and make their will heard. Their violence may be manipulated and ill oriented, and it may lead to populist hateful dictatorships. The danger is great. But all these popular expressions of resistance, violence included, have to be deciphered so as to try to solve some of the major contradictions crystallized by living in the city.

In other words, the aim of good urban management should be to develop the relationship between public and private urban spaces: usually, today, popular public spaces do not fit at all with political public spaces, they despise or ignore one another, while private popular spaces remain out of view of private bourgeois spaces, and out of reach of political spaces. And nevertheless there also lies a contradiction, because the general tendency in the world is to favor the privatization of urban problems,

laying more and more on local communities to solve what the public sphere feels unable to solve. This does not mean to rely on communities only for infrastructure and services, but also for land development regulations, building codes, and social services.²⁹ This tends to increase inequalities instead of trying to fill the gap. *This* is the modern urban bias, and not the fact that cities would be too populated, which is a false problem. Probably the only difference from metropolises in the North is probably that in Africa, cities are still growing, while in the North, problems evolve less dramatically because nowadays a kind of a balance is achieved between depopulated rural areas and the cities. But still growing or not, the actual problem is that cities always lived and still live a contradiction that is inherent to cities: being by nature multicultural and socially divided, cities generate both convergence and conflict. Conflicts are unavoidable, and when a conflict is solved, inevitably another conflict will emerge. *Uniting a Divided City*, quoted above, explains that although race issues are still important in post-apartheid Johannesburg, today the most important issues are social differentiations, social polarization, and social exclusion increasing along a number of varied axes of inequalities; social inequalities in tropical Africa since independence, and in South Africa after apartheid, are more and more developing along social *intra*racial and ethnic lines rather than along *inter*racial and ethnic lines. Therefore, the unceasing problem is to manage so that exchanges and openings triumph over ongoing conflicts. This is not an easy affair.

I end with a quotation taken from Ian Lewis, who recently published a revised and updated edition of his seminal book on Somali History, first published in 1965. I quote, changing just two words, in order to address to African cities what he writes in his new introduction, dated 2002, about the Somali political clan system:

Apart from the problematic area of centralized political organization, the system is remarkably flexible and compatible with most aspects of modern life and thus in no sense an atavistic force. Those who would impose their distorting Eurocentric ideological view of the world on African social phenomena, thus depriving them of originality and vitality, are, in my view, engaged to an endeavor akin to racism.³⁰

In conclusion, we may outline our findings, identifying broad new themes and new points in the following way: in Africa as elsewhere, but perhaps still more than elsewhere,

- (1) cities are places of hope as well as places of conflict;
- (2) cities are places of exchange as well as places of competition;

- (3) cities are not solely destinations, but only one pole in networks of exchange;
- (4) cities are sites of modernity “from below”;
- (5) in cities in Africa, as in cities everywhere, the gap between rich and poor has increased, which led to higher levels of violence—but cities in Africa today and in the past are truly not any more dangerous than cities in the United States or anywhere in the world.

Notes

1 This was well explained by Akin Mabogunje in chapter 2 of *Urbanization in Nigeria* (London: Africana Publishing Co., 1968); it is again developed by Paul Bairoch in *De Jéricho à Mexico: Villes et économies dans l'histoire* (Paris, Gallimard, 1985).

2 This is the argument developed in Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Histoire des villes d'Afrique noire des origines à la colonisation* (Paris, Albin Michel, 1993), translated into English as *African Urban History before Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Mark Wiener Publ., 2004).

3 Msoko li Qotole, “Early African Urbanization in Cape Town: Windermere in the 1940s and 1950s,” *African Studies Review* 60, no. 1 (2001): 107–17.

4 D. M. Anderson and R. Rathbone, eds., *Africa's Urban Past*, (Oxford: James Currey, and Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000).

5 Mabogunje, *Urbanization in Nigeria*.

6 Georges Balandier, *Sociologie des Brazzavilles noires* (1965, reprint: Paris, Presses des Sciences Politiques, 1985).

7 Pierre Kipré, *Villes de Côte d'Ivoire 1993–1940*, 2 vols. (Abidjan, Nouvelles Éditions africaines, 1985).

8 Two examples are: Philippe Gervais-Lambony, *De Lomé à Hararé: Le fait citadin* (Paris: Karthala, 1994); and Odile Goerg, *Pouvoir colonial, municipalités et espaces urbains: Conakry-Freetown des années 1880 à 1914*, 2 vols. (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997).

9 Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism, 1880–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) (Indochina, Morocco, and Madagascar).

10 Okwui Enwezor et al., *Under Siege: Four African Cities; Freetown, Johannesburg, Kinshasa, Lagos*. Documenta11, Platform 4 (Dakar, Munich, and Lagos: CODESRIA and the Goethe-Institut Inter nations, 2002).

11 Mabogunje, *Urbanization in Nigeria*.

12 Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, “The Process of Urbanization in Africa: From the Origins to the Beginning of Independence; An Overview Paper.” *African Studies Review* 34, no. 1 (1990): 1–98 (previously commissioned by the Joint Committee of African Studies, SSRC/ACLS [Social Science Research Council and American Congress of Learned Societies]).

13 See Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Histoire des villes d'Afrique noire*. We may also mention the recent book: Andrew Burton, ed., *The Urban Experience in Eastern Africa, c. 1750–2000* (Nairobi, British Institute in Eastern Africa, 2002).

14 Aidan Southall, *The City in Time and Space* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), 43–44, 289–90.

15 Yoshikuni, in *Sites of Struggle: Essays in Zimbabwe's Urban History*, ed. Brian Raftopoulos and Tsuneo Yoshikuni (Harare, Weaver Press, 1999).

16 See, among others: Robert N. Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine under the Nazis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); and Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870–1945* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989).

17 On the relationship between racialism and hygiene in Africa colonial cities, see William Cohen, "Malaria and French Imperialism," *Journal of African History* 24, no. 1 (1983): 23–36; Odile Goerg, *Pouvoir colonial*; W. Maynard Swanson, "The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900–1909," *Journal of African History* 18, no. 3 (1977): 387–410; Stephen Frankel and John Western, "Pretext or Prophylaxis? Racial Segregation and Malarial Mosquitoes in a British Colony: Sierra Leone," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 78, no. 2 (1988): 211–28; Thomas S. Gale, "The History of British Colonial Neglect of Traditional African Cities," *African Urban Studies* 5 (1979): 11–24; Thomas Gale, "Segregation in British West Africa," *Cahiers d'Études africaine* 20, no. 4 (1980): 495–507 (on Lagos); Raymond F. Betts, "The Problem of the Medina in the Urban Planning of Dakar, Senegal," *African Urban Notes* 4, no. 3 (1969): 5–15; Raymond F. Betts, "The Establishment of the Medina in Dakar, Senegal, 1914," *Africa* 41, no. 2 (1971): 143–52; Elikia Mbokolo. "Peste et société urbaine à Dakar: L'épidémie de 1914," *Cahiers d'Études africaines* 22, nos. 1–2 (1982): 13–46.

18 Anthony D. King, "The Social Production of Building Form: Theory and Research," *Environment and Planning Development: Society and Space* 2 (1984): 429–46.

19 Odile Goerg, *Pouvoir colonial*.

20 Senegalese statistical datas are biased by the definition of a city: many towns—such as most urban suburbs—are defined as "rural communities" because it ensures them financial advantages.

21 Bill Freund, ed., *Durban Vortex: South African City in Transition* (Durban, University of Natal Press, 2002).

22 Gregory F. Houston, *Public Participation in Democratic Governance in South Africa* (Human Sciences Research Council, 2001).

23 See Rodney Davenport and Christopher Saunders, *Southern Africa: A Modern History*, 5th ed., revised (London: Macmillan, 2000): 272–73, 396–97.

24 In Pretoria, an international conference was held in 1952 on urban housing and building in Africa South of the Sahara. British specialists participated, and also a French civil engineer. The following conference, focusing on native housing, was held in Paris in 1955. Sophie Dulucq and Odile Goerg, *Les investissements publics dans les villes africaines 1935–1985: Habitat et transports* (Paris, L'Harmattan, 1989), 14–15.

25 Gordon V. Childe, "The Urban Revolution," *Town Planning Review*, 21, no. 1 (1950): 3–17.

26 Leonard Plotnicov, *Strangers to the City: Urban Man in Jos, Nigeria* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1967).

27 Valentin Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Valentin Mudimbe, *Tales of Faith: Religions as Political Performance in Central Africa* (London: Athlone Press, 1997).

28 Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998).

29 Jo Beal, Owen Crankshaw, and Susan Parnell, *Uniting a Divided City: Governance and Social Exclusion in Johannesburg* (London, Sterling, VA: Earthscan Publications, 2002), 204.

30 I. M. Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali*, revised, updated, and expanded (Oxford: James Currey, 2002), viii.

PART I

Constructing Built Space

Moving between the marketplaces, residential areas, government buildings, churches, and mosques, urban dwellers navigate networks of built space that reflect the combination of indigenous and external forces and emphasize the importance of religious, political, and economic power. An analysis of spatial networks comments on the variety of architectural styles and control of urban planning, and it can also tell us much about the nature of social and cultural relations. In Africa, where a great deal more of life is lived outdoors than it is in western societies, a definition of built space must include not only the architectural objects that occupy the physical environment but also the spatial voids of which they form the boundaries. These boundaries serve not to separate one spatial realm from another, but to link the various areas together in a network of urban interactions. Scholarly studies of built space must take into account the function of these boundaries as a means to unite the various physical, social, and cultural identities of the urban environment. The essays in this section do this and attempt to provide an answer to the questions of how built space has been determined by the nature of outside relationships and how the resultant spaces help determine subsequent patterns of behavior.

Urban spaces are characterized by central spaces that represent main focal points. In modern times, these are often the commercial areas of the city with the bustling daily traffic of buyers and sellers and taxis and minibuses. In some precolonial African cities, these spaces were sometimes a cattle corral, a mosque, or the ruler's palace. For the Fulbe, Mark DeLancey argues, the nature of the focal space shifted as Fulbe architecture and their conceptualization of urban space underwent changes during the growth of the Sokoto Caliphate in the nineteenth century. The formation of African empires such as the Sokoto Caliphate brought about

urbanization and influenced the organization of urban space. Delancey shows how traditional African social organization, environmental concerns, and the input of Islam played fundamental roles in the spatial organization of economic, social, and religious spaces in the cities of the Sokoto Caliphate. For the Fulbe, pastoralist and gender concepts of spatial structures were integrated into the location of the cattle corral and the residential areas. While Islam enhanced the importance of a central religious space and the mosque replaced the palace as the center of urban space, in most instances it did not usurp previous forms of social organization. The differences in the perception of built space between the settled nomadic cultures, like the Fulbe, and sedentary ones, like the Hausa and Kanuri, were lessened in part by Islam, which helped introduce Fulbe built forms into Hausa society.

The second and third essays of this section focus on the influence of European ideas on the development of built space in French colonies and in Namibia. Michael Ralph's essay combines Islamic and European ideas of built space, showing how French stereotypes of Islamic and African civilizations permeated their colonial sentiments on urban planning and led to a distinctively different set of policies in North Africa and in sub-Saharan Africa. In Rabat, Morocco, colonial urban planning attempted to blend the modern with some of the Arabic and Islamic features while still controlling the nature of urban development. In contrast, the French essentialized their view of sub-Saharan Africans and attempted to impose a single architectural style that would reflect French efforts to build civilized spaces to replace indigenous ones. This representation of built space was evident in Dakar, Senegal. It helped to reshape colonial ideas, which in turn, instigated a process of shifting representations.

Those in power often control the planning and development of urban space with particular intentions in mind. The apartheid government in Namibia solidified the policy of separate development by managing the creation and expansion of African townships to rid the urban centers of African residences. In her study of Opuwo, Fatima Müller-Friedman illustrates the difficulties of rising beyond the modernist rhetoric of apartheid actions in the post-apartheid era. In the latter period, income replaced race as a residential requirement but the perceptions of a town (white) and a location (black) remained very much the same. Previous distinctions based on racial categorizations have continued in other forms in the present and have become associated with perceptions of modernist spaces. All of the essays in this section emphasize these links between the historical past and the present and between indigenous and external or imposed urban styles.

1

MOVING EAST, FACING WEST

ISLAM AS AN INTERCULTURAL MEDIATOR IN URBAN PLANNING IN THE SOKOTO EMPIRE

Mark Dike DeLancey

When I arrived in Ngaoundéré, Cameroon to conduct my dissertation field research in 2000, I was told that the palace of the Fulbe ruler, or *laamiido*, had been built when the city was founded in 1830 as the capital of an emirate in the Sokoto Empire. The palace is currently located on the eastern side of the historical city facing west toward the *qibla* wall of the central mosque (see figure 1).¹ I was surprised to discover later that the palace had originally been founded to the west of the mosque, in a position more central to the urban plan.² It was moved to its current location only in the late nineteenth century.

While local sources claimed that the palace was moved solely in order to construct a larger and more magnificent establishment, I suggest that the relocation of the palace represents nothing less than the renegotiation and recoding of conceptual space both within Fulbe culture, as well as with respect to other cultural constituencies of the Sokoto Empire. I begin by investigating the plan and orientation of commonplace nomadic pastoral Fulbe residences, as constructed in eastern Fulbe cultures. This is followed by a comparison of eastern and western nomadic pastoral Fulbe associations with the cardinal directions in order to understand their links to the natural environment. I then examine the implications of nomadic pastoral Fulbe culture for the palaces of sedentary rulers in the Sokoto Empire, established by Usumanu dan Fodio in an early-nineteenth-century

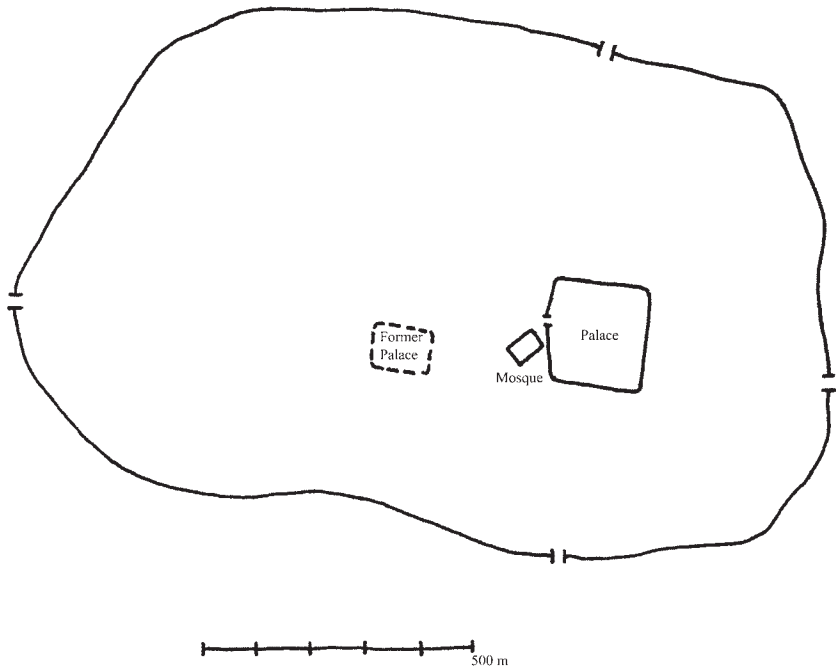


Figure 1. Ngaoundéré.

jihad to renew and expand the faith of Islam in the region. This material is compared to the ideal orientation and urban location of the palace in the pre-jihad Hausa and Kanuri cultures, both of which were extremely influential in the Sokoto Empire. It is then shown that the Fulbe found a reflection of their understanding of conceptual space in an early Islamic model of urban planning. The Islamic credentials of this model seem to have justified the reorganization of urban space to other constituencies such as the Hausa and Kanuri. Finally, I discuss the movement of the palace of Ngaoundéré in part as a reflection of the urban plans of capital cities throughout the Sokoto Empire, and in part to inscribe Ngaoundéré with a Fulbe understanding of conceptual space through reframing along the lines of an early Islamic model.

Eastern Nomadic Pastoral Fulbe Residences

The term *wuro* in Fulfulde, the language of the Fulbe, connotes several ideas. The more general, originating meanings concern the cattle herd and

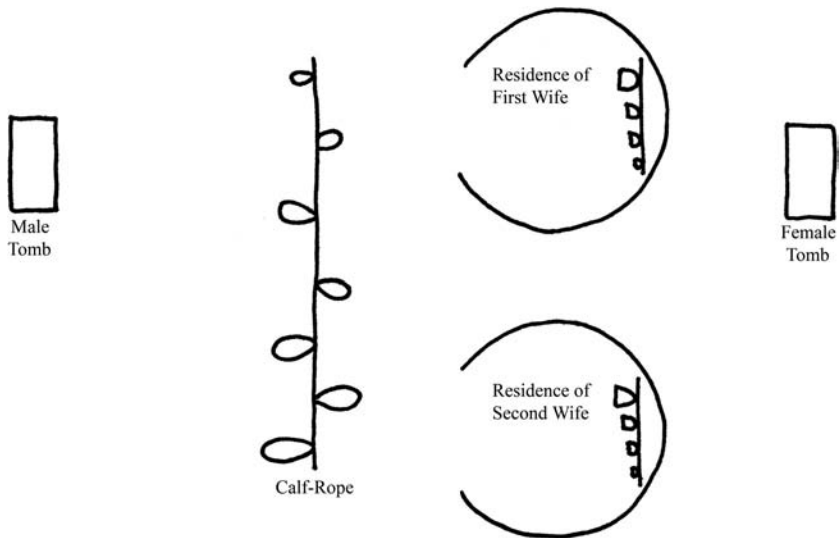


Figure 2. Nomadic Fulbe Wuro.

the place that it stays. The herd is at the center of Fulbe culture, especially their ideas of home and settlement. In the nomadic pastoral Fulbe context, the homestead of an individual family accordingly is also called the *wuro*.³

As a number of authors have noted, the nomadic Fulbe *wuro* is normally arranged according to the cardinal directions. While all have agreed upon the actual orientation and organization of the homestead, the underlying reasons have been more difficult to discern. F. W. de St. Croix, in his 1945 publication entitled *The Fulani of Northern Nigeria*, notes that the nomadic Fulbe residence always faces west, toward the area where the cattle are corralled (see figure 2).⁴ This observation is validated by the work of all later authors working on nomadic Fulbe in this region, including C. Edward Hopen,⁵ Derrick J. Stenning,⁶ Marguerite Dupire,⁷ and most recently Mette Bovin.⁸ Hopen indicates that this arrangement might be altered in the occurrence of mitigating environmental factors, in which case the cattle would be given the best ground possible and the family would camp nearby.⁹ In other words, the preferred orientation and arrangement of the household is ultimately subordinate to the needs of the herd.

More commonly, however, the homestead is divided into two basic areas, a western cattle enclosure and an eastern residential area, separated

by the rope running down the middle to which calves are tied at night. It is commonly thought that these two areas are gender specific. The eastern household area is a feminine domain, while the cattle corral is a masculine domain. The principal male activities are performed in the western cattle area. The east is mainly accessible only to females with the exception of the male head of the household and children too young to stay with the herd. These gender divisions are kept at all times, even in death when women are buried behind the household, to the east, and men to the west.¹⁰ Hopen even suggests that these divisions have been enshrined in language. He states that, "The root *gor* is unequivocally common to >man= (*gor*) and >west= (*gor*, in Sokoto dialect); while the root *rew* (>follow=) is duplicated in *rewbe* (>women=, lit. >those who follow=)."¹¹

Within the residential, or eastern, half of the homestead, the individual residences of wives, if there are more than one, are arranged along a north-south axis. The senior wife has her individual residence, or *suudu*, in the northern-most position while those of her juniors are arranged to the south according to marriage-order.¹² Stenning points out that "A senior wife is described as *wailaajo* (>north-one=) and any junior wife as *fombinaajo* (>south-one=)."¹³ In a similar manner, a woman's collection of calabashes is arranged by size within the residence with the largest in the northern-most position and the smallest in the southern-most position.¹⁴

When more than one family from the same lineage camp together, both Stenning¹⁵ and Dupire¹⁶ indicate that their homesteads are arranged according to the seniority of the males. The marking of male seniority is exactly the inverse of the feminine case, with the senior-most male establishing his homestead in the southern-most position and those of his juniors stretching to the north. At night, a man also attaches the family's calves to the calf rope, dividing the corral from the residence, in order of age with the oldest toward the south and the youngest toward the north.¹⁷

The philosophical reasons for the gender and age associations with the cardinal directions are in greater dispute than the actual arrangement of the camp. St. Croix provides only negative associations for north and east when he states: "If facing North, it is said that spirits will cause the occupier to leave the place for elsewhere, after but a comparatively short stay. If facing east, the occupants will never be free from sickness."¹⁸ Hopen recalls that, "They give no reason why they prefer to keep their herd to the west of the shelter except that >it is our custom= (*dum al 'ada amin*)."¹⁹ Dupire explains that, "The house always open toward the west—an orientation

which is attributed to the counsel of Usumanu dan Fodio (!) and which cannot be modified without fear of attracting misfortune upon the family—divides the terrain into two sectors.”²⁰ Stenning and Bovin give no explanations at all for Fulbe associations with the directions.

Eastern and Western Fulbe Compared

In a 1965 article entitled “L’initiation chez les pasteurs peul,” Germaine Dieterlen examines the myth *Koumen*, taught to youths during initiation, for information regarding Fulbe culture.²¹ The text of this myth appears to be known only in Senegal, and therefore, Dieterlen’s conclusions can do no more than provide clues as to directions for further research among other Fulbe groups. She suggests that initiates are taught a series of conceptual relationships through the understanding of *Koumen*.²² These relationships tie the cardinal directions to the four originating Fulbe clans, to certain colors of cattle, and again to the four elements. In one chapter of their 1996 publication *Drawn from African Dwellings*, in which they treat the architecture of the semi-nomadic Waalwaalbe Fulbe of northern Senegal, Jean-Paul Bourdier and Trinh Minh-Ha expand upon Dieterlen’s text.²³ A summary of the relationships delimited by these authors is as follows:

East is related to the clan *Dyal*, the color yellow, the element of fire, the rising sun, golden light, knowledge, and the Orient, invariably indicated as the origin of the Fulbe.

West is related to the clan *Ba*, the color red, the element of air, sunset, wisdom, and secret knowledge. Included as types of secret knowledge are the feminine powers of fertility and the giving of life.

North is related to the clan *Bari*, the color white, the element of earth, and the barren sands of the Sahara desert. The dangers of the Sahara, particularly for a pastoral society, are obvious. This direction therefore has negative connotations.²⁴

South is related to the clan *So*, the color black, the element of water, and the humid sub-Saharan forest regions. Forest regions provide ideal breeding conditions for the tsetse fly which spreads trypanosomiasis, also known as “sleeping sickness.” This disease is deadly to cattle, and to humans. Forest regions, therefore, are just as dangerous to cattle as the desert.

It appears that the associations made with the cardinal directions in Fulbe culture may find their origins in environmental realities. If this is true,

then we may understand the negative associations with north and south as resulting from conditions in these directions that are inhospitable to cattle.

If they are environmentally linked, however, one must take caution in using the series of associations in the texts of Dieterlen and Bourdier and Minh-Ha, since it would suggest that a change of environment might produce a corresponding change in the associations. For example, the Waalwaalbe of northern Senegal normally place the entrance to a residence on the southern side. This is clearly at odds with the norms in eastern Fulbe culture. Bourdier and Minh-Ha suggest that the principal reason for this arrangement relates to the desire to avoid the Harmattan winds which blow from the northwest during the dry season.²⁵ It is instructive to compare the orientation of the Waalwaalbe house to the Trarza and Brakna nomadic Arab tents in Mauritania. Odette du Puigaudeau, in a 1965 article entitled “Arts and Customs of the ‘Moors,’” states that these populations, in order to evade the Harmattan winds, orient their tents with the doors to the south as well.²⁶ In the areas inhabited by the eastern Fulbe, by contrast, the winds blow predominantly from the northeast.

The gender divisions of the Waalwaalbe also appear to be at odds with—even the exact opposite of—eastern Fulbe. In other words, the Waalwaalbe relate west with femininity, and all women’s items are kept on the western side of the house, while east is associated with masculinity. This explains the association, in Bourdier and Minh-ha’s text, of west with secret knowledge, fertility, and the giving of life. One must assume that these attributes would be associated with the east in an eastern Fulbe context, although this has yet to be concretely shown. In short, spatial concepts, architecture, and indeed Fulbe culture in general appear to vary in different locales.

Settled Fulbe

As the once nomadic Fulbe of Cameroon settled into sedentary communities in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the concept of the *wuro* expanded from the single encampment to the larger unit of the city. The connotation of *wuro* as “city” is one peculiar to Adamaoua dialects of Fulfulde. The individual homestead became known as the *saare*.²⁷

During an interview that I conducted in 2000 with the ruler of Banyo, an emirate of the Sokoto Empire in the southwest of Adamaoua province in Cameroon, Laamiifo Mohaman Gabdo Yaya explained to me the significance of the cardinal directions in sedentary Fulbe culture.

He declared that Fulbe palaces always face west as this is the “direction of power.” One can relate this association to a nomadic Fulbe insistence on west as a masculine domain, and thus powerful. He furthermore stated that the *laamiido* is usually seated facing west, and doorways open west whenever possible. East, on the other hand, he described as the direction of knowledge and religion. This, I suggest, must be related to the importance of Islam in settled Fulbe life and identity in Cameroon. Laamiido Mohaman Gabdo Yaya pointed out that if doorways do not open to the west, then they inevitably open toward the east.

North and south are considered inauspicious directions, toward which a palace never faces. Laamiido Mohaman Gabdo Yaya related south to poverty and north to misfortune. His explanation for the latter statement was that the toes of the dead, when buried according to Islamic custom in Cameroon, point north while the body faces east, the back faces west, and the head points south. I wondered at the time if the negative associations with north and south might also have to do with environments in which the Fulbe’s cattle herds might thrive. Indeed, one is reminded of the associations pointed out by Dieterlen and Bourgeois and Minh-Ha, in which south is related to black, water, and the forest, while north is related to white, earth, and the desert.

In the small village of Idool, I received yet another response to my queries concerning the orientation of the palace of the *jawro*, a subordinate of the *laamiido* of Ngaoundéré. The founder was a nomadic pastoralist prior to founding the village in approximately 1958. In this case, the palace faces west southwest. I noted to myself that this was exactly the same orientation as the palace of the *laamiido* of Ngaoundéré. I assumed that the *jawro* was merely following the example of his superior. The brother of the *jawro*, however, explained that it was in order to place the back of the residence to the prevailing wind. This is similar to Bourdier and Minh-Ha’s explanation for the southerly orientation of Senegalese Waalwaalbe houses.

The variety of responses suggested above indicates that the nomadic pastoral Fulbe associations with the cardinal directions are related to environmental factors. While the brother of the *jawro* of Idool recognized the importance played by environmental factors in the orientation of the palace of that village, the inhabitants of which have only recently abandoned a nomadic pastoral life, the nomadic Fulbe associations have more often been recoded in an Islamic understanding of the urban situation. It is in this context that we may comprehend Laamiido Mohaman Yaya Gabdo’s interest in maintaining the negative associations for north and south of nomadic Fulbe culture. Instead of environmental factors, the philosophical reasoning

for these negative associations has been reframed in terms of the directions in which the head and feet of the deceased point when buried according to Islamic principles. Similarly, east and west may have originally gained meaning from the rising and setting of the sun, but have acquired new meaning in the Islamic context due to the eastward direction of prayer.

Hausa Cities

While the early-nineteenth-century jihad of Usumanu dan Fodio, under whose banners most of the Fulbe cities of northern Cameroon were founded, was clearly a multiethnic struggle, there is little doubt that the majority of the leadership was Fulbe.²⁸ This situation required the tempering of Fulbe cultural norms with those of other major cultural constituencies, in order to gain acceptance and stability for the new regime. The difficulty of bridging the two is clearly shown by a conflict between the new Emir of Kano, Suleimanu, and his fellow Fulbe. The Fulbe, fearing that Suleimanu and his children would become as corrupt as the recently deposed Hausa ruler of Kano, forbade him to enter the palace. Usumanu dan Fodio himself directed Suleimanu to take up residence in the palace and to remove any individual that opposed him.²⁹ Clearly, Usumanu dan Fodio wanted to gain the legitimacy of the Hausa palace in the eyes of the Kano population.

There is, at first glance, surprisingly little consistency in the orientations of palaces in Hausa cities, and their relationships to the central mosques. In Zaria, the palace is situated in the center of the city facing the central mosque directly to the west across a square (see figure 3). The palace was constructed on this site long before the introduction of Islam. The mosque, however, has only existed since the jihad. Previously, the congregational mosque was located in Juma ward, to the west and outside the Madarkaci walls.³⁰ Thus, at Zaria the palace historically was at the city center, while the central mosque was later placed in its direct vicinity.

At Kano, the palace faces south with its back to the Friday mosque (see figure 4). The palace itself is located somewhat to the south of the city center. It was moved to this location in the late fifteenth century from an undetermined location by the famous ruler Mohammad Rumfa. Local histories state that the ruler of the original inhabitants of Kano lived atop Dalla Hill, geographically in the center of the old city.³¹ Rumfa also constructed the central mosque on its current site, just north of the palace. Prior to this date, the central mosque was located at one of two possible locations, both

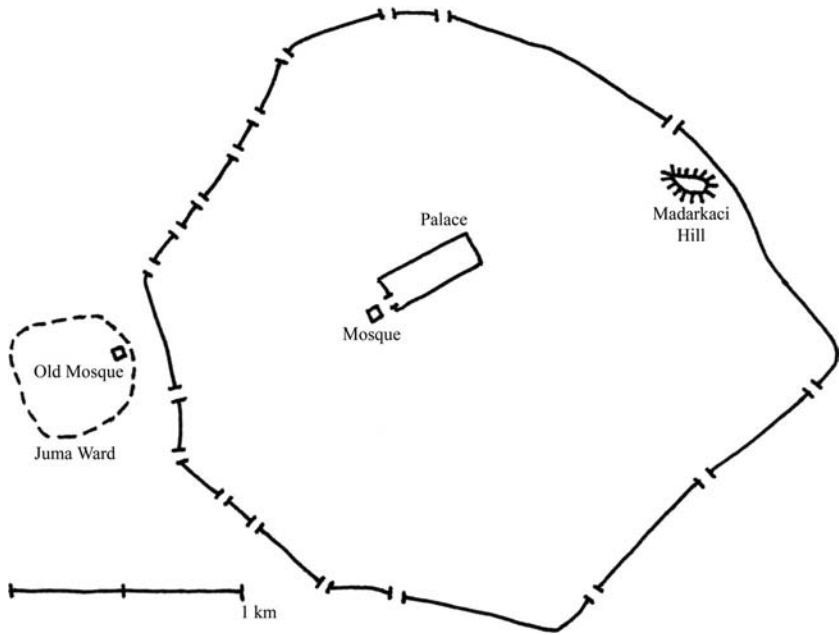


Figure 3. Zaria.

in the forest that surrounded the location of the central market. The first possibility is Sharifai quarter, where the reputed descendents of the fifteenth-century North African sheikh al-Maghili live. The second possibility is Yan Doya quarter, where the descendents of the fifteenth-century Muslim immigrants from Mali, the Wangarawa, live.³² In either case, it is clear that Rumfa, wishing to proclaim his adherence to Islam and his role as the leader of the Muslim community in Kano, moved the congregational mosque into close proximity with his newly constructed palace.

Although at first there does not seem to be much in common between these urban plans, one can say that originally the palace in both examples was at the center of the city. The central mosque was a later institution which appeared only with the conversion of the ruler, and was subsequently placed in the direct vicinity of the palace, often with an open space between the two. The palace does not necessarily open in the direction of the mosque, however, and the palace is primary with the mosque placed in relation to it.

The French anthropologist Guy Nicolas conducted research in Niger among the descendents of Hausa who had fled the jihad of Usumanu dan

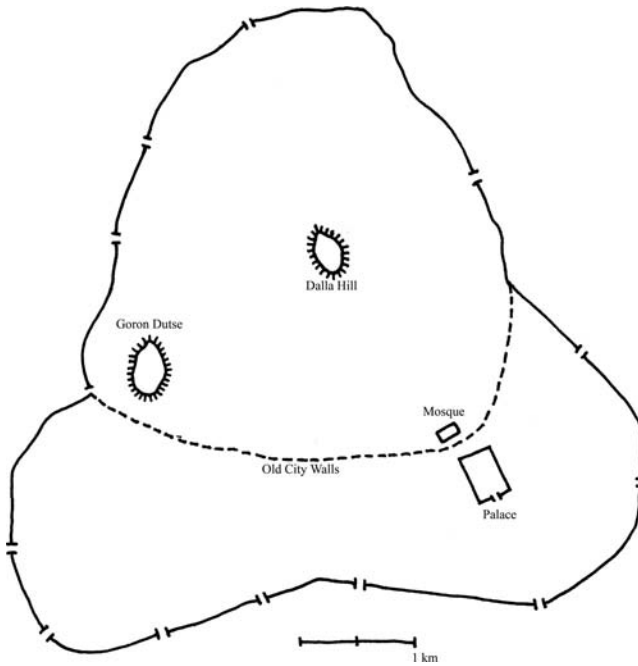


Figure 4. Kano.

Fodio. The author describes the founding of a house in terms which sound almost identical to those described in the literature on nomadic Fulbe homesteads:

For those who respect traditions, the opening of these residences must be turned toward the west, in such a way that one enters always facing to the east. Moreover, the residences of the wives of a single husband are disposed along a line oriented north-south. The first wife always has her habitation to the north, and the last to the south, each being north of the wife who entered the house of her husband after her, the order of entrances defining a hierarchy which regulates the reciprocal behavior of the wives. This is why the first wife (*matar fari*), who has the rank of lady of the house, and carries the title of “mother of the house” (*uwal gida*), is often called “the woman of the north” (*matar arewa*), and the last “the woman of the south” (*matar gusum*).³³

Nicolas’s observations indicate that there is significant overlapping between Fulbe and Hausa cultures regarding the proper orientation of the homestead and arrangement of wives’ residences.

In describing the founding of a city, on the other hand, Nicolas provides a conceptual framework for understanding the perceived centrality of the palace, a practice distinct from that of cities founded by Fulbe after the jihad. He points out that, based on information gleaned from the refounding of Maradi and Tsibiri in Niger after the previous sites were flooded in 1945, the ideal Hausa city plan is square with the sides oriented toward the cardinal directions, doors in each wall, and the palace at the center.³⁴ Nicolas explains that the cardinal directions may be understood in anthropomorphic terms, through the study of Hausa mythology, as the four children of a father who resides at the intersection of the polar axes.³⁵ The ruler is, by analogy, the “father” of the population.

Kanuri Cities

Unfortunately, there is very little scholarship concerning architecture and urbanism of the Kanuri. Most references concern structures built following the destruction of the historic capital of the Kanuri state of Bornu by the forces of Sokoto in 1812. The later capitals of Bornu, such as Kukawa and Maiduguri, appear to reflect the impact of the Sokoto Empire in that the mosque is placed at the center of the city with the palace to its east. I believe one should understand this phenomenon in terms of waging an ideological battle with the Sokoto Empire.

Bivar and Shinnie’s sketch plan of Birni Ngazargamu, the capital from 1470 until 1812, clarifies the central position of the palace of the ruler.³⁶ Not only is this ruin identified as the palace by its central location and size, but also by its materials of construction. Unlike the majority of architecture in this region, which is constructed from earth, this structure was built of baked brick. The orientation of the palace, however, is impossible to determine from this plan. One can only state that the Kanuri, like the Hausa, appear to emphasize the centrality of the ruler in the urban plan of the capital.

The Fulbe Model in Relation to Hausa and Kanuri Models

The Hausa and Kanuri practice of placing the palace at the center of the city differs remarkably from the practice of the Fulbe during and after the jihad. Data relating to Fulbe practices are taken from the numerous

ribats, or fortified towns, that were founded for the protection of the frontiers, as well as from the reorganization of some older cities. According to Murray Last, the houses of both Shehu Usumanu dan Fodio and Muhammadu Bello, the Shehu's son and eventual successor, faced west in the manner of pastoral Fulbe homesteads.³⁷ Indeed, in looking at most Fulbe *ribats*, and at most of those cities founded in Adamaoua by the Fulbe, one finds that the palaces are generally on the eastern side of town facing directly west toward the *qibla* wall of the central mosque. In this arrangement, if anything is topographically central, it would be the mosque.

The placement of the palace to the east of the mosque reflects several important differences. First, I suggest that the palace has been replaced by the mosque as the central element of urban planning in order to indicate clearly the ideological basis for the jihad. That is, the centrality of God is stressed under the Sokoto Empire, rather than the centrality of the ruler.

Second, I believe that the change in the location of the palace, from its central position to an eastern location, represents a fundamental difference in the understanding of space in Fulbe as opposed to Hausa and Kanuri culture. Labelle Prussin, in her 1995 publication *African Nomadic Architecture*, states the following concerning perceptions of space:

To understand nomadic boundaries, we need to think of the built environment and its spaces in the context of movement: the movement of people, the movement of one's world of material culture. Movement, however, is also an essential part of our cognitive experience. For the nomad, home cannot be understood except in terms of journey, just as space is defined by movement.³⁸

For nomadic cultures, this movement is constant, rather than being a single event of relocation. For sedentary cultures, however, space is a much more centralized experience. When we travel, we do so from one point to another, from one center to another. It is this emphasis on a center that characterizes Hausa and Kanuri conceptions of space. Despite transforming their culture from a nomadic to a sedentary one, I believe the Fulbe had not developed the same sense of the center that quite clearly dominates Hausa and Kanuri experiences of space.

Furthermore, Mette Bovin has pointed out that Fulbe architecture, and indeed many different aspects of their culture more generally, are based on ideals of balance. In the nomadic *wuro*, this translates into a division

of the homestead into two equally important gender-specific areas. In terms of the city of Ngaoundéré, and almost every other Fulbe capital that I visited in Adamaoua and North provinces in Cameroon, we may speak of the ruler to the east and the population to the west.³⁹ The two are equal halves of a whole unit. This view of the city is an expansion upon the concept of the male head-of-the-household who rules the nomadic pastoral Fulbe family from the eastern half of the compound. The *laamiido* is positioned in a sedentary context as the male head of the household, while his conceptual offspring submit to his rule in the western half of the city. This replicates the paternalistic message intended by the Hausa placement of the palace at the center of a city.

The Jihad and Early Islamic Models

The relationship created between mosque and palace also reflects a model used to establish urban centers during the seventh-century expansion of the Islamic empire from the Arabian peninsula. Muhammadu Bello, son of and eventual successor to Usumanu dan Fodio, encouraged the construction of fortified urban centers, known as *ribats*, to protect the borders of the Empire.⁴⁰ Murray Last explains the source of this policy:

Bello derived the inspiration for these policies from the history and the textbooks of the Arab conquest. He was therefore sure of their success and the rightness of enforcing them. Undoubtedly the sanction given by the Arabic authorities which Bello so often quoted helped to win acceptance for his policies and to generate enthusiasm for the dangerous life in the *ribats*.⁴¹

It has been clear for quite some time, therefore, that Bello was following early Islamic models in the establishment of *ribats* throughout the Sokoto empire. What has not been clear is just how closely these models were followed. The close resonance in urban planning in the early Islamic empire and the Sokoto Empire is illustrated by the city of Kufa, established in southeast Iraq in 638 (see figure 5).

The first construction on the site of Kufa was the mosque.⁴² From the mosque, an archer then shot an arrow in the direction of Mecca, and three others at 90-degree angles from the first. These arrows established the outer boundaries of the town, conceived in a square with the mosque at the center. The quarters of the town were divided and given over to the different

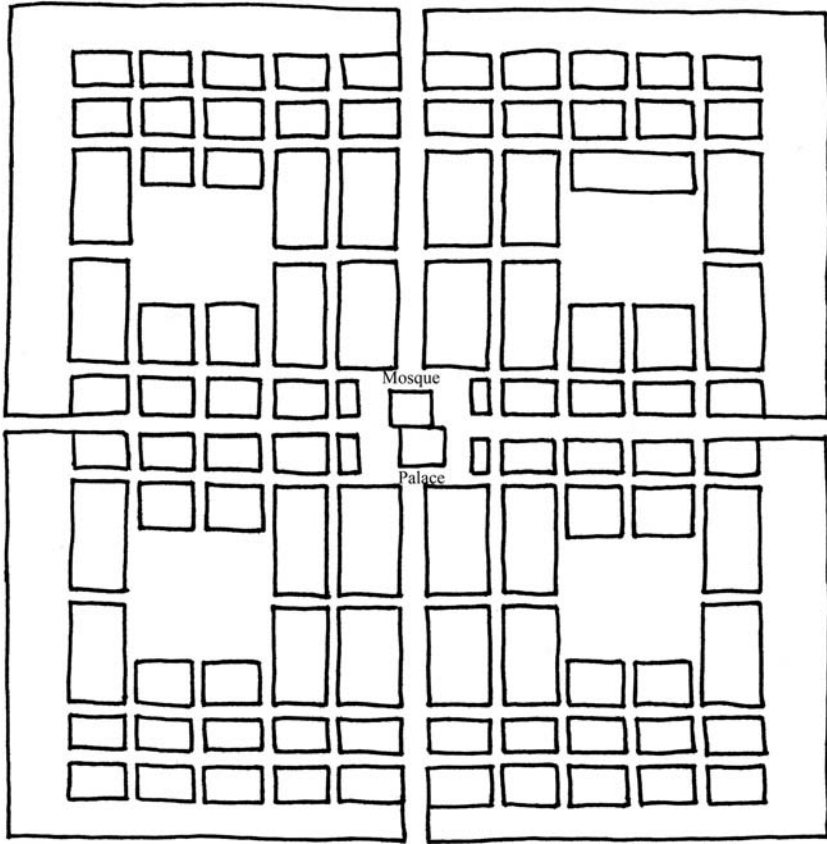


Figure 5. Kufa.

Arab tribes as residential areas. Roads were established parallel to the mosque, although one supposes that the central axis roads radiated from it.

The palace of the governor, containing the public treasury, was originally separate from the mosque. According to the medieval historian al-Tabari, active in the late ninth to early tenth centuries, it was attached to the *qibla* side of the mosque in order to better protect the public treasury after it had been robbed.⁴³ The idea was that someone was always in the mosque either praying or meditating, and therefore able to witness any suspicious activity. Indeed, in a later improvement, the two structures were rebuilt as one continuous monument.

At Sokoto and Bauchi, both founded after the jihad of Usumanu dan Fodio in the early nineteenth century, the palace was built facing the

qibla wall of the mosque, following the example of Kufa. The *qibla* from Nigeria and Cameroon is due east. The *qibla* wall of the central mosque of each of these cities therefore faces east. The palace of the ruler was built to the east of the central mosque facing west toward its *qibla* wall. In order to follow the arrangement of mosque and palace at Kufa therefore, the eastward oriented *qibla* wall in Cameroon and Nigeria faces the westward-oriented palace entrance. At Zaria, as was previously noted, the congregational mosque was moved to the city center so that its *qibla* wall was directly opposite the palace entrance. In other words, once again the eastward-oriented *qibla* wall and the westward-oriented palace entrance face each other. Shifting the mosque to the city center simultaneously repositions the palace to a more easterly location. As was pointed out previously, an easterly position in Fulbe culture implies the father-like status of the ruler. Thus, the emphasis on the central location of the ruler in Hausa and Kanuri culture was recast in an Islamic idiom that was more comprehensible in Fulbe culture.

Ngaoundéré

The city of Ngaoundéré was founded by a Bata servant and a group of Kanuri religious scholars in the name of Ardo Njobdi, a Fulbe leader under the authority of the Sokoto Empire.⁴⁴ The original arrangement of mosque and palace reflects a Hausa-Kanuri spatial arrangement—that is, the palace was originally in the center of the city where the Grand Marché is currently located. The mosque was positioned directly to the east of the palace.

In the late nineteenth century, the palace was moved to its current position east of the mosque and opening west toward its *qibla* wall. This occurred at a time when the descendants of Ardo Njobdi were becoming more and more independent of the Sokoto Empire, controlling a massive territory of their own. While it is claimed that the palace was moved purely in order to allow for its expansion, the new arrangement also seems to indicate a desire to reintroduce a Fulbe organization of space and to bring Ngaoundéré into line with the other great capitals of the Sokoto Empire.

From the reorganization of the historic Hausa capitals, and the urban plans of newly established cities, it becomes clear that Islam was used as a mediator in the negotiation of conceptual space in intercultural relations in the Sokoto Empire. The settling of the Fulbe in urban

environments coincided with an increasing emphasis in Fulbe culture on adherence to Islam, which in turn led to the early-nineteenth-century jihad of Usumanu dan Fodio. In their newfound position of leadership, the Fulbe discovered elements of urban planning in the early Islamic tradition that resonated with their own culture. Thus, the mosque, previously on the outskirts of town in most cases, was moved to the center as an emblem of the ideological basis for the jihad and the ensuing empire. This replaced the central position of the palace in Hausa and Kanuri urban planning. The palace was relocated to the east of the mosque in a position that, in Fulbe culture, implied the father-like status of the ruler. The rearrangement of urban space was made palatable to the Hausa and Kanuri members of the population because it was wrapped in the guise of Islamic tradition. In attempting to understand a seemingly unimportant shift in the urban plan of Ngaoundéré, one begins to understand the extent to which the jihad of Usumanu dan Fodio constituted a period as much of acculturation as of religious and cultural conflict.

Notes

1 The *qibla* wall is that which faces toward Mecca, indicating the direction of prayer in Islam.

2 The site of the former palace is now occupied by the Grand Marché (Great Market) of Ngaoundéré, built by the French colonial regime.

3 Galina Zoubko, *Dictionnaire peul-français*, Senri Ethnological Reports 4 (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 1996), 524.

4 F. W. de St. Croix, *The Fulani of Northern Nigeria* (Reprint Westmead, Farnborough, Hants: Gregg International Publishers, 1972), 26.

5 C. Edward Hopen, *The Pastoral Fulbe Family in Gwandu* (London: Published for the International African Institute by the Oxford University Press, 1958).

6 Derrick J. Stenning, *Savannah Nomads: A Study of the Wodaabe Pastoral Fulani of Western Bornu Province, Northern Region, Nigeria* (London: Published for the International African Institute by Oxford University Press, 1959).

7 Marguerite Dupire, *Peuls nomades: Etude descriptive des Wodaabe du Sahel nigérien*, Université de Paris, Travaux et mémoires de l'Institut d'ethnologie 64 (Paris: Institut d'ethnologie, 1962). The close resonance in urban planning in the early Islamic empire and the Sokoto Empire is illustrated by the city of Kufa, established in southeast Iraq in 638.

8 Mette Bovin, *Nomads Who Cultivate Beauty: Wodaabe Dances and Visual Arts in Niger* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2001).

9 Hopen, *Pastoral Fulbe Family*, 57.

10 Stenning, *Savannah Nomads*, 111.

11 Hopen, *Pastoral Fulbe Family*, 111. Also noted in Dupier, *Peuls nomades*, 157. Zoubko ascribes usage of *gorgal* to mean “west” to the following dialects: Western Niger, Voltaic, Macina, Gambia, and Eastern dialects. Zoubko, *Dictionnaire peul-français*, 165.

12 Hopen, *Pastoral Fulbe Family*, 59; Stenning, *Savannah Nomads*, 107; Dupire, *Peuls nomades*, 156.

13 Stenning, *Savannah Nomads*, 107.

14 Dupire, *Peuls nomades*, 156; Bovin, *Nomads Who Cultivate Beauty*, 65.

15 Stenning, *Savannah Nomads*, 39.

16 Dupire, *Peuls nomades*, 157.

17 Ibid.

18 St. Croix, *Fulani of Northern Nigeria*, 58. The fear of aimless wandering is expressed well in Cyprian Ekwensi's novel *Burning Grass: A Story of the Fulani of Northern Nigeria* (London: Heinemann, 1962). The main character, Mai Sunsaye, is a Fulbe pastoralist afflicted with *sokugo*, or "the wandering illness."

19 Hopen, *Pastoral Fulbe Family*, 57.

20 "La case toujours ouverte vers l'ouest—orientation que l'on attribue à un conseil d'Uthman dan Fodio (!) et que l'on ne pourrait modifier sans crainte d'attirer un malheur sur la famille—apportionne le terrain en deux secteurs." Dupire, *Peuls nomades*, 157. Author's translation.

21 Germaine Dieterlen, "L'initiation chez les pasteurs peul," in *African Systems of Thought*, edited by M. Fortes and G. Dieterlen, 314–27 (London, New York: Published for the International African Institute by the Oxford University Press, 1965).

22 Ibid., 316.

23 Jean-Paul Bourdier and Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *Drawn from African Dwellings* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 22–61.

24 Bourgeois and Minh-ha indicate that north is associated with the "grazing fields of the Fulbe cattle." Ibid., 44. I find this highly unlikely, however, and suggest that a more probable association with this direction would be the barren earth of the Sahara.

25 They are quick to point out, however, that environmental factors are not sufficient alone to explain the orientation of Waalwaalbe residences. "But such an explanation cannot stand by itself since there are—albeit very rarely—instances in which the southern (and western) direction proves not to be the most important factor in orienting the house. If, for example, a dome-shaped dwelling opens to a direction other than the south, it will invariably be the north, in spite of the inconveniences caused by the harmattan. In this case, what the dwelling does conserve is precisely the east-west ordering and gendering of interior space as described earlier, with the altar of milk (*kaggu*) consistently on the western side when one enters the north-oriented door. It seems, then, that over the physical factor prevails the cultural heritage, whose main principles are still maintained across generations and geographical borders, despite the adaptive variations that necessarily occurred with the widely changing contexts of Fulbe migration across Africa." Ibid. The material presented in this article suggests that while there are cultural continuities, difference do arise between eastern and western Fulbe cultures, based in part at least on environmental variations.

26 Odette du Puigaudeau, "Arts and Customs of the 'Moors,'" in Labelle Prussin, *African Nomadic Architecture* (Washington, DC, and London: Smithsonian Institution Press and The National Museum of African Art, 1995), 74.

27 It is somewhat ironic that *saare* is the term used in western Fulfulde to refer to "city." In western Fulfulde, the term *saare* is used to refer to the concepts of "village," "town," or "city," while the term *wuro* is retained for the denotation of the individual residence, or homestead.

28 On the multiethnic nature of the jihad, please see H. M. Maishanu, "Trends and Issues in the History of Bilad al-Sudan: The Sokoto Caliphate in Colonial

Historiography,” in *Islam in Africa: Proceedings of the Islam in Africa Conference*, edited by Nur Alkali et al. (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1993), 59–80.

29 S. J. Hogben and A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, *The Emirates of Northern Nigeria: A Preliminary Survey of Their Historical Traditions* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 198. Also see Nasiru Ibrahim Dantiye, “A Study of the Origins, Status and Defensive Role of Four Kano Frontier Strongholds (Ribats) in the Emirate Period (1809–1903)” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1985), 109–10n36.

30 See A. W. Urquhart, *Planned Urban Landscapes of Northern Nigeria: A Case Study of Zaria* (Zaria: Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1977), 14–15. The name of the ward “Juma” makes this clear, as it is derived from the Arabic term *jam`a*, meaning Friday, from the root *jam`a*, meaning “to gather.”

31 See, for instance, H. R. Palmer, “The Kano Chronicle,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 38 (1908): 63.

32 For a more in-depth discussion of this issue, please see Mark Dike DeLancey, “From Dalla Hill to Kano: An Example of Pre-Colonial Urban Development in the Central Sudan” (M.A. thesis, Harvard University, 1998), 32–38.

33 “Pour ceux qui respectent la tradition, l’ouverture de ces habitations doit être tournée vers l’Ouest, de sorte que l’on y entre toujours face à l’Est. Par ailleurs, les habitations des épouses d’un même homme sont disposées sur une ligne orientée dans le sens nord-sud. La première épouse a toujours son habitation au Nord, et la dernière au Sud, chacune étant au Nord de celle qui est entrée après elle dans l’enclos de l’époux, l’ordre des entrées définissant une hiérarchie qui règle le comportement réciproque des épouses. C’est pourquoi la première épouse (*matar fari*), qui a rang de maîtresse de maison, et porte le titre de ‘mère de la maison’ (*uwal gida*), est souvent appelée ‘la femme du Nord’ (*matar arewa*), et la dernière ‘la femme du Sud’ (*matar gusum*).” Guy Nicolas, “Essai sur les structures fondamentales de l’espace dans la cosmologie Hausa,” *Journal de la Société des Africanistes* (Paris) 36, no. 1 (1966): 78. Author’s translation.

34 *Ibid.*, 73–75.

35 *Ibid.*, 83–85.

36 A. D. H. Bivar and P. L. Shinnie, “Old Kanuri Capitals,” *Journal of African History* 3, no. 1 (1962): 2.

37 Murray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate*, Ibadan History Series (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1967), 184.

38 Prussin, *African Nomadic Architecture*, 40.

39 My dissertation, entitled “Representing Rulership: Palace Architecture, Spatial Orientation, Ritualized Movement, and Secrecy in Northern Cameroon” (Ph.D., Harvard University, 2004), is based upon research at fourteen palaces in Adamaoua and North provinces of Cameroon.

40 Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate*, 75.

41 *Ibid.*, 80.

42 This brief summary of the foundation of Kufa is based on the account of Nezar AlSayyad, *Cities and Caliphs: On the Genesis of Arab Muslim Urbanism*, Contributions to the Study of World History 26 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991): 55–65. For a more extensive inquiry into the foundation and history of the city of Kufa, please see Hichem Djait, *Al-Kūfa: naissance de la ville islamique*, Islam d’hier et d’aujourd’hui, 29 (Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1986).

43 In the case of Kufa, the *qibla* is due south, since that is the direction in which Mecca lies from this site.

44 Eldridge Mohammadou describes how these Kanuri religious scholars were sent by Ardo Njobdi: “Nine of these malams were selected by Ardo Njobdi, the Fulbe ruler of Bundang and founder of Ngaundere, to compose the first batch of pioneers who were to settle in Ngaundere. Their names have been recorded: Malum (K. *mālām*) Monguma, Malum Aliyu Jetawa, Malum Ibrahima, Malum Kadir, Malum Muktamu, Malum Mustafa, Malum Musa, Malum Firna, Malum Yusufu. Their particular assignment was to set up the first mosque in the new town, the first Koranic schools where they would be teaching, and to officiate the various ceremonies for the new community. These malams founded the Kanuri ward of scholars in Ngaundere known as Malumri, from where was created the second Kanuri ward of the city named Kormari and where resided the Mai-Borno or head of the Kanuri community of the town.” Eldridge Mohammadou, “Kanuri Imprint on Adamawa Fulbe and Fulfulde,” in *Advances in Kanuri Scholarship* edited by Norbert Cyffer and Thomas Geider, Westafrikanische Studien 17 (Cologne: Rüdiger Köpe Verlag, 1997), 271.

2

OPPRESSIVE IMPRESSIONS, ARCHITECTURAL EXPRESSIONS

THE POETICS OF FRENCH COLONIAL (AD)VANTAGE, REGARDING AFRICA

michael ralph

Colonialism was distinguished by its power of representation, whose paradigm was the architecture of the colonial city but whose effects extended themselves at every level.

—Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 171

For the French Colonial Exposition of 1931, Olivier and Lambert constructed a *Grand Palais* designed to represent *Afrique Occidentale Française* (French West Africa). But this monument was an “exaggerated version” of similar structures that had preceded it in French displays (Prussin 1985); the edifice was grossly different from dwellings located in the part of West Africa that had inspired it. To assuage expected criticism, members of the press hastily explained why modifications were made; after all, “If the tower had not been as high . . . one would no longer have a work of *art* but merely an *African construction*.” Elaborations by the “architect-poets” were appropriate, they argued, since “those who have *never been* to Africa find it *original* and *natural* and the colonials and indigenes *who know there is nothing similar there will discover with joy that it is real* to them.”¹

Much of French colonialism was concerned with trying to figure out how African structures should be presented—diagrammatically and in real

life.² This is so in the first case because expositions served as a visual display of empire, in the second instance because only certain forms of architecture were deemed appropriate for a given colony. But if all territories being considered were dominated by French rule, what factors influenced the specific ways a given place was depicted? More to the point, why was architecture characteristic of sub-Saharan Africa “*merely* African,” while Morocco during the same period was deemed the site of an architectural “masterpiece” (Hébrard and Anderson 1913, 1:77)? Of course, writers have dealt at length with the romanticization of “Oriental” Africa (Said 1978, Miller 1985), in contrast to what were considered to be the continent’s darkest recesses. But if racism was the sole force behind French perspectives on Africa, why was Casablanca, Morocco, considered to be “chaotic” (Prost 1932: 59) while Rabat, located in the same territory, was proclaimed one of the world’s “most beautiful” cities (Vaillat 1934: 74)?

There was a direct connection between French historical relationships with, attitudes about, and policies toward African territories under its control, and the way those spaces were represented. But as the questions above suggest, further investigation is needed to explain how and why such representations were formulated, since 1) different cities in the same territory could be imagined³ very differently, and 2) French perspectives on Africa were not merely influenced by events and activities, but by representations created in disparate contexts: popular literature⁴ and colonial expositions, for example. Besides considering figurations of Africa in these domains, however, the present essay examines architectural discourse and planning, since it presents an opportunity to study representations produced with great deliberation that were nevertheless somehow taken to be quite natural. In other words, though French colonials decided which architectural structures were suitable for different parts of the African continent, those decisions were alleged to be the most logical choices, whether such designs were held to be consistent with the region’s pre-existing “character” (Betts 1985: 194, Mitchell 1988: 15), or to satisfy obvious “needs.”⁵

But this issue of selecting structures that are “appropriate,” of satisfying “needs,” suggests more than the inevitable contours of French colonial designs. It reveals a form of political practice with a *poetic function*, a relentless commitment to reconfiguration, for the purpose of enhancement,⁶ the cherished transformations, of course, being those which facilitated colonial *rule*. In fact, there is a link between the techniques of aesthetic—and policies of political—representation,⁷ deployed by the French

colonial *order*, realized in its *poetics*: that mode of political transformation which made savage “spaces” into civilized “places.”⁸ Thus, French rule in Africa was at once literal and figurative. Indeed, the latter term refers both to the repressive power of popular imaginings and the practice of reproducing representations that expressed French ideas about Africa, even as these were responsible for creating new impressions that would later result in other symbolic expressions. In this *regard*, the politics of architectural representation were especially complex for French colonial officials: so many calculated decisions seemed, to them, most obvious, and built structures often became the standard for assessing a territory’s aesthetic—thus political and moral—integrity.⁹

But as I have indicated, different parts of Africa did not hold the same aesthetic, moral, and political ground. Given that north and sub-Saharan Africa were depicted quite differently, the present essay opens by addressing that issue in each region.

Le Sahara Français

The city of Rabat, Morocco, was highly regarded by the French. Selected as the nation’s capital by colonial officials because of its coastal location, by 1934 Rabat was proclaimed one of the world’s “most beautiful modern cities” (Vaillat 1934: 74–75), a “masterpiece” of “successful *planning* and *architecture*” (Hébrard and Anderson 1913, 1:77). As the latter phrase suggests, Rabat was praised not merely for its own pleasing characteristics. In France, the city was imagined as a place where Islamic beauty and modern aesthetics blended in exquisite harmony; in fact, Hubert Lyautey—who served for a period of time as both head of the French army and resident-general in Morocco, thereby becoming the city’s director of urban planning (Wright 1991: 92)—decided the main challenge was figuring out how to let “modern civilization *penetrate*” the city “while preserving what exists” in the region “that is of the greatest interest” (Wright 1991: 86; my emphasis). This sentiment reveals one consequence of a deliberate plan to modernize the city without losing those characteristics that signaled its indigenous beauty. So French “interest” was at once aesthetic and political, never one or the other: architects were concerned to preserve “the particular charm of these Arab houses and gardens,” even while making it clear “the Frenchman establishes the structure” of a building upon which the “indigenous” art may thought to be “his collaborator” (Wright 1991: 112).

This approach to civil engineering was consistent with France's official policy in Morocco, one of *association*. This colonial strategy sought to leave indigenous political institutions intact, while making them subservient to French administration. The goal was to establish political authority through a form of indirect rule. In a similar vein, urban designers and architects transformed Moroccan landscapes even as they fought to "preserve" local aesthetic forms (Wright 1991: 86). Here, colonial policy worked in concert with a discourse that championed the beauty of Moroccan "custom," arguing that it should be protected—in social life and architecture. Yet it should be stressed that, despite an ideological commitment to preservation, French officials were recreating Morocco. They were in effect—visually and politically—directing the new course of its design.

Besides urban design and implementation, French involvement had other far-reaching consequences. Since Moroccan history was continuously being made throughout the time of French contact with the city, some of the "customs" the colonial regime sought to protect and reify were historical developments produced by their involvement with the region. For instance, the French refused to meddle with tax-collecting procedures in Morocco. Yet Moroccan taxes were first levied as an attempt to boost revenue in response to European invasions of the nineteenth century; further, after colonialism set in, most taxes went to civil engineering programs and services that benefited the French anyway (Burke 1976: 26–40). Thus, despite the fact that French policy and attitudes toward Morocco during the first decades of the twentieth century can be aptly characterized as associationist, the presence or absence of French meddling in Moroccan affairs was governed by changing political interests, not some absolute commitment to that specific political ideology.

Given the convenient contingency of French colonial strategy, it should not be surprising that attitudes toward the Moroccan city of Casablanca were initially quite different from those held toward Rabat. While Lyautey and others had carefully guided planning and execution of architectural projects in Rabat from 1912 onward, work in Casablanca was taken to derive haphazardly from the whims of property owners who pursued their own commercial interests without regard for how it would affect the broader social and economic landscape. Henri Prost, for example, was one of several French architects who believed that Casablanca might never escape its "chaotic origins," given the fact that nothing had "kept foreigners from building wherever they wanted to" (1932: 59, 71).

Prost's anxieties are evident in his terminology. The complaint that French commercial interests mistakenly replaced civil engineering in the case of Casablanca's "origins" suggests a French ideal that the city ought to have been conceived through careful design and implementation. For the French, it apparently had no existence that preceded the engineering of it, and only carefully crafted designs were thought to produce an orderly cityscape. Frenchmen who purchased land while pursuing material gain at the expense of a broader concern for how it affected the colonial project-at-large were wayward "foreigners," not *colons*, a term used for Frenchmen with proper commercial and political sensibilities (Wright 1991: 100).

There is more that can be said about this Rabat-Casablanca tension. Recall that Rabat was selected to be the new capital of Morocco. Therefore, it received most of the French attention and economic resources; meanwhile Fez (the former capital), Casablanca, and other cities were viewed as somehow corrupt and improper. This *orderly* center versus *wild* periphery model was the same one operating in France during that time,¹⁰ whereby the inhabitants of outlying areas—and their lifestyles—were deemed wayward and undisciplined, if not altogether problematic. Because their environments were not well-organized neither, apparently, were they. Thus, despite inflections uniquely situated, the French or der-disorder distinction "recurred" in Morocco's capitol-elsewhere dichotomy.¹¹

Soon, however, concerns about Casablanca's chaos were left far behind. In 1914, feeling like action was better than indifference, Lyautey gave Prost orders to design Casablanca's *ville nouvelle*. The result was not merely another city whose mix of French and Moroccan architecture attracted acclaim, but a kind of laboratory through use of which Frenchmen experimented with forms of urban planning they believed could later be tried out at home (Wright: 101–2). Most of all, though, Morocco became well known as a place where oriental custom was maintained and meshed with French civil engineering. However, French usage of North African aesthetic forms remained dubious and inconsistent. As Gwendolyn Wright (1991: 111) points out:

Europeans considered Islamic architecture a more or less universal set of elements from Spain to the Middle East. Architects freely incorporated motifs indigenous to [places as diverse as] Moorish Spain, Syria, or Egypt. Nor was there even a consistent recognition of the various local traditions within Morocco.

Thus, what French officials considered to be “Moroccan” actually derived from a number of different places. Yet, it is quite telling that different planners and builders managed to reach consensus—despite the fact that they were incorporating diverse emblems and disparate themes—and it suggests there was relative consistency about the way Morocco figured in French imaginings. At the same time however, it relates two contradictory developments: on one hand, since “Morocco” as an image was well understood, the work of representing it could have been achieved by anyone and would be appreciated by all; at the same time, each new figuration seemed to transform popular views, each production—though consumed—was reproductive in its own respect.

As we bear these issues in mind, it is nevertheless important to realize that French admiration for Morocco—and the contrasts with views held toward other parts of Africa—did not result merely from the work of specific, physical representations. Indeed, all representations—architectural, literary, and otherwise—were held to be iconic with the spaces or places they depicted (ralph nd[b]). To understand French views about North Africa, one must consider the circumstances of their involvement, historically.

From the eighth century onward, France was quite familiar with Islamic Africa, having known of a Moroccan dynasty’s Moorish rule in Spain, which lasted from 711 until the 1492 reconquest by Catholic Spaniards (Aldrich 1996: 31). That same year, a Moroccan sultan conquered the western Sudan’s Songhay kingdom, sustaining a high degree of political power. Such events produced rumors and realities of North African military might, expressed with adulation in paintings of the period (ibid.: 250–52). Besides these forms of acclaim, by the 1700s Morocco had a highly developed economic industry, trading on equal terms with much of Europe. Moroccan wool and other products were highly coveted in Europe throughout the modern period and must have increased French respect for inhabitants of the region (ibid.: 31–32).

But although conquest and commerce certainly enhanced Morocco’s prestige, such notoriety does not sufficiently explain why the territory was so favorably depicted—with the rest of North Africa—in French art, literature, and colonial displays. This is especially true since, in the nineteenth century, Morocco’s trade industries were disrupted by extensive drought and plague, yet these factors had little impact on the way it was represented in various media, especially when being contrasted with sub-Saharan Africa. To understand the reasons for this, one must realize 1) “Morocco” (French: *Maroc*) did not merely index the actual territory

but frequently stood in for “North Africa,” “the Near East,” “the *African Orient*” or whatever else was being signified, so 2) it is probably fruitful to examine relationships between France and other parts of North Africa to understand how any one of them, or all of them came to be imagined.

Like a “Retarded Brother”: Caricatures of the French Self

In 1798, Napoleon invaded Egypt. Partly motivated by concerns that Britain or Russia would gain control of North Africa’s Ottoman Empire (Aldrich 1996: 20), the French officer also wanted to challenge Britain’s expanding domain in South Asia (Al-Jabarti 1997 [1798]: 7). Fearing that he could not defeat the powerful British Armada, Napoleon decided instead to move across land through North Africa. This mission proved to be a failure, and three years later, French forces made peace with Britain and left Egypt. That fact notwithstanding, Napoleon’s mission was not a total loss, since military pursuits were only part of what he was after. In addition to more than 36,000 French troops, Napoleon had taken with him to Egypt 167 scholars in various disciplines, including sixteen cartographers and surveyors, all under the intellectual leadership of Baron Dominique Vivant Denon. Napoleon’s scholars and scribes recorded Egyptian writing wherever it could be found: on monuments, tombs, or other edifices. Filling thousands of pages of text, most of this work appeared in the *Description de l’Égypte*, whose multiple volumes were published between the years 1809 and 1828.¹² In addition to these publications, Jean François Champollion’s decipherment of the Rosetta Stone in 1822 finally enabled scholars to translate Egyptian texts. These developments facilitated the rise and spread of Egyptomania (Humbert, Pantazzi, and Zigler 1994) throughout France and much of Europe during the nineteenth century.

Thus in one sense, French victory in Egypt was cultural, if not military. For instance, after returning to France, Denon was appointed to serve first as Director of the Central Museum of Arts in 1802, then as Director-General of Museums in 1804. One of Denon’s first projects was to develop a series of commemorative medals highlighting French military campaigns in Egypt. But these medals were designed for use in forms of ritual commemoration, and thus enhanced accordingly. One medal, in fact, features Napoleon leading a military charge against Egyptian

Mamluks while the Great Pyramids of Giza loom in the background. However, when Napoleon actually fought the battle to which the medal refers, the Pyramids were several miles away—thus nowhere in sight! (Clayton 1982: 15). Still, these commemorative medals were forms of “material culture” used to “translate truths,” providing “concrete signs of particular histories and historicities . . . not simply to legitimize existing cultural and political worlds, but also to reinvent them” (Abu El-Haj 1998: 168). Egypt became tied to the intellectual ancestry of France as it was culturally conquered—in the French imagination—then appropriated for use in popular images.

These issues have relevance beyond the specific relationship between France and Egypt. When Napoleon first arrived in North Africa, he confessed to being impressed by Islamic political and religious institutions. So, instead of forcing them to adopt French policies and cultural mores, he feigned allegiance to Islamic forms while plotting clandestine conquest. In other words, Napoleon created the illusion of trying to assimilate himself. This was so much the case that he donned customary Egyptian attire on several occasions (Al-Jabarti 1997 [1798]: 152). Thus Napoleon’s attempt to identify himself with the native Egyptian population provides concrete support for some of the points raised in Edward Said’s (1978) now classic work *Orientalism*. Recall that oriental othering is not merely a curious form of fascination, “European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself against the Orient as a sort of *surrogate* and *underground* self” (Said 1978: 3). In other words, French discourse about Egypt was largely autobiographical, revealing its own anxieties, frustrations, and aspirations.

Napoleon’s voyage through Egypt brought him in contact with a region whose ancient civilization was, for him, the archetype of power and refinement, while its contemporary world, too, seemed full of potential. Thus for many people of France, North Africa was a land endowed with highly civilized political institutions and a glorious past, attributes they might have wanted for their nation itself, at a time when it was struggling to achieve dominance. Perhaps such insights help explain why French planners used Morocco as a site of experimentation with urban designs they later hoped to use domestically (Wright 1991: 33). The notion of identity between Morocco and France, the claim of the former as a caricature of the latter is not merely discernible in architectural discourse. It was discussed explicitly: the socialist Lucien Deslinières spoke of Morocco as “a *retarded brother* whom we should love” (Wright 1991: 89). Thus it seems, however misguided, Islamic Africa was family. Moreover, with

adequate attention, it could be civilized and might even help to revitalize French culture, while redeeming the empire. In this spirit, “Lyautey insisted that North Africa was for France ‘what the far West is for America: an excellent testing ground for exacting new energy, rejuvenation, and fecundity.’”¹³ Given these views, it is not surprising that North Africa received so much attention in the popular literature of nineteenth-century France.

Africa Described and Incribed in French Popular Imag(in)ings

The work of Victor Hugo, Delacroix, Alexandre Dumas, and Fromentin—with that of other French writers and artists—painted North Africa as a place of mystery and romance.¹⁴ Indeed, much of their attention was focused on Morocco and Algeria, though the former was idealized far more than the latter, especially in the following century when political challenges to French rule in Algeria could not be camouflaged by orientalist literature. But idealized notions of Africa were not limited to *L’Afrique du Nord*. As with all forms of representation, what constituted the Orient fluctuated. Such othering later applied not only to North Africa but to those parts of sub-Saharan Africa providing evidence of Islamic influence. In fact, the French explained West Africa’s most impressive characteristics by pointing to origins in Egypt or some place farther East.¹⁵ Unconverted Africa was savage by comparison. As Labelle Prussin (1985: 212–13) explains:

The denigrating Black caricature . . . was applied to non-Islamized peoples along the Guinea Coast rainforest . . . [but] just as the *Black* African on the Guinea Coast [was alleged to have] lived in a savage, barbarous milieu, so the *White*, Islamized African of Haut Sénégal-Niger lived in a civilized setting, closely associated with North Africa and the Near East.

If “black” signified pure Africanity, more civilized members of the continent were surely “white,” hence the term *l’Afrique Blanche* as a synonym for *l’Afrique du Nord* or *le Sahara Français*.

Indeed, in terms of sub-Saharan Africa, the French were very much concerned with the western Sudan and placed great emphasis on cities like Timbuktu, former locale of Islamic learning and commerce. Djenné,

another important site of Islamic trade, was glamorized as well. And certain French writers, like Felix Dubois, proposed there might be an Egyptian origin of Sudanese architecture (Prussin 1985: 214–19).

It is important to point out that French appreciation for or denigration of different parts of Africa—based largely on this index of orientalism—did not stem from extensive knowledge of Islamic worship and practice in local communities. Rather, certain representations filled in for history. Fiction “erased” (Irvine and Gal 2000: 38) and replaced social complexity. Timbuktu, Djenné, Morocco, Sudan, Algeria, Egypt, were not merely places, they were images to be filled by literary devices and colonial aspirations. At times their referent was consistent, but that only meant there were sufficient institutional forces to regiment particular notions.

But as I have pointed out, the French did not regard all non-Oriental parts of Africa the same way. The consequences of that fact are evident in discussions of what they believed could be done architecturally with sub-Saharan Africa, and the reasons given why this ought to be the case.

The Forest of Symbols, or Iconization

The sophisticated coordination of building projects in North Africa contrasts sharply with approaches taken in sub-Saharan Africa,¹⁶ where some Frenchmen believed the “great fertility” of the landscape “only demands a little effort to develop it” (Aldrich 1996: 53). As the French writer Claude Farrère (1933) pointed out, General Lyautey accomplished more architecturally during a quarter century of work in Morocco than France had in several centuries of rule in Senegal.¹⁷ During the first two decades of the twentieth century, when work did finally begin in the capital city of Dakar, it was “chiefly concerned with the *alignment* of streets, the installation of sewer and water systems” (Betts 1985; my emphasis).

A plan for urban design in Dakar had been developed as early as 1856, but it was discarded after critics thought it too grandiose. At other times, builders claimed they could not launch projects in the region because they did not know it well enough. The French were markedly ambivalent; some architects felt civil engineering in black Africa was “hardly worth the effort” others thought it was “too late” (Alaurent 1945: 4). This tension reveals a general sentiment of frustration present in all

French discourse about what should be done with or to sub-Saharan Africa. After all, according to one Frenchman, Dakar had “no character, let alone a *colonial* character” (as quoted in Betts 1985: 194); and such notions were not limited to *Afrique Occidentale Française*—regarding the easternmost portion of Africa, novelist Paul Nizan once complained, “Djibouti has no past” (ibid.: 191).

There was no clean dichotomy between the way that northern and sub-Saharan Africa were discussed by the French. Every territory was considered somewhat unruly until *aligned* by the colonial *order*. But, the extent to which black Africa was demonized far exceeds the pejorative aspects of oriental othering; and more importantly, colonial policy directed toward different parts of the continent is remarkably consistent with French discourse, architectural and otherwise.

Recall the tension between Rabat and Casablanca whereby the latter seemed to the French far more “chaotic” merely because, there, construction had preceded urban planning. A similar phenomenon occurred in sub-Saharan Africa as well. French economic interests on the west coast of the continent, which had evolved from premature forms of imperialism in the latter part of the seventeenth century into colonialism in the nineteenth and twentieth, resulted in various edifices being built as French officials felt they were needed, rather than according to some preconceived directives. Instead of accepting responsibility for the consequences of their involvement in Dakar and other parts of Senegal, however, French administrators blamed the city’s native inhabitants for its confused layout. As one man argued, “Dakar is not a city, but a disorderly construction site . . . haphazardly arranged” (Rouch 1925).

Surely this was to be expected if there is any correlation between concern for a city’s orderly appearance and the number of people hired to facilitate that end: as early as 1908 there were eight architects commissioned to work in Indochina, from 1912 onward there were teams of urban planners and architects working in Morocco; meanwhile, as late as 1934 there were still none employed in French Equatorial Africa (Betts 1985).

As I have suggested, the French notion that some parts of the Empire were ripe for design and construction while others did not have the appropriate “character” is consistent with the official political relationships they established. *Assimilation* and *association*—the terms most often present in academic literature when discussing French colonial policy—provide insight about the kind relationship France decided to craft with different parts of the African continent. Such policies suggest the way certain spaces fitted into the French vision of its empire.

Just Semantics? Problems with Colonial Terminology

In his 1993 essay, “Colonial Administration and the Ethnography of the Family in the French Soudan,” Wooten attempts to revise previous work on French colonial policy. Examining forms of indirect rule, direct rule, assimilation, and association, Wooten points out that in the case of Africa, if not in all of France’s overseas colonies, the latter two terms do most of the explanatory work. Connecting these concepts to the broader intellectual milieu of French social science between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, Wooten suggests the French belief that inhabitants of the colonies should be assimilated derived from eighteenth-century theories of monogenetic human origins; conversely he argues, the later trend toward association in African colonies can be explained by a shift in French social science toward the work of Broca, Topinard, and other advocates of polygeneticism, who argued that colonized peoples were not from the same branch of the human family as Europeans, thus were not deserving of assimilation, or the French citizenship by which it was usually accompanied. Further, Wooten claims the concept of association lost its institutional footing when certain eighteenth-century notions of monogeneticism filtered back into twentieth-century thinking, but, by then, tended to explain human differences through social evolutionary paradigms. Thus, despite the limitations of such a perspective, he contends, the notion of social evolution provided a critique of polygeneticism and, by extension, of association.

Wooten’s essay is ambitious, and he is correct to argue for important links between French social science and colonial policy. However, he overlooks the fact that assimilation and association—while invoked to suggest relative absorption or distancing respectively—were not always deployed consistently. Beyond that, much of his argument is perhaps based on the fact that he focuses on colonial politics in sub-Saharan Africa without considering what took place in the northern part of the continent. That is why he presumes that notions of association are attached to the belief that Africans were not deserving of French citizenship. In some cases this was true; but in Morocco, for example, the French embraced associationist policy because they believed Islamic laws, social mores, and aesthetic sensibilities were so highly developed that Moroccans could not be forced to accept French civilization—to assimilate. And, as I have shown, this sentiment was present since the time of Napoleon’s eighteenth-century invasion of Egypt.

Wooten's argument masks the complexities of assimilationist discourse as well. While it is true that some Frenchmen were opposed to the idea of assimilating sub-Saharan Africans because they did not believe they were "fit" to receive French citizenship (Wooten 1993: 424), it is also true that sub-Saharan Africans were given assimilation as the only alternative during much of French colonial rule because, to many Frenchmen, they did not have cultured politics of their own. As Crowder argues, "French civilization" was often considered the only way one could redeem the "potential human[ity]" of "barbarians . . . people without history, without any civilization worthy of name, [who were] constantly at war with each other. . . ." (1967: 2). By assuming a stable ideological referent for terms like assimilation and association, Wooten overlooks their symbolic power, and mistakenly tries to chart a consistent trajectory of their usage.

But if these terms were not deployed consistently, how does one make sense of their usage at all? First, it is important to note that differential usage of the terms assimilation and association for sub-Saharan and northern Africa was complex and contradictory. Further, there was often a decisive rupture between the claims made by colonial ideology and the consequences of its policies. Therein lies part of the problem with Wooten's analysis. While it is true some colonizers were against assimilating African peoples and would not accept them on the same terms as native French citizens, it does not follow that French people who favored assimilation automatically accepted Africans as equal and, therefore, the same. Assimilationist notions were tied in colonial rhetoric to French Revolution ideals of "the equality of man," but that does not mean they were actually "based" on such a doctrine (an error made by Crowder 1967: 2 as well). Indeed it is unfortunate that some scholars have ignored the point made long ago by M. M. Knight that "assimilation and association are not different policies in any practical sense, but rather *elements* or factors in policy, present in varying degrees and combinations in the same colonies at the same time" (1933: 208; my emphasis). Thus, some favored territories were assimilated, others were left alone for the same reason; conversely, French policies held some "uncivilized" Africans at arms length, while others were assimilated.

These points notwithstanding, it is significant that association was the favored policy for French dealings with Morocco, while assimilation was preferred in Senegal and throughout sub-Saharan Africa into the twentieth century. That is, even though a 1900 conference on colonial sociology in Paris recommended association for all colonies (Wooten 1993: 424),

the resolution was embraced in Morocco and largely ignored below the Sahara precisely because it was so incongruous with what French colonials wanted: the right to envision Africans as they saw fit, as best to enhance colonial aspirations.

Besides these important ideological propensities, differential views toward Africa stemmed largely from the varied histories of colonization in different places. For instance, parts of sub-Saharan Africa had been controlled since the seventeenth century. From early on, assimilation was the rule. Morocco became a protectorate officially in 1907—seven years after the aforementioned conference—it is therefore not surprising this territory “embodied the associationist policies of Lyautey from the very start” (Wright 1991: 162).

The crucial point to be made is that north and sub-Saharan territories were treated quite differently throughout the history of French involvement with them; thus, they were envisioned and represented differently. Moreover, there was continuous movement between French perceptions of a place and the way it was represented. In fact, as I have argued, each representation produced new ideas. However, all representations—architectural or otherwise—were based on existing knowledge of the space being depicted. And, especially in the case of architecture, there needed to be sufficient knowledge about the “character” of a place before construction could proceed.

This point is best exemplified by highlighting a series of occasions when French planners were halted by their inability to determine appropriate architectural structures for sub-Saharan Africa. Recall that French architects and planners treated the prospect of urban design in Africa with a mixture of resentment, disgust, futility, and general frustration. For a long time nothing was built and, when it was, there was very little premeditation. But during the period between World Wars I and II, there developed an architectural representation eventually used throughout sub-Saharan Africa and French expositions domestically. It was known by several names, variously referred to as the style *AOF*, Nigerian, or Neo-Sudanese. In the present essay—following Raymond Betts (1985: 198)—the latter term is used since it best captures French efforts to develop an architectural emblem that would unify disparate territories and peoples of a particular region (or space constructed as such). Indeed the term “Sudan” prevails in French ethnographic literature. This is no coincidence; rather it reveals a historical process of inscription quite manifest in architectural projects and discourse, but not limited to it.

Political Representation: The Neo-Sudanese

First used in actual buildings during the 1920s, the Neo-Sudanese form of architecture was modeled after mosques located in places like Djenné. Used in edifices built throughout West Africa, this form was invoked for the Senegalese Chamber of Commerce, a maternity hospital in Dakar, a public market in Bamako, and a railroad station at Bobo-Dialosso. Then, just as suddenly as it had arrived, the Neo-Sudanese style died out after World War II (Betts 1985: 198).

But when the style *was* popular, French architects felt like they had arrived at the perfect spatial representation for black Africa—and that was precisely the problem. As is evident in discourse about the Neo-Sudanese style, French officials generally spoke of black Africa—from west to east coast—as if it remained consistent throughout.¹⁸ Thus, in 1931, when Marcel Griaule led a team of French social scientists across Africa, to collect artifacts and ethnographic material, it was called the “Mission Dakar-Djibouti” (Griaule 1931–32). Moreover, Griaule’s project—and that of his students—was largely concerned with finding underlying similarities throughout Africa despite obvious cultural differences, which, they argued, were superficial.

The point here is not to claim that African societies do not share forms of cultural exchange and interaction. As Jean-Loup Amselle has shown (1990, 1998), Africa might aptly be characterized by what he terms “originary syncretism”—that is, complex forms of borrowing that predate recorded history. The present argument is not designed to challenge Griaule’s extensive fieldwork, but rather to stress that domains of knowledge are always historically contingent and socially regimented.¹⁹ Thus it follows that the general French view that sub-Saharan Africa was marked by sameness throughout, and the particular sense of a Sudanese cultural continuum,²⁰ are notions tied to a colonial moment in which it was believed that a single architectural emblem could be designed that would be appropriate for black Africans, no matter what the particulars of their location or local histories.²¹

As stated, use of the Neo-Sudanese emblem for black Africa was isomorphic with the way that Frenchmen spoke of *AOF* and *AEF* as homogeneous spaces. And the production of this symbol relates to an observation made by Knight (1933: 209)—it is one of the occasions where an “idea” becomes a “device.” This was so much the case that Neo-Sudanese structures appeared in French expositions “in every pavilion set up to house exhibits” pertaining to “Black Africa,” from the Colonial Exposition of Marseilles in 1906 to the Parisian Exposition of 1937.²²

French Expositions: Theaters of Rehearsal

Colonialism . . . was distinguished not just by representation's extent, however, but by the very *technique*. The order of certainty of colonialism was the order of the *exhibition*, the certainty of representation itself.²³

It is impossible to understand French colonialism without devoting some attention to its theaters of rehearsal: domestic exhibitions.²⁴ Places that displayed all of French territorial holdings at a given moment in time, these were three-dimensional maps of empire, physical cartographies that layed out the entire colonial project for the people of France to experience and embrace.²⁵ Consequently, the way that African structures figured in this domain resonates with the way they came to be encoded in popular imaginings.

As I have stated, the Neo-Sudanese image did not appear at an exposition until Marseilles, early in the twentieth century. But that was the trope's most recent form. The Centennial Exposition of 1889 featured several structures modeled on African dwellings. And the most impressive—as far as French planners were concerned—was the *soudanienne*. Deliberately contrasted with rainforest huts, steadied by impressive columns, the Islamic dwelling was constructed to be reminiscent of its deep historical antecedents in Egypt and further east (Prussin 1985: 217), not unlike certain structures built for the Exposition of 1900. And the latter forms—made eleven years later—were equipped with domes in addition to columns. Yet, it should be stressed that neither columns nor domes were characteristic of mosques located in the western Sudan, the site by which these structures were allegedly inspired. In fact, the architecture was remarkably similar to *Beaux-Arts* stylings used in various other exposition buildings; this was so because the “African” structures reflected French architectural techniques, and could only be found on the African continent in dwellings then being constructed by French civil engineers (Prussin 1985: 220). Nevertheless, “Sudanese” structures continued to figure prominently in expositions, modified as thought necessary.

These examples of model architecture nonetheless affected French people as if they were the real thing. As much was intended by the expositions. These were not merely presentations: each one was an opportunity for the map of empire to be inscribed in the minds of French people, a chance to imprint the “synoptic view of worldwide achievements”

(Lebovics 1992: 51). Consider this passage from the *Guide*, or brochure, for the *Exposition Coloniale Internationale* of 1931:

[People of France, you are here because] you have sensed that today this great human collectivity that is FRANCE has horizons wider than those you have been accustomed to on the map of Europe. . . .

And, in case people mistakenly thought it merely their task to view the peoples and cultures of various colonies with “curious fascination,” a politically pragmatic purpose was suggested:

[You will] meet with curious fascination one surprise after another. But you will not find us exploiting the low instincts of a vulgar public here. . . . You will see no blacks tastelessly throwing themselves about on stage . . . but rather, reconstructions of tropical life with *all* its picturesque color and qualities.²⁶

So, there was an explicitly pedagogic dimension²⁷ to the expositions: French citizens were asked to *observe* the particular way each colony was fitted into the imagination of empire.²⁸ The panorama was a virtual diagram of French relationships with its overseas territories—established so that French citizens could see themselves as colonizers, transforming the outside world, creating *la plus grande France*.²⁹

Thus location within the exposition corresponded to geographic location,³⁰ and great pains were taken to recreate life in the colonies. For the 1931 Exposition, in a clearing surrounding the massive “Sudanese” edifice was staged a “Sudanese commercial town” where visitors could “shop for jewelry, leather goods, fabrics, pottery, baskets, and wood carvings, made by traditional craftworkers.” They could also “watch young women weave rugs” in a “village nearby, where 200 native inhabitants” went “through [what was alleged to be] the daily routines of their lives” before a French audience.³¹

So it is hardly surprising that, by 1931, some people were arguing that the “Sudanese style was the single truly original one . . . ,” this of course because the West African pavilions recreated African life “as perfectly as possible” (Prussin 1985: 224). Only within this context could the *Grand Palais* be truth, since it had erased reality. The “Sudanese” project—formerly tied to its dubious orientalist roots—assumed a life of its own, becoming the Neo-Sudanese style celebrated in West African cityscapes, *real* and *imagined*. Indeed, the fact that construction in

such a mold actually began to take place on the African continent is sufficient grounds for abandoning that dichotomy altogether, if ever it existed.³²

Poetics of Empire: In Place of a Conclusion

From the nineteenth century onward, French designers and planners sought to achieve “positive social” transformation through architectural structures at once “rational, healthy, and elegant” (Wright 1991: 3).³³ But these efforts cannot be explained merely through the “juxtaposition of culture and politics,” or concern for ideologies that underlie colonialism and urban design (Wright 1991: 312–13). Rather, they suggest the presence of an organizing principle common to these spheres, but manifest in other domains as well. In other words, the notion that certain structures—or physical representations—could be used to transform society was merely one consequence of a view that separated everything along that divide, with an “absolute,” irreducible difference between the two (Mitchell 1988: 167). Colonial *commandement*³⁴ forced the logic of a binary split between representation and reality, its power not limited by the particular characteristics of either one.³⁵ So while French colonials worked to arrive at proper representations—driven by the urge to match reality—they established a world of diagrams (blueprints and material structures), which indexed discourses that revealed the very logic at work. And, most crucially, there was no reality beyond the one under construction—no truths besides the ones in negotiation. Authority was not merely achieved through control of historical narratives, literature, art, or architecture, but through a commitment to enhancement: techniques of organizing expressions based on impressions of how an empire *should* be arranged.³⁶ The act of maintaining that vision is what I have identified as French colonial power’s *poetic function*.

And even as colonial poetics helped produce different forms of representation, the representations themselves transformed French ideas about Africa so that new and different representations were created. Such transformations show the production and consumption of images are inextricably linked; in fact, it is this double process that gives circulation its trajectory. And the path of such representations outlined the image of Africa in French imag(in)ings, though the form of specific images—in certain contexts³⁷—could be as curious as they were unpredictable. The reliable violence of the poetic function by no means ensured its predictability.

But, as with all forms of hegemony, the poetic function of colonial politics was never complete thus, in all contexts where such work is visible, it relied on relentless efforts to replace indigenous spaces with civilized places,³⁸ to determine adequate representations and proper traces. Most of all however, as has been argued, careful scrutiny of the poetic function is needed to understand relationships between the way specific regions were depicted, the history of their relationships with France, and how representations coded both: the link between French colonial vantage points, the forms of political advantage that produced them, and the mechanisms by which they were organized, *regarding Africa*.³⁹

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Notes

1 From Robert Delavignette, *Bulletin du Comité de l'Afrique française* (Paris: Rens. Coloniaux 11, 1931: 634), as quoted in Labelle Prussin, "The Image of African Architecture in France," in *Double Impact: France and Africa in the Age of Imperialism*, ed. G. Wesley Johnson (Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 1985: 225, my emphasis).

2 The latter phrase, of course, suggests social space at once historically and discursively realized.

3 Throughout this essay, the verb "imagine" is used for the practice of organizing historically realized perceptions using symbolic expressions—material and discursive.

4 Literature, here, is—literally—"significant" for two reasons: 1) it is often the site of representations similar to those reproduced in other media, plus 2) architecture—really spatial diagrammatization—recurs in various media begging for analysis; "Colonial literature of all genres, from adventure tales to official reports, abounds with descriptions of model urban environments and the techniques that engendered them" (Wright 1991: 2).

5 Certeau writes, "Every urban 'renovation' nonetheless prefers a *tabula rasa* on which to write in cement the composition created in the laboratory on the basis of discrete 'needs' to which functional responses are made" (1984: 200–1).

6 The phrase "poetic function" was coined by Roman Jakobson to explain "the dominant, determining function" of poetics to produce "verbal art" by transforming "verbal structures" (1960: 350). Nevertheless, his insights have served me well in this endeavor. After all, Jakobson was well aware that "relations between the word and the world concerns not only verbal art but actually [*sic*] all kinds of discourse" (1960: 351).

7 In other words, rather than an aesthetic concerned with *figurations*, the *poetic function* refers to the practice of *figuring*.

8 In learning to draw this important distinction I benefited from a paper given by Adam Rosen at the University of Chicago on March 30, 2002, as part of the "Eyes on the Mosaic" minority graduate student conference.

9 From the nineteenth century at least, there emerged a popular French notion that "aesthetic disarray and moral decay shared the same root"; this was why urban design—and its implementation through architecture—were part of positive social engineering (Wright 1991: 16).

10 Wright 1991: 210. As it happened so often with colonial attempts to control social and physical space, here, “metropole and colony each became a model for, a refractory image of, the other” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997: 277).

11 Irvine and Gal (2000: 38) use the phrase “fractal recursivity” when referring to inter-group tensions that “recur” at different levels. These ideological conflicts might occur between ethnic groups, nations, neither, both, or in some combination, given that they are somehow linked to the way people have been identified.

12 The full title is *Description de l'Égypte ou Recueil des observations et recherches qu'ont été faites en égypte pendant l'expédition de l'armée française publié par les ordres de sa majesté l'Empereur Napoleon le Grand*. Paris: L'Institut de l'Orient, 1809–1828.

13 Louis Hubert Gonzalve Lyautey, speech, Oran, Algeria, July 12, 1907, in *Paroles d'action: Madagascar—Sud Oranais—Oran—Maroc* (1900–1926) (Paris: Armand Colin, 1927), p. 52, as quoted in Wright (1991: 3).

14 These writers were heavily influenced by the travel narratives of Frenchman René Caillie, who ventured throughout the western Sudan in search of places he had read about in the published account of Scotsman Mungo Park. Thus, one is able to trace the course by which representations of Africa inscribed in narrative form served as the reality for others who never visited those places directly. And, as was often the case, successive elaborations became increasingly fictional.

15 “The Orient was something one only ever re-discovered” (Mitchell 1988: 30).

16 The term “sub-Saharan Africa” here refers to non-Islamic parts of *Afrique Occidentale Française*, French West Africa, and *Afrique Equatoriale Française*, French Equatorial Africa; in other words, this distinction includes “black Africans” and those parts of the continent believed to be populated by them.

17 France held trading posts in St. Louis, Senegal since 1659 (Aldrich 1996: 19).

18 This attitude persisted among French colonial officials despite the fact that relationships they cultivated in each part of the continent were unique—both north and south of the Sahara—except that only in the former was this fact acknowledged.

19 In other words, there is no end to the number of possible ways that any person or group may identify or be identified. Thus, with any given form of identification, the analyst might ask “why this?” “why this way?” “why this way at this time?” and so on.

20 This is a view proposed by Griaule (1949, 1952) and others (see, for instance, Dieterlein 1955).

21 This point is especially salient with regard to a joint work by Marcel Griaule and Germaine Dieterlein (1951) *Signes graphiques soudanais*, which proposed the existence symbolic systems discernible by disparate “Sudanese” peoples.

22 As Betts (1985: 198–99) points out, the Neo-Sudanic model “grew [increasingly] bolder in expression” from 1906 to 1937. It should be noted the *Grand Palais*, mentioned at the outset, was an example of this form.

23 Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge University Press, 1988: 171, my emphasis).

24 These might also be called expositions, following French use of the term *exposition*.

25 “The beauty of the display[s] transformed aesthetic appreciation into political ontology . . .” (Lebovics 1992: 55).

26 André Demaison, *Exposition coloniale internationale à Paris en 1931: Guide officiel*, (Paris, 1931: 17–18). And as quoted in Herman Lebovics, *True France: The Wars*

over *Cultural Identity*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992: 52, my emphasis). Demaison was, in part, responding harshly to previous displays he considered lewd and vulgar, nevertheless his efforts to coax exposition-goers toward a particular view cannot be denied.

27 Mitchell writes, “Both the exhibition and the city [of Paris] were built as political expressions, *didactic* in style. . . .” (1988: 161–62).

28 This aspect was so important, in fact, that Lyautey arranged for a passenger train to lead French citizens around the grounds, so the colonies would—literally—be circumscribed as they were regarded. He was so committed to this project that he refused to accept the post of *commisaire general* for the 1931 *Exposition* if it were not instituted (Lebovics 1992: 57).

29 Phrase used when referring to the colonial empire. Translation: greater France (Aldrich 1996: 1).

30 Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria were grouped together (Lebovics 1992: 81), and positioned hierarchically vis-à-vis French West Africa (*ibid.*: 79).

31 For an elaborated account of these events see Lebovics (1992: 76).

32 The Neo-Sudanese style eventually died out after World War II to be replaced by the modern, International Style, one characterized by straight horizontal and vertical lines. It is not coincidental, I think, that the Neo-Sudanese representation faded during the time widespread decolonization in sub-Saharan Africa. Rather, it seems the practice of representing disparate peoples with a single symbol became increasingly tenuous, and African urban architecture followed the pattern then being used in numerous international cities, including Los Angeles, Miami, and Casablanca (Betts 1985: 200). Of course, despite these insights, more rigorous historical work is needed to account for the complex links between historical processes noted and architectural representations discussed.

33 These were, above all else, “[e]fforts to assure visual *harmony*” (Wright 1991: 150).

34 Here I follow Mbembe in treating *commandement* as that form of “colonial rationality” resting on “a specific *imaginary* of state sovereignty” (2001: 25, emphasis in original), characterized by the commitment to an absolute view of how the colonial world should be arranged.

35 The analysis I have provided poses a quandary: it seems especially important to understand how certain representations are situated in relation to others, yet the momentary position held by objects of poetic reorganization matter less—in many ways—than the practice itself. After all, according to Jakobson, “The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination” (1960: 358), rendering some form of equivalence for the structures thus organized. Wright seems to agree, “Beneath formal variations . . . cities of the colonial realm usually shared a fundamental *reference* to . . . what the French called the *métropole*” (1991: 2). Often quite literally, “A model or panorama of the city stood at the center of the exhibition grounds, which were themselves laid out in the center of the real city. The city in turn presented itself as the imperial capital of the world, and the exhibition at its center laid out the exhibits of the world’s empires and nations accordingly. . . . The common center shared by the exhibition, the city and the world reinforced the relationship between representation and reality, just as the relationship enabled one to determine a center in the first place” (Mitchell 1988: 8, 9).

36 Thus, in other parts of Africa, European colonizers recreated dwellings to domesticate African bodies, in fact, “In its modernist form ‘the domestic’ had two planes, one socioeconomic and the other architectural” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997: 275).

37 Throughout this essay the term “context,” of course, refers not merely to a given setting or background, but to the inevitable and perpetual product of entextualization—multiple texts, or messages, entextualized with respect to each other (Silverstein and Urban 1996: 1–2).

38 Here, I use Certeau’s insights for my own purposes to suggest an important distinction between “place,” which indexes stability, in contrast to “space,” the site of numerous experiences and forms of practice that nevertheless fails to be “proper,” “distinct” (1984: 117–18), well-disciplined, clearly defined—civilized.

39 The latter phrase has two meanings. It suggests referentiality, France in relation to Africa, and the act of observation: the prior and post condition of colonial poetics was precisely the act of “regarding Africa.”

3

“JUST BUILD IT MODERN”

POST-APARTHEID SPACES ON NAMIBIA’S URBAN FRONTIER

Fatima Müller-Friedman

In everyday usage we often think of discourse as the written word or as a certain theoretical viewpoint rather than material objects or matter. Built form appears at first sight as merely an object or collection of objects. We could, however, think of built form as also inherently encompassing the circumstances of its own production as well as its subsequent uses, interpretations, and transformations—that is, as producing and conveying meaning. Consequently, we can look upon built forms as texts that are written, read, and interpreted, that express and produce opinions, ideas, and behaviors, and thus are discursive. Architecture and urban design in the day-to-day encounter is often taken for granted and unquestioned, assumed to be neutral and to provide merely a backdrop vis-à-vis societal structures. Despite built form’s seeming neutrality, it is created by those who control resources and is designed according to certain interests and with particular intentions.

Modernist built form, as propagated by the Modern Movement,¹ has in many instances been quite easily adapted from its original social reformatory intentions and deployed for oppressive ends. This malleability has enabled modernist planning and designs to be utilized by Western practitioners in a variety of colonial contexts, including Southern African apartheid rule. Due to this adaptability, modernist architecture and urban design practices used by apartheid regimes are capable of being appropriated and reworked by present-day urban practitioners. Given the fact that the same modernist built forms have been applied to widely different

socio-political contexts it might appear as if these forms are politically unbiased. However, as I have suggested above, built form is more than an object or a neutral vessel, it evolves in association with changing political and economic interests. Built form derives its potency precisely by appearing neutral and normative, often even to its creators.

In Namibia, as in South Africa, apartheid architects and urban designers borrowed from the Modern Movement to produce exclusionary urban landscapes under the banner of “separate development.”² Much research has addressed the negative effects and legacies of apartheid built forms on city residents in South Africa and Namibia, especially with respect to major urban centers (see figure 1).³

This article is an attempt, firstly, to move beyond a scholarly bias in the urban design literature that tends to favor an analysis of extraordinarily large metropolitan areas at the expense of more ordinary ones. In Namibia, most urban settlements are, in fact, relatively small. Secondly, with this article I hope to contribute to an understanding of the ways apartheid’s modernist urban design ideals have informed contemporary urban experiences and design practices. More specifically, I aim to show an historic continuity in the ways residents perceive, and practitioners implement, urban designs in Namibia.⁴ An examination of built form as discourse will help elucidate how such a politically oppressive urban model can be regarded as normative and neutral in the post-apartheid era, as well as relevant to a re-fashioning of the contemporary urban environment. Below, I explore the urban practitioner’s discourse of development in its relation to built form from the early apartheid days until the present. Following this, I investigate the ways residents in the small town of Opuwo perceive and reflect upon contemporary urban built form. In the subsequent section, I introduce a recent town planning initiative in Opuwo to explore how the theoretical approaches to the built environment of both urban practitioners and residents play out in practice. As I shall show, *both* Opuwo residents and urban practitioners view the modernist urban model that was implemented during the apartheid era as a blueprint for post-apartheid urban design.

From Apartheid Modernism to Post-Apartheid Development: The Language of Urban Design Approaches

I have chosen three housing reports as a way to chart the evolution of urban development discourse in Namibia (see figure 2). My first example,

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Figure 1. Aerial photograph of Windhoek in the early 1970s showing the “black” township Katutura (foreground), the “colored” township Khomasdal (center right), and the “white” city center and surrounding suburbs in the background. (Source: Office of the Surveyor General, Windhoek, Namibia.)

a housing report entitled *Housing for Non-Europeans in Urban Areas*, was written in 1948, the year that marked the beginning of the institution of apartheid. This report compiled by officials of the South West Africa Administration (SWAA) recommends the creation of purpose-built townships in Namibia. Although the term “development” is not employed

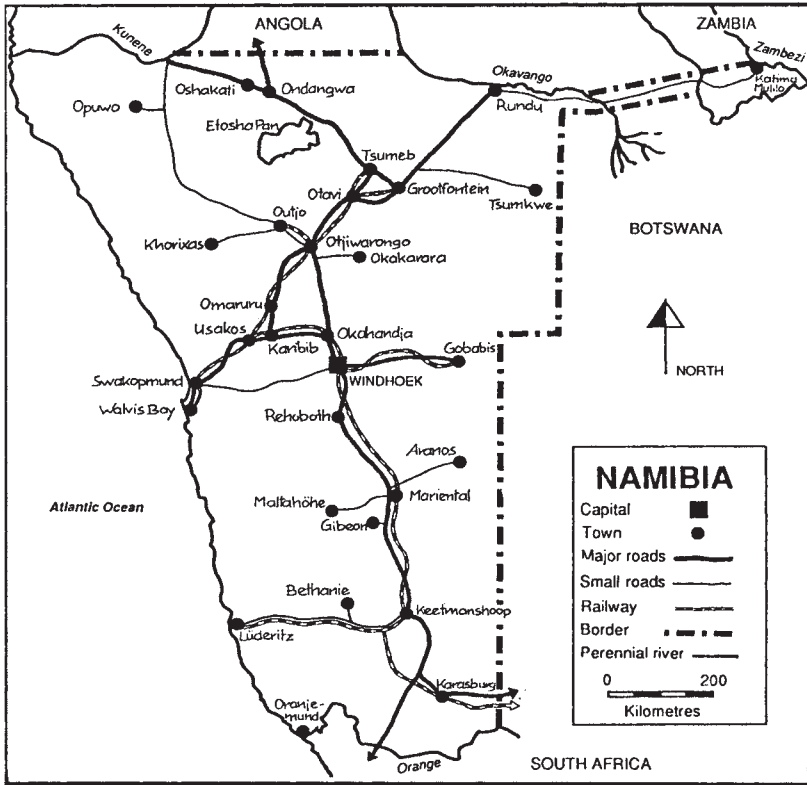
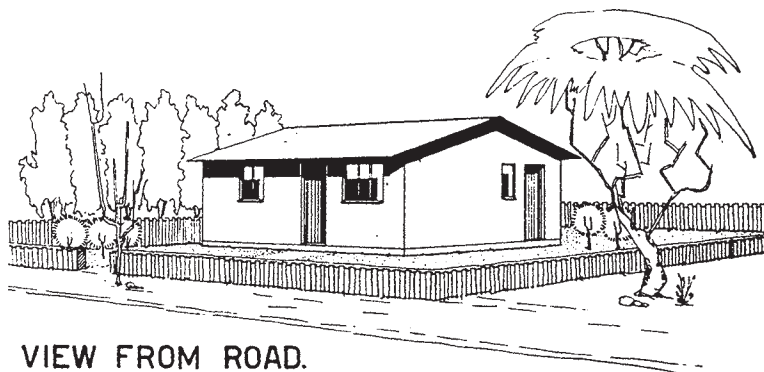


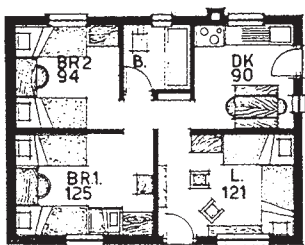
Figure 2. Map of Namibia. (Source: Ndeutela Hishongwa [1992], *The Contract Labour System and Its Effects on Family and Social Life in Namibia: A Historical Perspective*. [Windhoek, Namibia: Gamsberg Macmillan])

explicitly, the document lays the groundwork for a separate development strategy for “Non-Europeans,” a strategy that was introduced only gradually from 1960 onwards. The report, invoking modernist urban planning principles, proposes the creation of “modern self-contained”⁵ townships replete with “hygienic housing,”⁶ “schools, churches, clinics, recreation facilities, administrative buildings, communal halls and a shopping center,” though with “very simple designs [which] lend themselves to mass production.”⁷

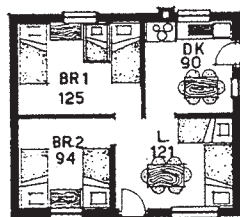
The report’s authors suggest a suburban setup within the townships with single-story, detached one family houses (see figure 3). In order to lessen the costs of expensive street layouts and service provision that such an urban design implies, the report proposed the “intelligent use of



VIEW FROM ROAD.



PLAN



PLAN

Figure 3. Typical standardized township house layouts. (Source: Japha and Huechzmeyer.)

cul-de-sacs” which not only removes houses from traffic-carrying streets but also reduces the cost associated with the installation of services for each household.⁸ In order for these new modernist residential areas to work as envisaged, the committee urges that “the policy of one house one family without lodgers must be strictly enforced.”⁹ In addition, the report proposes the erection of buildings for small business operators in order to avoid the construction of “shoddy structures which will disfigure the commercial center of the township.”¹⁰

The report continues by noting that housing conditions in the old locations¹¹ were held to be “generally deplorable,” a situation that required remedy because it would “endanger the health not only of the location inhabitants themselves, but also of the Europeans with whom they come into contact.”¹² The report therefore places great stress on installing a service infrastructure in individual homes of the new townships “even if it may take many years before installation is practicable in all the areas.”¹³

Furthermore, a proportion of the houses is to be set aside for individual ownership.¹⁴ Ownership of the houses, the committee was aware, would surpass the financial capabilities of most residents and would be a possibility only for a minority. As the above examples show, the report committee suggests the imposition not only of a certain built form but also seeks to ensure a certain lifestyle, a “proper” usage of these forms. Very clearly, the report voices the hope that the modern townships may impart Western and Christian norms and values onto its residents, such as a desire for private ownership, a nuclear family setup, and a whole host of related but more subtle concepts including a concern for order, privacy and hygiene.

Ostensibly, the report portrays its recommendations as beneficent, enabling the black population to progress in developmental terms from the “dreadful hovels which existed in the old location”¹⁵ to the bright prospects of living in a modern township. In reality, however, there existed a contradiction between these modernist efforts of the South African administration and their simultaneous drive to marginalize and exclude black residents from participating within modern society on equal terms with their white counterparts. The project to house the urban black population in modern townships was conducted with the aim of furthering the policy of separate development, and was principally designed to remove black people from the central city locations which they had hitherto occupied and which had been slated for white development.

The Language of Reform Era Urban Design Approaches

My second example is drawn from the *1986 Low-Income Housing Policy for South West Africa/Namibia*, which was formulated by SWAA officials in an attempt to reform prior grand apartheid urban design approaches. In it an altered approach to development becomes apparent, one in which the policy’s authors are anxious to portray Namibian state practices as commensurate with urban planning methods in developing countries throughout the world.¹⁶ Accordingly, the policy shows all the signs of a deracialized, depoliticized, and technical language. As apparent from the title, the racial language prevalent in the previous document is conspicuously absent from the report; it is replaced by income indicators.¹⁷ Furthermore, the paternalist outlook characterizing the earlier non-European housing report is rejected; rather the policy’s authors emphasize

that housing is ultimately the responsibility of the individual, and thus they propose state-facilitated self-help as an answer to the housing problem.¹⁸

According to the document's authors, past policies have led to "unrealistic expectations"¹⁹ and "excessively high standards and unnecessarily extravagant house designs"²⁰ while "discouraging individual initiative and a desire for home ownership."²¹ Despite these problems, the setting of general design and construction standards remains an important guideline to planning and design.²² The standards are thus set with an eye to this ideal but in view of what is financially possible—given the new maxim of full-cost recovery—within a certain socio-economically stratified neighborhood. Given limited affordability, the authors suggest that standards be "reasonably adequate" rather than "ideal."²³ The ideal, however, has implicitly been defined in strikingly similar ways to that described almost forty years earlier and includes a striving for single-story, one-family detached houses, individual home ownership, certain service standards, and a separation of urban functions. In other words, the ideal urban design model of old is simply adapted to what practitioners view as adequate and realistically achievable, leaving the overall approach to urban design and architecture undebated.

The *1986 Low-Income Housing Policy for South West Africa/Namibia* is best seen within the context of late apartheid reform efforts that had hoped to avert the South West African administration's internal problems. This new approach sought to deflect responsibility away from the state and postulated that individuals themselves held the key to their own development. As Tapscott, writing in the South African context, has noted, the new development paradigm of the 1980s attempted to be more inclusive, and development remained determined from the vantage point of the developed white populace.²⁴ This new development rhetoric successfully de-politicized and neutralized urban design and presented it as merely a technical issue.²⁵

The Language of Contemporary Urban Design Approaches

My final example is taken from a recent Namibian policy document, the *1996 National Plan of Action, Habitat II* which outlines present and future approaches by the Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing (MRLGH) on issues related to urban settlements. The document

incorporates much of the material from the *Low-Income Housing Policy for South West Africa/Namibia* of 1986. Both use a similar vocabulary and propose an urban development that includes the lowering of design standards, the promotion of home ownership, and the development of a community and self-help spirit.²⁶ The document's rationale is "development" and housing has been identified as one of the most important aspects in promoting it.²⁷ The document is filled with references to economic growth, industrialization, a concern for creating stable families, and a productive work force.²⁸ In line with the community and self-help approach to development that is currently *en vogue* globally, the targets of "development" are now expected to bring about their own development rather than having development being brought to them.²⁹

As the document exemplifies, urban practitioners today also remain wedded to this development paradigm and organize the process of development through the usage of a certain type of language. Any contemporary Namibian urban planning document makes frequent reference to development and to the instruments that are to accompany its process. They appeal to people to act as a "community," to practice "self-help," and to engage in so-called participatory processes in order for development to be "sustainable" and "appropriate."³⁰ Though these participatory methods are held to ensure that "stakeholders" can identify their own needs, in practice, the outcome of development has already been formulated in advance through the hegemonic discourse. That is, this discourse inculcates ideas about how "development" translates into a certain kind of urban settlement design, in this case the "modern" city, and a particular accompanying lifestyle. In writing critically about these discourses, I wish to point out simply that these discourses exist and that they entail certain assumptions about what development constitutes as an endpoint.

What is significant is that the document translates into an urban design approach that is in outcome very similar to that suggested in the earlier documents. As the authors themselves note: "Whatever urban development has taken place since Independence does not indicate any significant deviation from the segregated development patterns inherited at Independence."³¹ For example, the document's authors propose the one-family house, one plot maxim as the basic unit of urban settlements.³² Furthermore, new urban growth is envisaged as taking place along the old monofunctional lines, separating residential from other urban functions.³³ The provision of "proper shelter" is deemed one of the central issues in the document and is defined as the modern houses previously available only to a minority. While traditional housing methods are rejected as inappropriate

so too are mass-produced “match-box” housing schemes which the authors evaluate as “aesthetic disasters [. . .] with no identity or individuality.”³⁴ Rather, the design of urban settlements, the production of building materials, and the design and construction of houses—though within the framework specified earlier—is recommended to be left to the owner-occupiers and relevant agencies.

All of the documents discussed in this section led to the formulation of urban policies that then served as a basis for urban design practice. In other words, urban practitioners in their designs relied on the urban concepts proposed in these documents. For this reason, the discussion of these policies and reports proves most relevant. These three distinctive periods in Namibian history reveal continuity in the way urban design issues have been and are being addressed. Post-independence urban design in Namibia has followed general modernist pre-independence lines in order to integrate black residents into an urban environment formerly reserved for white residents. While during apartheid modernist urban design was used as a means to achieve separate development—that is, a division between the developed white spaces and the undeveloped black spaces—contemporary urban practitioners view the same modernist urban designs as a means by which to achieve equal development for all. Although the political terms and reach of development have clearly changed, the idea of what “development” entails as an endpoint has remained quite constant. The main assumption in the current mainstream approach to urban practice is that the only inhibiting factor on the path to Western-style development for all is poor residents’ and government’s financial limitations—rather than, for example, diverging aspirations and persistent social inequalities. Having looked at the ways in which policy makers and practitioners formulate these issues, I will now turn to explore how residents in the town of Opuwo reflect upon the subject of urban built form.

The Apartheid City as Blueprint for Development

The modernist apartheid city consists of two main elements: the city or town formerly reserved for white people, comprising the central business district and suburban-style residential areas, and the townships, colloquially termed “locations,” located several kilometers outside the town proper, for all those people termed “non-white.” This same pattern was perpetuated in homeland³⁵ towns, with the difference that locations were often located closer to a town’s center than were white residential areas. In

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Figure 4. Aerial photograph of Opuwo in 1995 depicting the town’s formal urban layout (center) as well as the main informal settlements (right). The most clearly demarcated area in the center of the photograph denotes Opuwo’s former “white” neighborhood. (Source: Office of the Surveyor General, Windhoek, Namibia.)

the town of Opuwo in northern Namibia, for instance, a black residential area was constructed in the early 1970s around a small town center and a small white residential area was erected at a distance from both (see figure 4). In addition, white residents in homeland towns were greatly outnumbered by black residents, and their residential areas were therefore

significantly smaller and much less prominent than was the case in towns outside the homelands. Residents, though being aware of Opuwo's difference from classic apartheid towns, perceive this difference in terms of a deficiency. Opuwo, most residents believe, is not a "real" town. It is to this oft-stated assertion that I now turn.

Town, it can be the place where people can work and buy. Yeah, it can be the place where people work for the government, and even be where people can be in a nice building with good protection. There are no goats, no what [*sic*], no dogs, no animals in the street. Because Opuwo itself is undeveloped you can even see pigs and goats moving around in town. If it was developed you could not see any pigs or goats in the streets. The whole of Opuwo here we call it town, but if you take it to Windhoek it will not be a town, it will be a location [township]. Because here, we do not have any town here in Opuwo. But it is proclaimed as town because we don't have any other here in Kaoko.³⁶

The above resident alludes to a distinction between "town" and "location," the latter a common term used for the former "townships." "Town" here designates that part of the urban settlement formerly zoned "white" and the word "location" the former black residential areas. In the explanation offered by the Opuwo resident above, "town" is closely associated with development or, as one local school learner put it more succinctly, "the word town itself means that a place is developed."³⁷ The evaluation of Opuwo as not a "real" town is thus an expression of its perceived "underdeveloped" status. Clearly, the residents cited here associate urban form with those spaces formerly created by and reserved for white people:

You see, when we grew up the place where you get mostly white people is town. When you are going to Otjiwarongo [a Police Zone town] and there is a shopping center there with everything, we call it *Ondoropa* [town]. Because it was mainly owned by the white people. So, and this people, I mean there was no business areas, so that's why they just start calling this side where the white people were staying *Ondoropa*. *Ondoropa* is more developed, I mean it's a more developed thing than the location [township]. That's why they call it like that.³⁸

For this Opuwo resident, town is equated with white-owned businesses, shopping centers, white residential areas, and white residents. In order for Opuwo to become a "proper" town, he and other residents

believed that it would require decent infrastructure including tar roads, rubbish removal, reliable electricity, and water connections; as well as services such as a bank and shops, and the type of residential areas that were occupied exclusively by white people in former times. In sum, towns require not only a particular service infrastructure and accompanying lifestyles, but also a modernist style layout.

Residents often made the comparison between Opuwo and a town like Otjiwarongo, a town halfway between Opuwo and the capital Windhoek, arguing that Otjiwarongo constitutes a real town. Otjiwarongo possesses a sizeable white population (whereas Opuwo does not), that is, it belonged to the white spaces which, under apartheid, were reserved for white settlers. The town is endowed with the infrastructure and services that residents named as lacking in Opuwo. Furthermore, Opuwo residents, in trying to capture the essence of the differences between their town and a Police Zone town like Otjiwarongo, often refer to the lack of dust in the latter type of settlements. Only undeveloped places are dusty.

Otjiwarongo is more developed, very, very far developed. I mean this Opuwo, it's very, very far behind in comparison with Otjiwarongo. They are not the same. You see, there is no bank here. In Otjiwarongo you can find a bank. There is, I mean, everything. Here, it's remote if you compare it with Otjiwarongo. There is no tar road. Even in town here you see how it is dusty compared to Otjiwarongo. In Otjiwarongo I mean everything is tarred, there is no dust that's why.³⁹

In addition, Police Zone residents themselves are said to be more developed, they are less “traditional,” and are generally less “behind.” In other words, Opuwans hold that “town” and hence “development” denotes not only aspects related to buildings and spaces but also includes a certain type of personal outlook, as one must also learn how to act and how to present oneself in urban space: “In town people live according to western culture, for example the way you dress in order to fit into that place.”⁴⁰ Other residents also felt that urban space itself has to be used in certain ways: “I think some people don't understand development or why do they not want to pay electricity or cook outside while you are given a kitchen to cook in.”⁴¹ Upon moving from rural areas to town, this resident along with many others argued that one had to adapt one's lifestyle to modern cultural norms and values.

Time and again black people alluded in interviews to having felt excluded from the modernist urban spaces and accompanying lifestyles

and conveyed a sense of having been left out or having been left behind: “[T]own houses are modern and developed and blacks were left behind. That’s why today we are in the town houses and not in traditional houses [because we are not left behind any longer].”⁴² Another resident similarly held: “[T]he houses of *Ondoropa* were built for the needs of white people because this kind of house was only for whites before Namibia got its independence. [. . .] I want to have a better future in order to stay in these white houses.”⁴³

To summarize, the modernist city model from apartheid days thus has not only influenced practitioners’ approaches to urban design, but it has also conditioned Opuwo residents’ conceptions of “proper” urban form. The modernist spaces of the town proper are labeled “white” by black residents in Opuwo because historically urbanism was largely introduced by German and most particularly by South African colonial regimes. In addition, such spaces were exclusively created, transformed and inhabited by white people. In the present-day context, Opuwo residents do not regard the fact that black urban residents increasingly live in urban areas formerly reserved for white people as a sign of these spaces becoming more “Africanized,” but, rather to the contrary, as a sign that the black residents in question have adopted “modern,” or “developed” ways. The apartheid divisions between white and black spaces have thus remained imprinted in people’s perceptions of the built environment as expressed by their distinction between (“proper”) town and location. Many urban residents find it difficult to imagine how an urban environment could be structured in any other way. Modernist urban forms as created under apartheid appear normative and, given a choice between “white town” and “black location” as the two distinguishing features and possibilities in Namibian urban environments, most will opt for the “modern” and “developed” town.⁴⁴ In other words, the quality of a town will be judged according to its ideal, namely the modernist spaces created under the policy of separate development for the benefit of a white population.

“Thinking Ahead”: Contemporary Urban Design in Opuwo

This section will now illuminate how the theoretical urban design perspective adopted by contemporary policy makers introduced in the first section and the resident ideas as discussed above play out in interaction with one another, presenting a recent town planning intervention in Opuwo. The

town of Opuwo suffers from a severe formal housing shortage, as approximately 60 percent⁴⁵ of Opuwo’s inhabitants live in one of its informal settlements. In order to alleviate this shortage, the Namibian government appointed a town planner in 2000 to design a town extension including both residential and business plots. In addition, the appointed planner was also meant to deal with the town’s “squatter problem” by concurrently initiating the formalization of Opuwo’s largest squatter settlement. If implemented, this formalization will entail a subdivision of the settlement into plots for residential and business uses and a street layout design while slating as few of the existing buildings as possible for demolition. Existing residents will be given a plot of land but will have to pay for the services to be installed, including water, sewage, and electricity. The houses to be erected on the land would, in future, have to be approved by Opuwo’s town council and meet certain construction standards. In keeping with the post-independence approach to development, all stakeholders, including the affected residents themselves, are to be included in the planning procedures and to participate in the decision-making process.

As part of this process, the town planner visited Opuwo to introduce his designs to the town council and town residents, the latter consisting of a dozen members of Opuwo’s elite who had been specifically invited by the town council to attend the meeting. To begin with, the town planner hung up a colorful plan which he then set out to explain, consistently referring to Otuzemba and Ouranda, the two squatter areas to be formalized, as “the northern part of Opuwo” which was confusing to those present (see figure 5). It was also difficult for the assembled residents to discern the location of the planned area and to grasp the significance of the lines depicted on the map. Even the town councilor responsible for urban planning matters had to ask where Putuavanga school, a huge landmark in the town, was situated on the map. The town planner had divided the whole area into five residential sections each connected with the main road through one street and each was divided from the others through a so-called green space. The existing businesses, currently interspersed throughout the informal settlement, were relocated to a separate area along the main street. Essentially, the planner had produced a reproduction of the same modernist urban layouts that characterized the apartheid urban landscape.⁴⁶

The town planner introduced his planning as neutral and natural—as the only way to carry out town planning—and he presupposed a universal applicability of his modernist layouts. He seemed unperturbed by the fact that Opuwo residents obviously live in ways that differ starkly from his own (see figure 6). Rather, in a private interview after the meeting,

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Figure 5. Town Plan showing the proposed new layout for Opuwo's informal settlement Otuzemba. (Source: Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing, Windhoek, Namibia.)

he stressed that “one has gotta think ahead” when planning town extensions.⁴⁷

Today there may not be a lot of vehicles present but in 20 years there may be two cars per household [and] if you are then stuck with streets that aren't wide enough to accommodate all that traffic, it will be a disaster. One will then have to move people living in permanent houses in order to widen those streets and that will be a lot more painful than moving these people now when they are only living in temporary structures.⁴⁸

His plan also included a number of open spaces to serve as “playgrounds for children” or “just to look at or to take your dog for a walk.” As these examples show, the town planner employed certain assumptions about lifestyle (and wealth) in his designs that betrayed an underlying modernist planning and design discourse.

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Figure 6. Aerial photograph of the informal settlement Otuzemba. (Source: Office of the Surveyor General, Windhoek, Namibia.)

For instance, in his presentation to the assembled residents and town officials, the town planner emphasized repeatedly that the standards utilized for his designs were the same as those applied all over the industrial world. This assurance served to convey that in independent Namibia, development is finally reaching Opuwo, as the same modernist designs are now available to *all* Namibians. Black people no longer have to make do with the lowered standards previously thought appropriate for them. Rather, Opuwo’s design standards are equal to those even in developed countries. Clearly, when designing his layout for the town, the town planner had a vision in mind, a vision about what he believed Opuwo should look like in future. In particular, he wished to make Opuwo into a copy of “developed white towns” like Otjiwarongo not just in terms of the

modernist built forms but also with regard to the style of living that he envisages to take place there. What, then, did Opuwo residents think about this planned intervention?

Manuel,⁴⁹ a laborer working for the government, admitted to not understanding the plan as such, but he was satisfied that it meant getting electricity and felt relief at the planner's assurance that few houses would be demolished. However, he did feel confused about the planned demolition of some of the houses in the informal settlement. He wished to know just how many houses would be destroyed and especially where. Was his house going to be among those that had to make way? Kerisa,⁵⁰ a businesswoman, too felt very satisfied with the community meeting. She was grateful to the planner for "bringing order into Otuzemba." She especially favored his suggestion to create wide streets through the settlement. She, like Manuel, also needed some clarification. Were people going to be moved from their homes? Was the government going to build new houses for everyone? Similarly, Hilda⁵¹ thought that the new planning entailed not just the creation of new streets but also the construction of new houses alongside these streets. Obviously, there existed some confusion about what the planning really entailed, but residents nonetheless felt excited about the promise of development brought about by the construction of "proper" houses and streets and the installation of a service infrastructure (see figure 7).

Far from rejecting the town planner's urban vision, residents embraced the promise of development. Of course, who would reject wide tar roads, brick houses, electricity, water and sewage connection, street lighting, and the relatively carefree life that these improvements were sure to bring to Opuwans? Such approval of the town planner's future scenario suggests a degree of consensus between urban practitioners and residents. But this picture is misleading. Since the model proposed by the town planner is presented as inherently technical and apolitical in nature—he is after all only "thinking ahead" with his "developed" vision of Opuwo—the fundamental differences between the few wealthy white and black residents and the poor black majority go unrecognized (see figure 8). What the latter are attracted to is to lead a life in relative wealth that plans like these promise. However, the town planner's approach may lead to an urban environment that will be unable to respond adequately to deviation from a Western middle-class ideal. His plan can become reality only if residents earn a living wage that allows them to buy a residential lot, to construct a house on it, and to own a car with which to drive through the wide streets. In other words, his designs favor the needs of a hoped for, or imagined, rising middle-class and neglect the fact that most Opuwans will not be able to take part in or benefit

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Figure 7. Photograph of a recent housing development in Opuwo. (Source: F. Müller-Friedman.)

from any of the envisaged modifications. Perhaps this is why the meeting was by invitation only and attended by the local elite.

In essence, an urban design model which was once used for exploitative and oppressive means under an apartheid administration is now being revamped—i.e., spun in a different way to apply “development” to all people equally. In this sense, there is much continuity between apartheid modernist urban planning and post-apartheid development urban planning, at least on the ground. The discontinuity emerges mostly in its labeling. At the same time, from the point of view of poor urban residents, the revamped apartheid urban model is difficult to resist not only because its development discourse has been normalized, but also because it includes some very tangible improvements that many desire even if they are unlikely to ever afford these improvements.

Apartheid Built Forms as Harbingers for a Developed Urban Future

At first sight it may indeed appear as if apartheid urban forms in themselves convey no inherent meaning and are simply designed in a certain

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Figure 8. Photograph of Otuzemba. (Source: F. Müller-Friedman.)

architectural style, in this case the modernist style that was replicated all over the world with diverging political aims. If this were the case, the urban forms left from apartheid should have no association with former apartheid rule attached to them. In making this argument, however, one would have to assume that built form is a physical rather than a social or political object. However, as I have suggested, built form mediates, constructs, and reproduces power relations. Built forms are, therefore, simultaneously both social and physical. Physical space does not simply exist but is produced under certain changing historical and political circumstances; it acquires meaning through the circumstances of its production and reproduction. Built form then draws its power from the dialectic relationship between physical and social spatiality, that is, through the form and the conditions of its production and reproduction. In addition, the meanings of any space change over time. This explains why modernist urban designs can be replicated in and adapted to very diverging political contexts, acquiring various new meanings, which however does not mean that the resulting urban forms are neutral or that old social relations are not implicated and inadvertently (or otherwise) reproduced.

The social inequalities created during apartheid (and colonialism) in Namibia have, for the most part, persisted into the independence era. This is exemplified by the perpetuation of three factors: gross economic

disparities between white and black Namibians, racially segregated residential neighborhoods, and racism. While apartheid laws have been abolished, the day-to-day life of many residents remains to a large extent unchanged, along with the physical spaces within which people’s lives are lived. Although the formal canon used to create urban environments is seemingly neutral in its modernist style, its relatively uncritical application in a post-apartheid context—consisting of a physical legacy of exclusionary forms in modernist style and a social legacy of inequality—leads to the entrenching of some of the exclusionary and marginalizing urban spaces. These practices in urban settings such as Windhoek may inadvertently reproduce some of the racial divisions of apartheid, while in a town like Opuwo they may lead to creating built environments that serve the needs and interests of a small local elite. In making this argument, I do not mean to suggest that urban practitioners consciously subscribe to an apartheid society and wish to perpetuate it. My purpose here is to argue that the perpetuation of apartheid urban forms is largely an unintended outcome resulting in part from the neutral position ascribed to urban form. In examining the discursiveness of contemporary Namibian built form, I do not intend to search for an objectively true or better built form, but rather aim to uncover how certain notions about built form have come to be accepted as true within contemporary Namibian society.

Urban built form in the Namibian context was originally created by apartheid planners with the aim of separate development in mind. In order to achieve this aim and to mask the less worthy aspects of this intention, planners made use of and adapted the language of the Modern Movement. Today, modernist urban forms of apartheid are made over with the aim of “development” for all Namibians. Both practitioners and residents imagine and produce an urban future through an inadvertent perpetuation of the modernist forms of apartheid because these forms are relegated to a politically neutral position and have long been regarded as harbingers of development per se rather than apartheid development specifically.

Notes

This article is based on fifteen months of fieldwork in the town of Opuwo, Namibia, during 2000/2001. I would like to express my gratitude to the many Opuwo residents who kindly shared their time and knowledge with me. Additionally, I would like to thank those whose critical reading and suggestions first helped shape this article, in particular, Nancy Duncan, John Friedman, and Fiona Scorgie. An earlier version was first

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1 The Modern Movement, a movement originating in the West, began in the early twentieth century as an “architectural revolution.” There exist two main reasons for the movement’s inception: first, the new building materials offered by technological progress; and second, the flowering of capitalism, which, through mass production, made inexpensive products available to the middle classes. Part and parcel with these technological advances came the belief that human needs could be scientifically and universally determined and that these advances would lead to an improvement of life. Brent C. Brolin, *The Failure of Modern Architecture* London: Studio Vista, 1976, 14.

2 Separate development, as formulated in South Africa and Namibia during the 1950s–70s was openly promoted as a means to perpetuate white domination, a “strategy of racial cleansing for the development of white society (Kate Manzo, “Black Consciousness and the Quest for a Counter-Modernist Movement,” in *Power of Development*, ed. Jonathan Crunch [London and New York: Routledge, 1995], 237). South African official publications at the time liked to portray South African political, economic, and social conditions as dualistic, analogous to the conditions experienced in the First and Third Worlds. Separate development, then, was also an enterprise in spatial reordering, as, under its policy, the declared “underdeveloped” black population was pushed out of the “developed” white First World into the Third World of the black bantustans and townships (Chris Tapscott, “Changing Discourses of Development in South Africa,” in *Power of Development*, ed. Jonathan Crunch [London and New York: Routledge, 1995], 178).

3 For example, Anthony Lemon, ed., *Homes Apart: South Africa’s Segregated Cities* (London: Paul Chapman Publishing, 1991); Astrid Seckelmann, “Probleme Ehemaliger ‘Townships’ Heute: Das Beispiel des Windhoek Nordens,” *Geographische Rundschau* 50, no. 4 (1998): 223–28; David Simon, “Urban Squatting, Low-Income Housing, and Politics in Namibia on the Eve of Independence,” in *Slum and Squatter Settlements in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. R. Obudho and C. Mhlanga (New York: Praeger, 1988); David Simon, “Windhoek: Desegregation and Change in the Capital of South Africa’s Erstwhile Colony,” in *Homes Apart: South Africa’s Segregated Cities*, ed. A. Lemon (London: Paul Chapman, 1991); David Smith, ed., *The Apartheid City and Beyond: Urbanization and Social Change in South Africa* (London and New York: Routledge and Witwatersrand University Press, 1992); Mark Swilling et al, eds., *Apartheid City in Transition* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1991); Richard Tomlinson, *Urbanization in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990).

4 Throughout this chapter, I employ the expression “urban practitioner” as an umbrella term to denote various urban professionals including town planners, urban designers, urban policy makers, and architects.

5 South West Africa Administration, “Housing for Non-Europeans in Urban Areas” (Windhoek: South West Africa Administration, 1948), 4.

6 *Ibid.*, 1.

7 Ibid., 4.

8 Ibid., 4.

9 Ibid., 2.

10 Ibid., 6.

11 During colonial (pre-apartheid) times, most of Namibia’s urban “black” and “colored” population lived in so-called locations near the city center. The term “township” was introduced by the South African government in the early 1950s, after the implementation of Apartheid rule.

12 South West Africa Administration, “Housing for Non-Europeans,” 9.

13 Ibid., 5.

14 Ibid., 6.

15 Ibid., 1.

16 South West Africa Administration, “Low-Income Housing Policy for South West Africa/Namibia: Draft for Consideration by the Cabinet Committee on Housing” (Windhoek: 1986), 5.

17 In the 1980s, a shift in development rhetoric occurred at precisely the same time political pressures mounted, leading to the institution of reformist policies in South Africa, e.g., through private sector development which moved responsibility for economic success away from the state and onto the individual. This new more incorporative development discourse was pursued largely as a scientific, technified, and depoliticised undertaking. In due course, the official and value-laden racial terminology, which included “Bantus” and “Blacks,” was neutralized by replacing them with inconspicuous, deracialized terms such as “underdeveloped population” and “rural poor” (Tapscott, “Changing Discourses,” 187–91).

18 South West Africa Administration, “Low-Income Housing Policies,” 20.

19 Ibid., 9.

20 Ibid., 2.

21 Ibid., 9.

22 Ibid., 2.

23 Ibid., 5.

24 Tapscott, “Changing Discourses,” 189.

25 Compare James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: “Development,” Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

26 Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing (MRLGH), “National Plan of Action, Habitat II” (Windhoek: Ministry of Regional and Local Government and Housing, Government of the Republic of Namibia, 1996).

27 Ibid., 9.

28 Ibid., 37.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid., 34.

31 Ibid., 20.

32 Ibid., 23.

33 Ibid., 33.

34 Ibid., 17.

35 During South African apartheid rule, the spaces within the Namibian territory consisted of the Police Zone—as the area under formal colonial rule was termed—with its

towns and commercial farming areas and the native homelands. Homelands were remote rural areas (similar to “reservations” in the United States) created by the South African government as part of its apartheid policy of “separate development.”

36 Personal interview, INT 062/05/2001, May 2001, Opuwo.

37 Essay ESY 001. This essay was submitted as an entry to an essay competition organized by J. Friedman and myself in May 2001 involving Grade 10 learners from the Putuavanga Junior Secondary School in Opuwo. Learners were asked to write one essay a week on selected themes.

38 Personal interview, INT 037/02/2001, 28 February 2001, Opuwo.

39 Ibid.

40 Informal survey, ISQ 6/17/10, April 2001, Opuwo.

41 Informal survey, ISQ 6/28/8, April 2001, Opuwo.

42 Informal survey, ISQ 6/25/7, April 2001, Opuwo.

43 Essay ESY 002, May 2001, Opuwo.

44 This is not to say, however, that black residents necessarily wish to live among white people. See Fatima Friedman, “Deconstructing Windhoek: The Urban Morphology of a Post-Apartheid City” (London: University College London, Development Planning Unit, 2000).

45 I have taken this figure from the Opuwo Household Survey, conducted by J. Friedman and myself in November 2000. The survey targeted a third of all the households in town. According to the survey figures, 60.45 percent of Opuwo’s households are located in one of the town’s informal areas.

46 Such an approach to urban design is, however, not specific to this particular town planner. A previous planning initiative in Opuwo completed in 1999, comprised the construction of 120 housing units and perused an urban layout that had been designed long before independence in 1970. In this instance, the apartheid design’s original *raison d’être* was reinterpreted to accommodate today’s modified urban design approach.

47 Untaped interview, UIN 001/10/2000, 11 October 2000, Opuwo.

48 There exist only approximately 600 registered vehicles in the whole of the Kunene Region, in which the town of Opuwo is located. Stephen Devereux, Etalemahu Melaku-Tjirongo, and Trine Naeraa, “Urban Situation Analysis: A Study of Five Namibian Towns” (Windhoek: Social Sciences Division, University of Namibia, 1993), 36.

49 Personal interview, INT 006/11/2000, 17 November 2000, Opuwo.

50 Personal interview, INT 009/11/2000, 22 November 2000, Opuwo.

51 Personal interview, INT 012/11/2000, 29 November 2000, Opuwo.

PART II

Racialized and Divided Space

Although cosmopolitan and modern districts abound in Africa's cities, traveling around the urban environment reveals that there is not a single, unified, and complete structure but a collection of distinct neighborhoods separated by class, race, and ethnicity. Racially and ethnically segregated urban spaces became commonplace in African cities during the colonial era. Those with greater numbers of European settlers, in particular, experienced the problems associated with segregation to a higher degree. The essays in this section look at racialized spaces in Nairobi from the establishment of the city to the present, as well as problems of racial class and identity in South Africa during the middle decades of the twentieth century.

In the first two essays, Kefa Otiso and Godwin Murunga suggest that the rural-urban divide began to grow very early in the colonial era when Europeans sought to control the development of urban space by instituting strict policies of segregation and encouraging the development of separate spheres based on racial stereotypes of traditional and modern. European administrators, railroad workers, and settlers promoted urban spaces as modern constructs and suggested that Africans belonged in "traditional" rural areas. Otiso points out that this presentation of the city as a modern and, thus, European space by the colonial elite and the settlers led to a feeling of alienation for Africans in Nairobi that continues to have an impact on urban society. Today, income has replaced race in determining urban stratification, but the reality differs little for those disenfranchised. There continues to be, Otiso argues, a high degree of postcolonial apathy that results in continued underdevelopment in the urban areas. Segregationist policies and racial stereotyping were also influenced by the growing power of the railway administration, as well as the negative

stereotypes that South African settlers brought into Nairobi during the first decade of the twentieth century. These new groups employed racial stereotypes to restrict the movement of Africans and define the nature of urban development. Murungu argues that spatial segregation in Nairobi was determined, in part, by European stereotypes of Africans and Indians as unclean and more prone to diseases, particularly after the outbreak of plague in the early 1900s.

In South Africa, racial categories were even more pronounced, before and during the apartheid era. People were officially designated as Blacks, Coloreds, or Whites. Wessel Visser and Corinne Sandwith show that these categories were often blurred by other factors. Whites, for example, fractured not only into groups of Europeans and Afrikaners, but Afrikaners also developed different identities based on their occupation and class. The Afrikaner working class, Visser argues, set out to establish their own material and cultural urban space through the development of formal organizations, and only later did political leaders draw on their existence to foster heightened racial exploitation. Various attitudes and actions also defined a heterogeneous group among South African coloreds, even within the educated elite. Sandwith shows that colored elites split into different generations divided by the official implementation of apartheid in 1948. In general, coloreds had a higher social and economic status than most black South Africans did. Earlier generations attempted to utilize education as a tool for political and economic advancement. Younger generations retained the emphasis on education, but they rejected the option to work within a system based on strict race and class identities. They opted instead for more radical confrontation and employed a variety of intellectual and political strategies that led to the creation of new racial and cultural spaces that allied them with all of the oppressed peoples subject to the horrors of the apartheid system.

4

COLONIAL URBANIZATION AND URBAN MANAGEMENT IN KENYA

Kefa M. Otiso

Introduction

Prior to European colonialism, most Kenyans were rural dwellers, except for those in the coastal region that had a long pre-existing urban tradition. Europeans, beginning in the late 1800s, founded most of Kenya's urban areas and set them aside for exclusive European habitation. To the detriment of Africans (i.e., indigenous black Africans) and Asians (see note for definition),¹ different strategies were used to exclude these groups. Exclusion of Asians took the form of under-representation in the municipal councils, especially in Nairobi; limits on their admission into the country following the completion of the Kenya-Uganda railway; barring them from owning rural land in order to protect European settler interests; and restrictions on their ownership of land in Nairobi, except in designated areas. Moreover, Asian residential and commercial areas in Nairobi were declared unhygienic and razed on the pretext of controlling plague outbreaks in the first half of the twentieth century.²

To a greater extent than Asians, Africans were directly excluded from urban areas through legislation and coercion, and indirectly through harassment. Various pieces of legislation, such as those that controlled African movement and employment, housing, land ownership, and urban infrastructural standards, were purposefully crafted to make it difficult for Africans to move into, live, and work in urban areas. In housing, for instance, the colonial authorities prohibited Africans from owning land in

cities and adopted European standards that resulted in housing that was too expensive or inappropriate for African family occupation (e.g., sharing bathrooms with strangers). These regulations also made it impossible for Africans to erect decent housing for themselves. Moreover, even the few employers (e.g., Kenya Railways) that provided housing for their African labor force limited such housing to bachelor rooms, thereby precluding African families from settling in cities. In addition, colonial pass laws that severely constrained the movement of Africans to and within urban areas were enacted. Collectively, these legal instruments created a sense of non-belonging among urban Africans. Over time, even those few lucky Africans who owned urban housing came to consider themselves as sojourners with “houses” rather than “homes.”

As might be expected, Africans and Asians resisted these exclusionary measures in various ways. At first they acted separately, but later they realized that unity is strength and began to coordinate their efforts. This strategy won them greater access to the country’s urban space and government, and ushered in independence in 1963. These gradual successes did not, however, prevent these two groups from developing a sense of non-belonging in the country’s urban areas during and after the colonial period; and each group coped with this reality in separate ways. For Africans this meant investing more in their rural homes to the detriment of their urban dwellings. Asians, on the other hand, not able to return to their ancestral homelands in India and having no rural homes in Kenya to invest in, chose to disconnect from politics and invest instead in their professional and economic development.

The consequences of these disparate African and Asian responses became significant in the postcolonial period when income replaced race as the main factor in access to urban amenities, a relative situation that disadvantages the majority of the poorer African population.³ Overall, colonial exclusionary measures, largely retained at independence, are the core of widespread urban apathy in Kenya today. This indifference prevents residents from participating fully in the development and management of the country’s urban areas, thereby contributing to the country’s urban decay.

To understand the contest for urban space in colonial Kenya, this article first provides a brief historical overview of urban development in Kenya from the pre-colonial to the colonial period. Next, colonial instruments for entrenching European urban control and the African and Asian responses to this oppression and its impact on postcolonial urban management are examined.

History of Urbanization in Kenya

Pre-Colonial Urbanization

The East African region that includes Kenya and Tanzania has a long history of human occupation.⁴ Indeed, the Leakeys unearthed the earliest human remains at Olduvai Gorge, Tanzania, in the early part of the twentieth century. However, except for the coastal area, evidence of pre-colonial urbanization in the region is rare because contemporary settlements were made of temporary materials such as grass, wattle, and mud.

Kenya's coastal region has an urban tradition that spans almost two millennia, first detailed in the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* (i.e., Indian Ocean), that was written around 110 AD by a Greek traveler. This, authoritative source on urbanization on Kenya's and indeed East Africa's coastal region details the existence of early coastal towns and trade centers such as Rhapta.⁵ Subsequent accounts by Ptolemy, Barros, and other Greco-Romans, as well as Arabs and Persians, also describe trading posts along coastal "Azania" and "the land of the Zenj" or modern-day Kenya and Somalia.⁶

Throughout its long urban history, Kenya's coastal region has come under the influence of foreigners, notably Arabs and Europeans. Greeks and Romans dominated the region between the first and the seventh century AD. Thereafter, Arab control resulted in the growth of trade between East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. This trade culminated in significant Arab settlement in East Africa by 1000 AD, aiding the growth of coastal urban centers, for example, Lamu, Mogadishu, Manda, Zanzibar, and Kilwa.⁷ Prior to Arab settlement in coastal East Africa, Afro-Arab trade occurred at temporary locations. These later became permanent settlements and subsequently developed into Arab-dominated city-states including Pate, Lamu, Mombasa, Malindi, and Kilwa.⁸ By the end of the fifteenth century, when the region came under Portuguese hegemony, ten towns were well established on the Kenyan coast; by 1850, their number had quadrupled.⁹ Most of these early Arab-dominated towns were built of wattle and mud and had a planned layout. According to Chittick:

The houses were built very close to one another, often sharing a party wall and sometimes linked together, suggesting a family relationship between occupiers. The blocks of buildings were separated by very narrow lanes, though often there were gardens behind. They were one story. . . . Roofs were flat, built of stone laid in mangrove poles which were usually squared;

the weight of this massive roof and the strength of the timbers restricted the width of these rooms. . . . The houses followed a fairly uniform plan. They were entered by a doorway leading to a sunken courtyard. Facing on to this was usually a reception room, or veranda with the main living room behind, and bedrooms to the rear of this; such a basic arrangement was often much elaborated by the addition of other rooms. The main entrance into the courtyard of the larger houses were impressive. . . . At least one latrine . . . was included in each house. . . . There were usually no windows except in the facade facing the courtyard so the inner rooms must have been dark but their ceilings and thick walls would have been cool. The walls were plastered. . . .¹⁰

Population composition of these settlements included a ruling elite (a mixture of Arabs and Africans) who performed the most important social functions, African commoners, and recent Arab immigrants. Many of these settlements were political and trade centers, whose business, political, and religious rivalries often resulted in war. Between 1500 and 1509, the Portuguese took advantage of this rivalry and overthrew Arab domination of the East African coast. The Portuguese then made Mombasa their headquarters and built Fort Jesus for defensive purposes, and in the process, introduced European architecture to Kenya. Moreover, the Portuguese introduced important plant domesticates such as maize, groundnuts, cassava, sweet potatoes, pineapples, paw-paws, and guavas to the region.¹¹

Portuguese rule of the East African coast lasted nearly two hundred years and marked the beginning of rapid urbanization in the coastal and inland areas of East Africa. The Portuguese were permanently expelled by an Afro-Arab coalition in 1698.¹² The departure of the Portuguese created room for the rise of unrestrained Arab influence in the East African coastal region, a situation that culminated in the Arab-led slave trade.¹³

Development of Inland Urbanization

Initially, the urbanization of the coastal region of East Africa, including Kenya, resulted from trans-Indian Ocean trade. Gold, ivory, iron, copper, animal skins, copal, rhinoceros horn, tortoise shell, ambergris, and slaves were obtained in the region's interior by African traders and sold to Arabs and Europeans at the coast.¹⁴ But by the 1840s, demand for ivory and slaves, in particular, outstripped supply as more Arab and other foreign traders migrated to the East African coast. As a consequence, Arab traders

especially ventured into the interior of contemporary Kenya and other East African countries to obtain these items, leading to the establishment of small permanent rest and supply centers along the caravan routes,¹⁵ including Mumias, Taveta, Dogoretti, Machakos, and Tsavo in Kenya.¹⁶ As coastal-inland trade blossomed, more inland centers were established to supply the caravans with food and merchandise and to keep caravan routes open, thereby augmenting inland urbanization. Some caravan supply centers (e.g., Mumias in present-day western Kenya), were preexisting indigenous ethnic and periodic or seasonal trade centers. Their growth and prosperity were greatly enhanced by this new economic relationship to the caravan trade. The caravan trade did not, however, benefit all pre-colonial urban centers in the interior of Kenya. But, those urban centers that were touched by the caravan trade became more prominent and grew even more during the colonial period.¹⁷

Many more pre-colonial urban centers would have developed were it not for the existence of the traditional African “system of mutual kinship obligations . . . [that] minimized the need for the market.”¹⁸ These kinship obligations enabled community members to exchange goods and services in a non-market setting. Those goods and services that were unavailable through the kinship system were obtained at periodic trade centers functioning along inter-ethnic boundaries. Foodstuffs were usually the main commodities exchanged at these centers.¹⁹

In the early 1800s, British and German explorers inspired by earlier missionary accounts of East Africa’s interior arrived in Kenya. They made initial contacts with inland Africans at preexisting caravan centers and periodic trade centers such as Mumias. These centers also functioned as dwelling places for Arabs and administrative places where African chiefs held court. Following these explorers were more missionaries, traders, imperialists, and colonists.²⁰ As Europeans ventured into the African interior, many preexisting trade centers grew in population size and economic importance. Although most centers were ethnically oriented, this changed radically with the advent of British colonialism.²¹

British occupation of Kenya was a gradual process. In 1888 the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) gained control of the region that is now Kenya.²² Simultaneously, missionary influence began to be felt in Kenya with the establishment of missionary centers such as Rabai, Freretown, and Ribe in the coastal region between 1870 and 1895. These centers, especially Freretown, were settlements for freed slaves who became homeless after the abolition of the trans-Indian Ocean slave trade in 1870 and its subsequent decline.²³ IBEAC established more caravan

centers in modern-day Kenya before it became insolvent in 1891. It then relinquished its assets and activities to the colonial office in 1894, paving the way for the declaration of the British East Africa Protectorate in 1895.²⁴ Subsequently, the colonial office dispatched British administrators to the area, thereby initiating Kenya's formal colonialism. To more easily consolidate their rule, the emerging colonial administration expanded the political and socioeconomic role of pre-colonial centers.²⁵

Although the arrival of the British in Kenya initially benefited pre-colonial or traditional trading centers, it soon destroyed them. After consolidating political power, the colonial administration undermined pre-colonial urban centers by developing new centers more suitable for European needs. Unfortunately, this geopolitical exercise was unsystematic and often failed to meet the needs of the local population that found itself barred from residing in them.²⁶ Consequently, many new urban centers lacked sufficient linkages with the surrounding countryside, thereby initiating the problematic rural-urban dichotomy that continues to plague Kenya.

The "ad hoc" creation of urban centers by the British was partly due to the fact that they originally had no intention of settling in Kenya; their attention was focused on the prosperous kingdom of Buganda (in modern Uganda), located west of Kenya, on the shores of Lake Victoria and close to the source of the Nile River. British interest in securing the source of the Nile River was to initiate shipping services to their North African colony of Egypt and to preempt its control by the Germans who already controlled the area of modern-day Tanzania. Having found the Nile's headwaters, the British were disappointed to discover that it was basically unnavigable. Also, overland transportation from Kenya's coast to Buganda using porters and animal transport was expensive and detrimental to the expansion of trade. This necessitated the construction of the Uganda railway.²⁷ Even as the railway was built across Kenya, single-minded British interest in Buganda reduced their perception of Kenya to "that sterile region" between the coastal town of Mombasa and Lake Victoria.²⁸

This negative perception persisted until the British realized that Buganda's economic potential had been overestimated. With the cost of the railway unable to be recouped from Buganda alone, the British found it necessary to tap the economic potential of the intervening territory. Consequently, much of Kenya's most agriculturally productive region, the undulating plateau area between Machakos and Fort Tenan (now Kitale), encompassing the cluster of urban centers in central and southwestern Kenya, was annexed in 1902 and set aside for European settlement.²⁹

Plantation crops such as coffee and tea were introduced in the so-called white highlands in 1904. Because of the area's favorable climate and fertile soils, yields were so good that the country's negative image as a "sterile region" quickly changed for the better. Unfortunately, this change led to the more ambitious mission of making Kenya a "white man's country."³⁰

Using annexed land as an incentive, the colonial government generated a massive influx of European settlers (especially from Britain and South Africa) to Kenya, eventually resulting in a racial and political hierarchy revolving around land. Although Africans already inhabited the "white highlands," the area was annexed on the following racist ideology: "Africans had neither the mental capacity nor the numerical strength to work this land profitably. . . . [I]t was [also] rationalized that the growing number of Asians would prefer the warmer climates near the Coast and . . . Lake Victoria."³¹

Although none of this was fact, it served as a pretext for preventing Africans and Asians from owning land in the fertile "white highlands." Afterwards, Asians were barred from owning rural land or engaging in agriculture to prevent competition with immigrant European farmers. However, Asians were allowed to run convenience stores and to function as middlemen mediating the exploitative and sometimes volatile³² commodity production and exchange relations between the British and Africans.³³ The Asian presence in Kenya began when they "were indentured in India and brought into the country to help with the construction of the Kenya-Uganda railway. At the end of the project, they found themselves in a precarious position because of lack land tenure and the insurance of a rural home."³⁴

Because successful European cash crop farming required cheap and abundant labor, the colonial administration developed various discriminatory strategies aimed at Africans to meet this need. Annexation of extensive tracts of fertile land and the segregation and dispossession of Africans to reserves³⁵ on marginal lands, coupled with draconian controls on African migration and the imposition of heavy taxes on them, triggered African migration to the European controlled "white highlands" in search of employment. These measures also led to population redistribution, the creation of an African working class with disposable income; and the development of new periodic markets that would facilitate capitalist production, accumulation, and consumption, all controlled by the British. In time, the "white highlands" became the most urbanized portions of the country, with blossoming urban centers like Nairobi established by and for the exclusive convenience of Europeans.

With colonial rule fully established in Kenya by the 1920s, three types of urban centers emerged: (1) *bomas* or towns (i.e., 2,000 or more people), (2) trading centers (i.e., fewer than 2,000 people), and (3) periodic or seasonal markets. Although trading centers soon became the most effective link between rural areas and the modern economy,³⁶ they remained insignificant for planning purposes because, first, Asians initially built trading centers on land belonging to Africans; and, since they lacked land tenure, they built makeshift structures, many of which still exist! Second, the colonial government did not adequately plan or control the building of trading centers and, as a consequence, they developed organically, i.e., without a plan. This situation curtailed subsequent attempts to reorganize them in a more rational manner. Third, like periodic markets, trading centers were collecting, bulking, and distribution centers whose economic future was considered insecure by all (i.e., colonial authorities, Africans, and Asians), hence the lack of permanent investment in them.³⁷ Nevertheless, some trading centers grew to become important urban centers, particularly after independence.

Colonial Strategies and Instruments of Urban Control

In the colonial period, race was used as the most important determinant of one's status and place (literally) in society. Eager to turn Kenya into a "white man's country," the Europeans established a hierarchy with themselves at the top, Asians in the middle, and Africans at the bottom. This imposed system governed nearly every aspect of one's life. Thus, according to J. E. Goldthorpe (1948):

Under the law, a person's racial status—that is, the racial category into which he is officially assigned—affects such fundamental matters as his civic rights and obligations, for instance, whether he has to obey a chief's orders and whether he is subject to collective punishment; the tax he pays; where and how he may hold land; his political representation, generally speaking, the way he is tried for an offence, and the way he is treated in prison; and the way in which civil disputes in which he is involved are heard, and before which court.³⁸

Moreover, to ensure Kenya's domination by European settlers, the colonial authorities subjected all non-Europeans, especially Africans, to

harsh legal, political, economic, and social conditions.³⁹ Besides overt and humiliating racial discrimination and neglect, the colonial authorities institutionalized African and Asian exploitation by: (1) expropriating African land and setting it aside for European use, (2) providing African farmers with insufficient infrastructure facilities, agricultural inputs, and marketing services in order to protect European settler farmers from competition, (3) preventing Africans from growing lucrative cash crops such as coffee, (4) forcing Africans to supply cheap wage labor to European farmers by imposing cash taxes on them, (5) minimizing African access to education and subsequently exploiting this lack as a reason to underpay them, and (6) further protecting European settler farmers' interests by prohibiting Asian ownership of rural land and participation in agriculture.

According to Werlin, European settlers initially rationalized African exploitation through the belief that the latter were innately inferior to Europeans in physique, stamina, and intelligence. These injustices were justified by arguing that Africans were generations behind Europeans in their mental and moral development, and that their heavy taxation and servitude on European farms was a small price to pay for their being led into civilization.⁴⁰ Despite their false justifications, these oppressive measures were efficient means to facilitate European prosperity through the massive exploitation of African lands, resources, and labor. Moreover, traditional African societies were forcibly thrust into the modern capitalist economy by undermining, reorganizing, and transforming indigenous self-sufficient subsistence production.⁴¹

The colonial authorities also instituted a series of legal measures designed to thwart African urbanization and Asian participation in the colony's affairs. The official rationale was that as pre-colonial Africans were predominantly rural, contemporary African interests could best be preserved if their rural "tribal" cultures were maintained intact.⁴² Shamelessly, the authorities were trying to prevent the impact and consequences of African urbanization on the European status quo, knowing "that Africans who broke away from [rural] traditional forms of control would be encouraged to challenge the existing European forms of control."⁴³ Thus, a number of legal and political strategies, including laws and restrictions on African urban land ownership, housing, employment, and business; exclusion from government; evictions; and the use of inappropriate planning and housing standards, were used to actively discourage African urbanization. A brief examination of these and other discriminatory measures directed at non-Europeans follows.

Laws

The colonial government extensively used legislation to exclude Africans from urban areas. The 1930 Public Health Act and the Vagrancy Acts of 1922 and 1949⁴⁴ are notorious examples of exclusionary legislation, since they ultimately helped in the creation of European cities in Kenya. These two laws, as designed, were widely used by the authorities to advance colonial or parochial interests. Consequently, these laws, and especially the Public Health Act, may have had the most enduring impact on Kenya's colonial urban development and management.

The colonial government formally promulgated the Public Health Act in 1949 to protect European health and safety. Because of prejudice towards Asians and Africans and the erroneous belief that non-Europeans were less hygienic, the colonial authorities incorrectly surmised that the only way to guarantee European health and safety was through racial segregation⁴⁵ rather than by providing basic urban services such as sanitation and medical services to all. According to Peter Hall:

The basis for [segregation] was hygienic: the government medical service, invariably of military origin, had a virtual stranglehold over the planning system. Since the British settlers fell like ninepins to tropical diseases, they had to take themselves to the hills, segregate themselves as best as they could, and live bungalow-style at exceedingly low densities, even when that meant—as it invariably did—high infrastructure costs and long journeys [to and from work]. Typically in Nairobi, the Europeans would get the best—that is, the highest—areas, the Indians the next best, and the Africans anything that was left.⁴⁶

Moreover, the policy of segregation helped the colonial authorities to maintain political control, although they masked this primary objective by claiming that racial segregation was beneficial and “necessary [to] ensure that the different races [would] practice their cultures without interference from other groups.”⁴⁷

Asians actually bore the brunt of official segregation policy on “public health grounds” because European settlers perceived them to be the greatest threat to their “white man's country” project. Indeed, Asians were nearly as well educated and informed as Europeans, as well as being more numerous and collectively wealthier.⁴⁸ These advantages, especially relative to the African population, enabled Asians to challenge European domination long before the African majority joined the struggle to help end European domination. Thus, lacking cogent reasons for depriving

Asians of such privileges as land ownership, civil rights, immigration, and urban settlement in Kenya, the European settlers and their government resorted to indirect methods. An effective means of achieving this goal was through racial segregation and the destruction of Indian property in the guise of protecting public (i.e., European) health. According to Werlin, the foundations of anti-Indian action were laid as early as 1906 and adopted with the 1919 Economic Commission report that argued:

Physically the Indian is not a wholesome influence because of his incurable repugnance to sanitation and hygiene. In this respect the African is more civilized than the Indian, being naturally clean in his ways; but he is prone to follow the example of those around him . . . [the] moral depravity of the Indian is equally damaging to the African, who in his natural state is at least innocent of the worst vices of the East. The Indian is the inciter to crime as well as vice, since it is the opportunity offered by the everready Indian receivers which makes thieving easy . . . [I]t is our firm conviction that the justification of our occupation of this country lies in our ability to adapt the native to our civilization. If we further complicate this task by continuing to expose the African to the antagonistic influence of the Asiatic, as distinct from European, philosophy, we shall be guilty of a breach of trust.⁴⁹

Unfortunately, the only protection of African interests occurred when European interests were at stake.

Unluckily for Indians, Nairobi was hit by a series of plagues (in 1901, 1902, 1904, and 1911–1913⁵⁰) that began in the Indian Bazaar or residential and commercial area,⁵¹ thereby “confirming” European claims of inferior Indian hygiene and the need for racial segregation as well as the razing of Indian Bazaars. Attempting to deal with the plagues, the government sought the advice of various health and urban planning experts,⁵² who mostly deplored the state of sanitation in the Bazaar and recommended its removal and continuation of the policy of racial segregation. Although one such group of experts, the White Commission of 1948, found Nairobi’s working and living quarters in general to be unhealthy due to poor discharge of waste, lack of architectural control, and building codes that were not enforced,⁵³ it nevertheless singled out Indian Bazaars as a major culprit. The commission noted: “Indian Bazaars which were damp, dark, unventilated, overcrowded dwellings on filth-soaked and rubbish bestrewn grounds housed hundreds of people of most uncleanly habits who loved to have things so, and were so let.”⁵⁴

Instead of advising the government to improve waste discharge, impose architectural control, and enforce building codes, the commission endorsed the practice of racial segregation. It also excused government failure to provide basic urban services to all residents by arguing that, “with the future of the town still uncertain, it was useless to undertake any improvements.”⁵⁵

The major consequence of the Public Health Act was the racial segregation of nearly all aspects of urban life in Kenya into three ethnic “quarters”: European, Indian, and African. The creation of three separate residential areas occurred especially in the city of Nairobi. As orchestrated, the quality of housing and amenities in the three residential areas was highest in the European area and lowest in the African section.⁵⁶ In contrast to palatial European living, Africans lived apart in locations with

poor lights in the streets. Library facilities and social halls were ill-equipped. Public lavatories were very, very dirty. Some of them did not have running water. Instead, they had hard tins like dustbins in which people “eased” themselves. There was an inescapable offensive smell when these bins were full of faeces, and especially when municipal workers who removed them were late (as they always were). One public lavatory was used by over one thousand people. . . . In the African houses there were no lights, water supplies, or gas for cooking. The Africans used paraffin or kerosene oil lamps [and] [c]harcoal fires for cooking, and water drawn in tins or emptied oil drums. . . .⁵⁷

While the Public Health Act provided justification for racial segregation in Kenya’s urban areas, the Vagrancy Act was the primary means of controlling the urban growth of non-white populations, especially Africans. Although the Act restricted urban African egress and ingress to ensure exclusive European areas, its advocates provided a seemingly more benign public justification, arguing:

It is unfortunately the case in any Colony with a native population that among those to whom a town naturally offers attractions are idle, vicious, or criminal natives, who seek to avoid tribal control or indeed any control at all. Such undesirables do not come to town to work but rather to live “on their wits,” which generally means either begging or stealing, and they become not only a menace to public security but a definite incubus upon the honest working natives from whom they beg lodging and food, relying on tribal custom to preclude a refusal.⁵⁸

For the Act to work, the authorities enacted pass laws that

prohibited Africans from being outside the locations in which they resided between 10 P.M. and 5 A.M. without a valid pass, and . . . [also forbade them] from remaining in the Municipality for more than thirty-six hours, excluding Sundays and public holidays, without employment, unless they had the required visitors' or residents' permit.⁵⁹

Again, justification for these injurious pass laws was couched in seemingly benevolent terms:

A municipal body which is responsible for providing locations and housing for natives within its area must be protected from having its obligations made unduly onerous owing to the presence in its area of natives who have no legitimate reason for remaining there.⁶⁰

As Werlin aptly observed, although these laws ultimately proved futile, their tactical enforcement enabled urban European employers to thrive on surplus African labor. The only total clampdown on African urban migration occurred in the 1952–57 State of Emergency in order to stem rising African nationalism.⁶¹ Besides helping to minimize the urban African population, pass laws also guaranteed the availability of cheap African labor in the European rural farming areas.

Restrictions on Urban Land Ownership, Housing, Employment, and Business Enterprises

Besides vagrancy laws, other restrictive measures made African urban life unbearable, making a voluntary return to rural areas inevitable. Thus, together with the appropriation of fertile land from natives and their subsequent concentration in native reserves with insufficient and poorer land, Africans were barred from owning urban land. Despite justification by the fictitious logic that Africans were merely temporary urban residents,⁶² this became the most effective means of preventing African urbanization and ensuring that the supply of cheap labor to rural European settler farms was not disrupted.⁶³ Thus, very little urban land was set-aside for Africans who became the majority urban population despite the adverse impacts of the pass laws in restricting their ingress and settlement in urban areas—this occurred because many African “vagrants” flocked to urban areas as soon as they were removed to native reserves.⁶⁴ Moreover, to deny African and Asian access to urban land through the market, land speculators and

auctioneers were not allowed to sell land to these groups. Exclusive land auctions were the rule in the colonial period, as the following example illustrates:

The auctioneers have been requested to give notice at the auction that although it is open for any person to bid for any of the town or residential plots in Nairobi, Parklands, or on the Ngong Road, Asiatics or Natives will not be allowed to reside on those in the New Post Office Road, Parklands, or on the Ngong Road.⁶⁵

As a result of these measures, most initial African residential areas in urban areas were outside the city proper and were largely the result of African self-construction efforts.⁶⁶

Such limited access to urban land likewise severely limited African access to urban housing. Nairobi, for instance, had no provision for African housing until 1919, almost twenty years after the city's founding, when it became obvious that the exclusion of Africans was not working. Initially, the colonial authorities refused to provide African housing, because Africans were "officially supposed to be farmers . . . [besides being] the most transitory"⁶⁷ residents in need of no permanent urban dwellings.⁶⁸ Subsequently, Africans were denied housing, especially for families, because this:

would encourage an excessive influx into Nairobi, resulting not only in additional crime and disease but also in a undesirable economic burden on the city. For this reason, the earliest public housing for Africans consisted of dormitories suitable only for single men.⁶⁹

Additionally, when Africans began to erect their own housing in or outside the colonial cities, especially Nairobi, many were bulldozed⁷⁰ for being illegal, unplanned, unsanitary, uncontrolled, and "breeding grounds" of violence, disease, crime, and vices such as prostitution, and violating other by-laws.⁷¹ Unfortunately, the planning and housing standards used to outlaw African housing were inappropriate because they "were imported by foreign professionals from a very different context and often a very different time."⁷² The "colonials [simply] imposed their existing laws on their overseas territories, ignoring or discounting indigenous laws, which were often relegated to the status of customs, of interest only to anthropologists, not lawmakers."⁷³

Moreover, the colonial officials who implemented them were completely oblivious "to the social needs of Africans as far as housing was

concerned.”⁷⁴ This insensitivity also doomed most colonial urban housing projects that were later built for Africans.⁷⁵

Nevertheless, by the 1920s the need for African housing, especially in Nairobi, could no longer be ignored. First, as the African population grew, illegal African settlements arose at the periphery of colonial urban centers. Lacking sanitary services, these squatter settlements constituted a health threat to all.⁷⁶ Second, as these illegal settlements grew,

[I]t was feared that the colonial government would lose control of the African labor force and law and order would break down. The need for social control grew even stronger with the emergence of the urban-based African nationalist politics and the illegal settlements were viewed as the breeding ground for this discontent.⁷⁷

Third, as colonial Kenya prospered and its cities grew, a stable work force to ensure smooth and efficient operation of capital accumulation became necessary. This need ultimately resulted in “improved salaries and housing conditions for the African population” as well as “the removal of all barriers to urban property ownership by Africans . . . although these changes were upsetting the colonial policy on African urbanization.”⁷⁸ A limited number of African residential housing schemes were developed in various urban centers (e.g., Nairobi, Thika, Mombasa) between 1919 and independence in 1963. These housing schemes can be classified as: (1) self-help schemes and site-and-service schemes, e.g., in Nairobi; (2) tenant-purchase schemes, e.g., in Thika in 1951; (3) owner-occupier schemes, e.g., the 1937–38 publicly funded Shauri Moyo estate in Nairobi, which later became a rental housing estate when residents could not afford mortgage payments; and (4) village layout schemes, e.g., in Mombasa. Besides these conventional housing projects, self-help housing erected by Africans themselves, or the so-called native villages such as Nairobi’s Pangani Native Village and Mombasa’s Changamwe Repooling Scheme, arose in many colonial Kenyan cities and may have met most African residential needs.⁷⁹

The 1919 site-and-service-scheme at Pumwani was the first native housing scheme in Nairobi. It required Africans to build their own housing according to a street plan. According to Macoloo, “400 acres of land were acquired in the area for that purpose. Communal ablutions and latrines were built and the 343 plots of 1500 square feet each were laid out.”⁸⁰ However, the need for housing far exceeded available space, forcing

Africans to violate the settlement's stipulated housing density. For instance,

[A] house was [supposed] to occupy less than 50 per cent of the plot area and each house was expected to house a maximum of 15 people. However, as time went on, the house owners added extra rooms to cover the entire plot and even extended the houses on to the spaces left between them. These developments made Pumwani take on the appearance of an unplanned settlement where houses were rented by the room, and it attracted prostitutes.⁸¹

Subsequently, public African residential areas were put up in Shauri Moyo, Starehe, Ziwani, and Kaloleni.⁸² The first, Shauri Moyo, was built in 1937–38 to accommodate residents from Pangani, which was demolished in 1938.⁸³ These estates were usually located in unpleasant areas. For example, Shauri Moyo was sited next to sewage treatment plants and noxious industries.⁸⁴ Because of the acute shortage of urban housing for Africans, estimated at 20,000 bed-spaces by 1953,⁸⁵ the African shelter situation, even among those who were gainfully employed in urban areas became desperate. Many slept “under verandas, in the streets, in various and often dangerous shacks on vacant swampy land, or in overcrowded rooms in the African locations.”⁸⁶

The native population was also constrained in the areas of employment and business ownership. Most Africans working in colonial urban areas were consigned to low wage employment, low-cadre government clerks, private sector menial workers, and as domestic workers for Europeans and Indians.⁸⁷ Low wages kept them from moving their families to cities, thereby helping to stem the natives' ingress to urban areas. Other measures with a similar goal included levying higher taxes on urban Africans and arbitrary price increases on African staples such as maize.⁸⁸ The latter measure also facilitated European capital accumulation. Similarly, African entrepreneurship was frustrated by cumbersome business licensing procedures, lack of available credit, and government harassment of unlicensed penny capitalists.⁸⁹

European Paternalism

Various forms of European paternalism also made colonial urban life miserable for Africans. This paternalism included government attempts to: (1) run African grocery stores, ostensibly to protect them from exploitation by fellow African traders, (2) provide meals for African public

employees, and (3) regulate mundane African public behavior, e.g., movie viewing.⁹⁰ Much of this paternalism was self-serving as it “coincided with a desire to keep down disease and the cost of living and to ensure an efficient labor force.”⁹¹

Limited Planning and Investment in Urban Areas

Besides other laws designed to exclude Africans from urban areas, colonial authorities rarely invested sufficient resources in emerging urban areas. Nairobi, the country’s largest and most European city, lacked a master plan until 1948. Then, the master plan prepared by a commission of three South Africans “ultimately produced no tangible result because the government was not obliged to implement it.”⁹² Other colonial cities also lacked master plans and fared even worse.

There are two explanations for the colonial authority’s lack of planning and investment in the country’s urban areas. First, the government lacked financial and institutional capacity to implement major capital projects.⁹³ Second, and perhaps more important, the colonial administration maintained its limited view of the country’s urban centers not as permanent settlements in need of investment, but as bulking centers for the shipment of raw materials and as markets for British industrial goods.⁹⁴

Exclusion from Government

Many challenges facing Africans and Asians under colonial urban government in Kenya stemmed from being denied voice and participation in local and national government.⁹⁵ Colonial authorities never contemplated giving Africans or Asians more than a nominal voice in the country’s management given their overarching and non-negotiable goal of making Kenya a “white man’s country.” Consequently, excluding non-Europeans from government and positions of authority, by any means necessary, was colonial dogma almost until independence.⁹⁶ Europeans also dominated the affairs of urban areas in such bodies as the Nairobi Municipal Council despite their relatively small numbers (i.e., Europeans never surpassed 11%; see table 1) and persistent resistance from Indians and Africans.

As there was no African representation in the Nairobi Municipal Council until 1950, jostling for power in the council in the preceding half-century was between Europeans and Asians (Asians were on the council by 1908), the latter constantly protesting European over-representation. Although the Asians protested frequently through civil disobedience,

Table 1. Nairobi's population by race for selected years

Year	Africans	%	Europeans	%	Asians	%	Total	%
1906	6,351	60.4	579	5.5	3,582	34.1	10,512	100.0
1928	19,112	64.0	1,492	5.0	9,260	31.1	29,864	100.0
1931	26,761	55.8	5,195	10.8	15,988	33.4	47,944	100.0
1936	27,700	55.8	5,357	10.8	16,549	33.4	49,606	100.0
1948	66,336	55.8	10,830	9.1	41,810	35.1	118,976	100.0
1962	157,865	59.2	21,476	8.0	87,454	32.8	266,795	100.0
1969	421,079	82.6	19,185	3.8	69,022	13.6	509,286	100.0
1979	768,032	92.8	19,050	2.3	40,693	4.9	827,775	100.0
1989	1,260,149	95.1	15,822	1.2	48,599	3.7	1,324,570	100.0
1999	–	–	–	–	–	–	2,143,254	100.0

Sources: After R. A. Obudho, "Nairobi: National Capital and Regional Hub." In *The Urban Challenge in Africa: Growth and Management of its Large Cities*, edited by Carole Rakodi (Tokyo: UNU, 1997), 301 and Republic of Kenya, 1999 Population and Housing Census, vol. 1 (Nairobi: Government Printer, 2001), Table 3.

refusal to pay municipal taxes, or boycotting council meetings, the Europeans manipulated Asian absence from the council to bolster their own control over the city.⁹⁷

Overall, because of European dominance in the municipal council, the city was governed in a Eurocentric way that greatly disadvantaged Africans and Asians. By the time African representation on the council materialized in the 1950s, so much damage had already been done that it would "take many years to redress."⁹⁸ Even then, however, this representation was marginal and was designed to foil growing African nationalism and the Mau Mau freedom movement,⁹⁹ which eventually led to independence in 1963. Unfortunately, this late African representation in the council neither changed the status quo nor the living conditions of most Africans in Nairobi,¹⁰⁰ as confirmed by two African councilors:

At the moment being only two against an overwhelming majority of Europeans and Indians, our views have little influence, and more particularly as we do not have the sympathy of the European Councillors and Aldermen, who have by far the greatest influence on Council matters. It is our experience that unless we have increased representation, present representation may be of little effect. For this reason we are convinced that it is essential, in the constitutional developments in urban affairs, to consider most seriously the question of increasing African members on the Town Council. African population is rapidly increasing and with it more

problems affecting them. To solve these problems African opinion should not be ignored.¹⁰¹

African opinion was not only ignored, but it continued to be disregarded until independence, when African power at the national level superseded European control of the municipal council.

Lack of Social Services for Africans

Africans also endured a chronic shortage of urban social facilities, especially the lack of medical and educational facilities, a social security or pension program, and access to credit.¹⁰² Lack of medical facilities contributed to the high incidence of diseases such as tuberculosis in urban African populations. These facilities were denied to Africans because the urban councils never took responsibility for them.¹⁰³ For instance, Nairobi's Municipal Council never perceived the need to provide services to Africans on the "grounds that they were not ratepayers."¹⁰⁴ Yet, the Council required Africans to pay into a separate account used to provide them with some services. Also, a native trust fund sustained by the proceeds of beer sales to Africans was used by the city to provide some social amenities such as recreational facilities to Africans.¹⁰⁵ However, because of the low wages paid to Africans, neither the trust fund nor the taxes generated were ever sufficient to meet basic educational, medical, and utility needs.¹⁰⁶ In addition, urban Africans had to endure a general color bar that circumscribed their access to hotels, restaurants, and other urban facilities.¹⁰⁷

Although these draconian measures were meant to guarantee European domination and security, they eventually undermined these same goals by kindling the African and Asian freedom movement.

African and Asian Response to Colonial Urban Alienation

Overall, colonial urban exclusionary measures succeeded in alienating Africans and Asians, thereby limiting the country's urbanization throughout the colonial period (until 1963) and its immediate aftermath—hence the low pre-1969 figures in table 2. As a consequence, both groups naturally developed a sense of "non-belonging" in the country's urban areas. Nevertheless, the two groups' individual and collective response to colonial exclusion varied.

Table 2. Growth of Kenya's urban population (numbers in the thousands)

Year	Rural	%	Urban	%	Total	%
1948	5,120	94.7	286	5.3	5,406	100.0
1962	7,910	91.6	671	8.4	8,636	100.0
1969	9,861	90.1	1,082	9.9	10,943	100.0
1979	13,018	84.9	2,309	15.1	15,327	100.0
1989	17,567	81.9	3,877	18.1	21,444	100.0
1994	20,002	73.2	7,341	26.8	27,343	100.0
1999	20,123	65.2	9,997	34.8	28,687	100.0
2015*	20,859	55.5	16,752	44.5	37,611	100.0
2030*	20,220	46.0	23,696	54.0	43,916	100.0

Sources: From Republic of Kenya, *1999 Population and Housing Census*, vol. 1 (Nairobi: Government Printer, 2001), Table 3; R. A. Obudho, "Urbanization and Sub-Urbanization Processes over Time and Space." In *Environment and Development in Kenya*, ed. R. A. Obudho (Nairobi: Kenya National Academy of Sciences, 1999), 14.

*UNCHS (Habitat), *Cities in a Globalizing World: Global Report on Human Settlements 2001* (London: Earthscan, 2001), 271.

Collectively, the restrictive European measures galvanized the African and Asian freedom movement that eventually overthrew the colonial government. This historical event was a catalyst that transformed cities and made them more racially inclusive by repealing racial barriers to representation in local government, urban property ownership, migration, and mobility.

Interestingly, the two groups' response to colonial urban exclusion also varied according to its severity and individual circumstances. Severe African exclusion from colonial urban areas forced many Africans to develop a sojourner mentality towards these spaces. Because they perceived themselves as temporary urban residents, as did the government, they sought to invest in their more permanent rural ancestral homes for retirement. Since Kenya's post-independence governments have not changed many of the colonial exclusionary measures, the country's urban areas are still alienating to most local non-European people. Hence, many indigenous Kenyans continue to invest in their rural homes at the expense of the urban areas they live in for most of their working life.

Since race determined one's place in colonial Kenyan society, Asians were treated a little better than Africans by the colonial authorities. But, because Asians lacked proper representation in government, had no local rural homes given their disqualification from engaging in agriculture, and were unable to return to their ancestral home in India, they came to

eschew politics and focused instead on their professional and economic development. In the post-colonial period, they have seldom participated in politics at any level of government despite frequent requests. Nevertheless, their long focus on personal professional and economic development has resulted in their near total dominance of the country's economy, especially the commercial and industrial sectors.¹⁰⁸

Overall, Kenya's colonial urban areas were scenes of social, political, and economic contestation involving Europeans, Asians, and Africans. Using state power and unfair legal instruments such as laws governing urban Asian and African life, the minority European population shaped the nature and character of Kenya's urban spaces. Although Africans and Asians eventually united and overthrew colonial rule, they still struggle with the injurious legacy of near-total European control of urban spaces in the colonial period.

Conclusion

Most of Kenya's urban areas have a European character since they were founded by and for Europeans. Thus, colonial urban managers made no serious provision for the non-European population, especially Africans. Moreover, the colonialists actively tried to prevent the urbanization of Africans, arguing speciously that Africans were a rural people and that urbanizing them would endanger their largely agrarian societies. In reality, this purposefully advanced doctrine was designed to prevent large-scale African urbanization that could undermine the rural European settler farming economy that depended on the exploitation of cheap African labor. Europeans also legally prevented Asians from owning rural land, engaging in agriculture, or participating fully in government in order to maintain European control, shield European farmers from economic competition, and use Asians as minority middlemen between the dominant Europeans and African peasant farmers and laborers.

Thus, to facilitate the operation of European capitalist interests, various laws and regulations barring or restricting African urban settlement, freedom of assembly and movement, and ownership of urban land and housing were enacted. Asians were similarly subjected to oppressive legislation and consigned to a specific middleman role in the colonial economy. Eventually, these restrictions bestowed on Africans and Asians a sense of "non-belonging" in colonial urban areas. Unfortunately, the coping mechanisms that these groups used to counter colonial urban

exclusion, with the exception of the freedom movement, often intensified their urban exclusion. Specifically, urban Africans preferred investing in their more secure rural homes while Asians eschewed politics and focused on their professional and economic development.

Over time, both groups became apathetic toward urban areas and scarcely participated in the country's urban development and management. Despite the attainment of independence four decades ago, these patterns of behavior are ingrained. The situation is exacerbated by neo-colonial governments' urban management policies that alienate most citizens. This critical failure is largely responsible for the country's current urban crisis, as the country's colonial cities were designed for a small population and a European socioeconomic structure. Since neither of these colonial-era conditions currently applies, the process of indigenizing the country's European cities must continue and become a national priority.

Notes

1 In Kenya, the terms African, Asian, European, and Arab have had very specific meanings since the colonial period. Africans are native blacks; Asians/Indians are people from the Indian subcontinent, though it can also include anyone from Asia. The Indian connection dominates because most of the Asians in Kenya are from India. The term European was/is generally used to refer to people from Western Europe. In the colonial period the term European referred to the British and white South Africans who immigrated to Kenya. Throughout the essay the term Arab refers exclusively to people from the Arabian Peninsula, not those living in northern Africa.

2 Kefa M. Otiso, "The Voluntary Sector in Urban Service Provision and Planning in Nairobi City, Kenya" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 2000), 47–48, 51, 54–55, 57.

3 Ibid., 64.

4 R. A. Obudho, ed., *Urbanization and Development Planning in Kenya* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1981).

5 Gideon S. Were and Derek A. Wilson, *East Africa through a Thousand Years* (New York: Africana Publishing Co., 1968), xiii.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., 2.

8 Ibid., 7–10.

9 Obudho, "Urbanization and Development Planning in Kenya," 8.

10 In Obudho, "Urbanization and Development Planning in Kenya."

11 Were and Wilson, *East Africa through a Thousand Years*, 7–26.

12 Ibid. Leaving East Africa, the Portuguese consolidated their control of Mozambique, which remained their colony until its independence in 1975.

13 Were and Wilson, *East Africa through a Thousand Years*, 80–84.

14 Ibid., 3–6.

- 15 Ibid., 88.
- 16 Robert A. Obudho and Peter P. Waller, *Periodic Markets, Urbanization, and Regional Planning: A Case Study from Western Kenya* (London: Greenwood Press, 1976), 9.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid., 10.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Were and Wilson, *East Africa through a Thousand Years*, 99–123.
- 21 Obudho and Waller, *Periodic Markets*, 11.
- 22 Patricia Stamp, “Local Government in Kenya: Ideology and Political Practice, 1895–1974,” *African Studies Review* 29, no. 4 (1986): 23.
- 23 Were and Wilson, *East Africa through a Thousand Years*, 100–105.
- 24 Ibid., 122–123.
- 25 Obudho and Waller, *Periodic Markets*, 11.
- 26 Ibid., 20.
- 27 Were and Wilson, *East Africa through a Thousand Years*, 100–123; See also Andrew Hake, *African Metropolis: Nairobi’s Self-Help City* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1977), 21.
- 28 Hake, *African Metropolis*, 22.
- 29 Were and Wilson, *East Africa through a Thousand Years*, 130.
- 30 Herbert H. Werlin, *Governing an African City: A Study of Nairobi* (New York: Africana Publishing, 1974), 39.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Asians often bore the brunt of African anger over the low prices that they were paid for their produce. This planted the seed of mutual mistrust that continues to characterize African-Asian relations in Kenya.
- 33 Otiso, “The Voluntary Sector,” 47.
- 34 Ibid., 67–68.
- 35 Reserves were areas set aside for African occupation. They were the functional equivalent of Native-American reservations.
- 36 Obudho, “*Urbanization and Development Planning in Kenya*.”
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Quoted in Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 45.
- 39 Ibid., 44–47.
- 40 Ibid., 46.
- 41 Otiso, “The Voluntary Sector,” 48.
- 42 Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 48.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Kinuthia Macharia, “Slum Clearance and the Informal Economy in Nairobi.” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 30, no. 2 (1992): 221–236.
- 45 Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 53.
- 46 Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 190.
- 47 Chris Macoloo, “The State and Low-Income Urban Housing Production and Consumption in Kenya,” in *Issues in Resource management and Development in Kenya: Essays in Memory of Professor Simeon H. Ominde*, eds. R. A. Obudho and J. B. Ojwang (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 2000), 251.
- 48 Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 69; Were and Wilson, *East Africa through a Thousand Years*, 135.

- 49 Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 70.
- 50 Otiso, "The Voluntary Sector," 51.
- 51 Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 53.
- 52 Hake, *African Metropolis*, 36–52.
- 53 L. W. Thornton White, L. Silberman, and P. R. Anderson, *Nairobi: Master Plan for a Colonial Capital* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1948), 13.
- 54 *Ibid.*, 14–15.
- 55 *Ibid.*
- 56 Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 54.
- 57 R. Mugo Gacheru, *Child of Two Worlds* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1964), 73–74.
- 58 Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 48.
- 59 *Ibid.*, 59–60.
- 60 *Ibid.*, 60.
- 61 *Ibid.*
- 62 *Ibid.*, 48.
- 63 Kefa M. Otiso, "Forced Evictions in Kenyan Cities," *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 23, no. 3 (2002), 258.
- 64 Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 60.
- 65 *Ibid.*, 53.
- 66 Hake, *African Metropolis*, 38.
- 67 Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*, 189–90.
- 68 Otiso, "The Voluntary Sector," 57.
- 69 Werlin, *Governing an African City* 49.
- 70 The peak for demolitions occurred in the 1952–59 State of Emergency, when the colonial government, in a desperate and massive attempt to control rising African nationalism, demolished many African settlements in Nairobi and repatriated or detained thousands of residents (Otiso, "The Voluntary Sector," 194).
- 71 Hake, *African Metropolis*, 42, 46, 48; Macoloo, "The State," 251; Macharia, "Slum Clearance," 226–27; Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 58.
- 72 S. Yahya, Elijah Agevi, L. Lowe, A. Mugova, O. Musandu-Nyamayaro, and T. Schilderman, *Double Standards, Single Purpose: Reforming Housing Regulations to Reduce Poverty* (London: ITDG, 2001), 17.
- 73 *Ibid.*, 17.
- 74 Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 58.
- 75 Macoloo, "The State," 251; Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 58.
- 76 Macoloo, "The State," 250.
- 77 *Ibid.*
- 78 *Ibid.*, 252.
- 79 *Ibid.*
- 80 *Ibid.* 251.
- 81 *Ibid.*
- 82 E. S. Lukasavich, "Nairobi: A Compendium" (Nairobi: USAID, Regional Housing and Urban Development Office, 1988).
- 83 Macoloo, "The State," 251.
- 84 Otiso, "The Voluntary Sector," 58.
- 85 Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 51.

- 86 Ibid., 50.
- 87 Otiso, "The Voluntary Sector," 56.
- 88 Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 61.
- 89 Ibid., 56–57.
- 90 Ibid., 57.
- 91 Ibid., 56.
- 92 Otiso, "The Voluntary Sector," 60.
- 93 Macoloo, "The State," 253; and Otiso, "The Voluntary Sector," 55.
- 94 Were and Wilson, *East Africa through a Thousand Years*, 107.
- 95 Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 86–91.
- 96 Otiso, "The Voluntary Sector," 58.
- 97 Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 43; Otiso, "The Voluntary Sector," 57.
- 98 Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 50.
- 99 Gretha Kershaw "Mau Mau from Below: Fieldwork and Experience, 1955–57 and 1962," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 25, no. 2. (1991): 274–297.
- 100 According to Werlin, *Governing an African City*, 82–87, some form of African representation, in the form of government appointed representatives, had been present in Nairobi since the 1920s. But the views of these African representatives were never taken seriously.
- 101 Ibid., 86.
- 102 Ibid., 51, 57.
- 103 Ibid., 51.
- 104 Ibid., 50.
- 105 Ibid.
- 106 Ibid.
- 107 Ibid., 55.
- 108 Benson Kathuri (18–24 November 2003), "Why Asians Dominate the Local Business Scene," *Financial Standard, East African Standard Online Edition*. Available at <http://www.eastandard.net/financialstandard/>, accessed 18 November 2003.

5

“INHERENTLY UNHYGIENIC RACES”

PLAGUE AND THE ORIGINS OF SETTLER DOMINANCE IN NAIROBI, 1899–1907

Godwin R. Murunga

[T]he Indian is not happy with a sufficiency of space and unpolluted air, but that he is most pleased when he lives huddled together with numerous others like bees in a hive. He appears to be averse to daylight and fresh air, and indeed to all that is good in matter of sanitation.”¹

—Medical Officer of Health, J. T. C. Johnson, 11 May 1908

Construction of Inherently Unhygienic Races

The notion of inherently unhygienic races is gleaned from reports and correspondence among European colonial officials in Kenya regarding Indians and Africans. It refers to the assumption that there are some races, ethnicities and classes whose habits, customs and mannerisms predispose them to perpetual insanitary and unhygienic conditions of living. This assumption focuses on the habits of groups of people and draws generalizations on the overall effect on hygiene and sanitation of certain “indexed features” of their character traits.² It then identifies these traits and those bearing them as the source of diseases. Deriving its origins from Victorian assumption that “epidemic disease was primarily the product of dirt and decomposing matter; [that] it was concentrated in towns and especially in their least sanitary district,”³ this argument was reinforced in colonial

times by racial and related stereotypes about Indians and Africans. In nineteenth-century Western Europe, "images of cleanliness, appearance, and beauty . . . defined social hierarchy and difference."⁴ It defined cleanliness as a central component of Englishness (of being English) and contrasted this with the "image of disease and pathology" associated with black bodies. Africans were imagined as "filthy, depraved, and ugly."⁵

But to what extent were racialized ideas about sanitation rooted in concrete realities and understandings of the socio-economic circumstances of Africans in a colonial setting? Studies of medical history show that biomedicine and colonial sanitary policies formed a structure of power that had the capacity to construct epidemics and impose their vision on the knowledge of disease.⁶ This capacity distorted the line between the medical facts of a disease and their construction for expedient motives. Thus, there is no clear line between an epidemic as medical fact and its social construction. The two interpenetrate in complex ways such that "medical facts . . . are unavoidably shaped by the social and intellectual environment in which they occur."⁷ In the case of Nairobi, no one can deny the fact of the plague epidemic of 1902. Yet its origin, manifestation within society and the appropriate methods of control were perceived and explained differently by different people. These perceptions are complicated by the use to which the European community put the occurrence of epidemics. This is particularly useful with respect to the issue of racial segregation.

The real aim of white settlers in Nairobi was to effect racial segregation. Racial segregation in most African towns is closely linked to the process of normalizing the white image, pathologizing black and setting up black people as a danger to whites.⁸ The pathologies associated with the black image have, in turn, fed white anxieties and fears. For example, in the literature on racial segregation in South Africa, the fear of black people is explained in terms of white attitudes towards and assumptions about Africans and their economic interests in Africa.⁹ But fear and appeal to phenotype alone have been inadequate factors in justifying segregation. In the Cape Colony, it took a plague epidemic in 1901 to break the myth of a unique tradition of Cape liberalism. But the consequent establishment of African locations was built on existing European attitudes towards black people that predated the epidemic.¹⁰ We cannot, therefore, discount the importance of epidemics in the creation of racial segregation even if its role was simply that of creating or exacerbating an environment of fear about the dangers posed by those seen as inherently diseased. This article sets the stage for understanding the move towards racial segregation

in Nairobi by demonstrating that plague was used to create an environment of fear and this environment became the basis on which settlers in Nairobi hardened their demand for segregation after 1907.

This objective requires conceptual tools that acknowledge the reality of epidemics as dangerous to human survival in Nairobi but that also show that the discourse and practice of public health in colonial Nairobi went beyond the genuine objective of controlling and preventing disease. Such a conceptual tool must recognize that the public health discourse in Nairobi had some a priori racial explanations of the origins, manifestations and consequences of epidemics and these explanations were geared towards enhancing the privileged position of settlers in the town. It is within these explanations and assumptions that the pathologization of black images in the discourse on public health is located. Such explanations framed a perception of black people and their sanitary state in the terms of inherently diseased people. But such explanations were constructed before the fact and they simply indexed features that made it possible to reach their desired conclusion. This article looks at the framing that occurred at the level of the body (race) and of place (geography) to show how notions of inherently diseased races or diseased terrains were constructed in Nairobi. The idea is to illustrate the limiting nature of colonial explanations of epidemics that focus on race rather than the historical causes of the unsanitary conditions that lead to epidemics. At the level of the body, previous analysis has historically shifted from “non-belonging others” (like immigrants and the poor in Europe) to non-Europeans (like Chinese, Indians and Africans) in the colonial contexts. In Kenya, it was Indians and Africans.¹¹ When the focus was on place, the logic was that inherently diseased bodies occupied diseased space and the two constituted a danger to civilized people.

Bubonic plague has an important place in the story of diseased bodies and spaces. Compared to other diseases, plague had particular resonance with the colonial penchant for exclusion that focused on the inherently diseased people. It is closely associated with quarantine as “the first line of defence”; a measure that demands isolation and exclusion of victims just as isolation, exclusion and segregation are also strategies germane to a colonial situation where domination, accumulation and legitimation were necessary.¹² Quarantine simultaneously serves against contagion as it does the colonial objective of segregation. Secondly, frequency of plague epidemic attack is a factor that brings into the discussion the importance of medical personnel and the data they assemble. In practice the frequency of epidemic attack sustained the theory that “pestilence was always present

in the dwellings of the poor."¹³ Thus, the dwellings of the poor have historically been targets because medical statistics easily showed how epidemics frequently originate from their midst or have greater mortality among the poor. Third, by "confirming" particular places as frequently susceptible areas, medical data indexed such areas as "familiar terrains," sites where the medical personnel or administrator was most likely to look when warning against possible attack.¹⁴ Ultimately, plague is useful in the production of a familiar terrain, even though this is a political process that generalizes on the basis of particular indexed characteristics.

The explanation for epidemics via notions of inherently diseased races or familiar terrain is circular and not very useful for the task of prevention. Its frame of reference is limited to the argument that plague emanates from the familiar terrain but these terrains are inherently diseased. This is an explanation that fails to locate the reality and concrete understanding of the historical causes of disease in the socio-economic circumstances in which people live. It suggests that we should not assume that colonial medicine aimed to prevent epidemics. But though it is not a useful explanation in preventing disease, its central argument points to how and why settler discourses were self-serving as they sidestepped the core task of preventing epidemics. It shows that real as diseases are, their identification and assessment was always framed by the context, knowledge, visions and interests of those making the explanation. Did Europeans in Nairobi have alternative ways of knowing and understanding the origins of epidemics? Was plague of any instrumental value to the settler community? Did Europeans in Nairobi use plague to create an environment of fear? Studies of plague in other regions show that the disease "possesses the richest genealogy of fear in the Western psyche."¹⁵ This has, according to Benedict, elevated "plague" to a "generic label for any form of pestilence" and a "potent metaphor for utter devastation."¹⁶ For this article, it is curious that though plague was not the most threatening disease in terms of morbidity and mortality, "the British medical authorities devote[d] a great deal of attention, scarce medical funds, and personnel to combating the disease."¹⁷

The Formative Years: A Chaotic Background

The period from 1899 to 1906 constitutes the formative years of Nairobi. These years were characterized by indecision and chaos as a new administration began to consider and implement its policy. Developments within

these years significantly influenced Nairobi's post-1907 history. The primary goal in these years was to establish a working administration in Nairobi and to consolidate control over what Lonsdale describes as the "overlapping patchwork of hunting, cultivating and herding peoples" in the countryside.¹⁸ The first goal was achieved through the establishment of centers of power like Nairobi and the laying out of a rudimentary administrative system. But the consolidation process proved an intractable challenge. The challenge was exacerbated by controversies within the administration, between it and the settlers, and by the fact that, unlike South Africa, Kenya "was appropriated whole by a metropolitan power which wanted to control the region but did not have any clear notion in advance of what to do with it."¹⁹ Thus, the development of a coherent colonial system proceeded in fits and starts, something the administration was never really able to overcome by 1910. It is within this inchoate situation that plague occurred, pushing onto the table controversies over the site where Nairobi was located.

Two issues engaged the early colonial administration in Nairobi in these formative years. One was whether Nairobi was a sanitary site for a colonial town. The second was whether this site should be shifted if it was declared unsanitary. Deliberation on these questions was protracted, but it was also telescoped by one dominant assumption in colonial town planning—that the primary concern with sanitation and hygiene was the health of Europeans.²⁰ Prevailing notions of town planning and public health directly imported into Nairobi from Britain and its colonies in Asia, New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa dictated the focus on Europeans.²¹ Urban policy was aimed at "entrenching urban privileges for whites" since the city was "the white man's peculiar creation."²² Africans could be only temporary residents of the town, coming in only to minister "to the white man's needs"²³ as laborers and eventually returning to their rural homes. Public health policy was therefore meant to protect Europeans from the dangers allegedly posed by the Indian and African presence.

The idea of the Asiatic and native menace which took root within European communities in Kenya came ideologically loaded from South Africa. It exercised some influence on the discourse of Indian, and later African, inherent susceptibility to disease. In this discourse were a set of assumptions about Indians and Africans that, by 1907, made the view that diseases originated from non-European peoples and spread to Europeans appear a truism. Initially, colonial administrators and officials unanimously agreed that Nairobi as a whole was an insanitary and unhealthy

site. They disagreed on whether the solution lay in moving to a new site or rehabilitating the old one through proper sewerage and drainage schemes. Indeed, as this article shows, the early administrators sought solutions to the sanitary problem in the site where Nairobi was located and not in the people. It took more than seven years to decide whether to retain Nairobi's site or to shift. This indecision was useful to the notions of inherently diseased races, for it allowed settlers to sneak into discussion the sanitary status of people and sidestep the sanitary credentials of the site. Eventually, indecision compounded the sanitation problem and left an indelible mark on the planning and organization of Nairobi for physical order and sanitary living.

What is interesting is the discernible shift in emphasis from Nairobi as an unsuitable site to Indians, and later Africans, as an inherently unhygienic people whose dwelling posed dangers to whites resident in the town. The article traces how the discussion shifted from the unhealthy site of the town's location to unsanitary people whose ways of life were solely responsible for the sanitary problems in Nairobi. This shift from a geographical explanation to a racially determined human cause of Nairobi's sanitary problem is instructive for the study of the transformation of racial attitudes that are at the heart of Nairobi's history. It reveals how internal debates among Europeans began to crystallize around a racist explanation and how this affected alternative ways of planning the town and dealing with its sanitary problems. One cannot understand how segregation was thought of as a solution to the sanitary dangers of Nairobi unless it is acknowledged that the public health debate proceeded within a circumscribed set of assumptions. By 1907, Williams recommended that a segregated residential pattern was necessary but substantial disagreement endured on where to locate Indians and how to deal with the African presence.

The Making of "An Unhealthy Site at a Healthy Altitude"

The decision to locate Nairobi at its present site was a contested one. This was because it was located in an "unhealthy site [but] at a healthy altitude."²⁴ Because of the contestations, the administration failed to institute adequate policies to plan this site and check the sanitary problems it presented. Consequently, Nairobi grew, but it was in a poorly drained and hazardous site for a colonial town.

Two factors exacerbated the town's susceptibility to sanitary problems. The first was the problem of administrative dualism that led to and prolonged the contestations mentioned above. This pitted the colonial administration against the railway authorities and initially led to two opposing ways of planning Nairobi. This problem was dealt with by the establishment of the Nairobi Township Committee which brought together administration and railway officials. A second factor emanated from within the committee and involved a political controversy pitting settlers against Indians over who was to dominate in Nairobi. This grew from a much larger problem: the problem of who, between Indians and Europeans, should colonize the East African Protectorate (EAP) and the use to which the Protectorate would be put in order for it to repay the loans used in the construction of the Uganda Railway and for itself. These two issues made it difficult to achieve consensus on planning Nairobi and rendered the town even more susceptible to sanitary problems. These explanations of Nairobi's sanitary problems are historical but the European settlers who dominated the township committee ignored them for the most part. By 1907, the controversies began to give way to hardening settler initiatives towards urban segregation.

Administrative Dualism

In choosing Nairobi, the railway authorities had a specific and narrow objective. They wanted a "large flat space" for a railway stopover.²⁵ Nairobi had fresh water and marked an end to the relatively easy Athi plain and the start of steeper slopes and the Rift Valley escarpment. These slopes posed serious difficulties to the construction of the railway. As a railway depot and a resting place, Nairobi was an apt stopover. It eased some of the problems related to supplies of equipment for the construction task ahead. Because of this aptness, Chief Engineer George Whitehouse selected a point at the bottom of the hill as a camp for the railway on 10 May 1899. Shortly after, the site was decided upon as the railway headquarters. This site became the nucleus of Nairobi. It is therefore not surprising that the influence of the railway dominated its early pattern of development. But the railway officials did not give sufficient attention to the sanitary condition of their new headquarters.

The settlement developed with a class rather than racial residential pattern. The residences for the railway officers were constructed separate from subordinate quarters. Indian coolies were housed in the landhies

(big dormitory-like housing quarters) located close to the railway to facilitate their easy access to the workplace.²⁶ To the west were located quarters for the "railway subordinates", both white and Indian, while to the East, up the hill, were located railway officers' quarters. Class rather than racial differences dominated the initial physical and social structure of Nairobi. Europeans located on the hill were mainly of the officer class while white artisans lived close to Indians. Built with minimal planning and on the "low and swampy" ground, the railway layout nurtured *ad hoc* structures that became the Indian bazaar. There is no precise detail on drainage or sewerage arrangements for Nairobi at the time. One can surmise that these did not matter until the township committee was constituted in 1901. Before then, no clear authority existed to oversee the growth of the town beyond the railway jurisdiction, and this contributed to its piling sanitary problems. That is why in 1907, Winston Churchill thought the town was "a convenient place for assembling the extensive depots and shops necessary to the construction and maintenance of the railway, [but] enjoys no advantages as a residential site."²⁷ He concluded that poor planning and "lack of foresight" lay at the heart of Nairobi's problem.

In 1899, the same year that the railway camp was opened, John Ainsworth, the sub-commissioner in Ukamba Province, shifted his headquarters from Machakos, some forty miles to the southeast, to Nairobi. The railway authorities did not appreciate this move because it introduced a rival centre of power.²⁸ Ainsworth selected a site to the north of the Nairobi River as his administrative headquarters. This move introduced a dual administrative structure in Nairobi. It split the railway administration from colonial administration and introduced the possibility of separate, even conflicting, growth strategies for the town. Ainsworth built a separate residence to the north, around what is today the Museum Hill. Within a short time, the "physical disparity of State apparatus and Railway administration" was evident.²⁹ Since the railway was better resourced than the administration, it enjoyed independence in its plan for the future of Nairobi. This rivalry became protracted when the sanitary situation of the site became an issue further worsening an already bad situation.

The sanitary status of Nairobi was a serious cause for discussion and disagreement between the railway authorities and the colonial administration. They all maintained that Nairobi was generally an unhealthy site for a colonial town. The administration first reported "a large number of the larvae of *Anopheles Mosquitos* in the swamp" near Ngara Road.³⁰ The

medical authorities pronounced the site unhealthy. In response, the administration shifted and began to construct its new offices across Nairobi River in 1900. Although the railway acknowledged that the site was unhealthy, they pointed out that it was meant as a railway stopover, not an administrative capital. The medical authorities argued that the town was located in an unhealthy site, a problem that was compounded by the lack of good plans for drainage and proper sanitation. They challenged the administration to alleviate the health challenges of the location. Ainsworth's administration, on its part, tried to maintain maximum sanitation in Nairobi, though against huge financial odds. He acknowledged that the whole town had been constructed without due regard to basics like surveying, planning and drainage. Distancing his administration from this problem, Ainsworth admitted that he had no control over Nairobi's planning. "At the time of its selection," he argued, "the Railway interests were predominant and what the Railway wanted was a large flat space and they found it here. . . ." ³¹ Clearly, there was no dispute on one issue—the unsanitary nature of the site where Nairobi was located.

A major part of the early sanitary problems of Nairobi can also be blamed on neglect or lack of planning by the railway administration. Indeed, it was reported that "the Railway buildings were substantial and impressive" while "the provincial administration had a paucity of staff, [was] ever unable to cope with the claims made upon it in the way of surveying and land division, and was miserably housed in corrugated iron structures." ³² Due to their rivalries, the railway officials did not extend services beyond their jurisdiction. Ainsworth relied on early Indian merchants, especially A. M. Jeevanjee, to construct the early administrative offices in Nairobi, including, among other buildings, his house, government offices, staff quarters, and police lines. ³³ In return, he offered Jeevanjee as much land as he wanted. Jeevanjee acquired most of the land along Government Street, where the Indian Bazaar developed. ³⁴ He became a major land owner in the bazaar, which, incidentally, was also located in the town centre. The bazaar, like the rest of the non-railway controlled parts of Nairobi, grew in an *ad hoc* fashion, without adequate planning, surveying, or drainage. It was neglected and became congested. It began to attract consistent administrative and settler attention when Jeevanjee's prominence in Nairobi collided with the interests of incoming settlers like Lord Delamere. Their collision reflects a wider problem between Indians and Europeans; a major reason for the problem was who, between Indians and Europeans, should colonize the Protectorate.

Indian or European Colonialism?

Indian merchants were the first beneficiaries of the rivalry between the railway and colonial administration. But their role grew from a larger question of British intentions in colonizing EAP.³⁵ Initially, the administration was undecided on who was to colonize (settle) EAP and work its resources for the benefit of the empire. On this question, there was no consensus within the administration either in EAP or in London. But Indians had two advantages over Europeans when this question came up. The first was their numerical strength in EAP. Indians had a long historical presence at the East African coast that endowed them with a familiarity with EAP that most Europeans, including some administrators, lacked. This familiarity enabled them to play a leading role during the construction of the railway, first in providing the labor and second, in supplying the constructors with basic items and supplies through their shops and businesses. Indeed, Indians were among the first people to establish shops along the railway route and venture into the interior. By 1898, there were flourishing Indian Bazaars at Voi, Kibwezi and Machakos.³⁶ Jeevanjee, for instance, was contracted by the railway authorities to supply labor and equipment for the railway. He was responsible for bringing Indian labour to construct the railway. He brought an estimated 31,983 Indian artisans, clerks and laborers to work on the railway, of whom 6,724 remained upon completion of the railway in 1901. To cater to them, some Indian merchants operating in Nairobi constructed a small market in 1899 that developed into a large encampment of tents. This site became the Indian Bazaar.

The second advantage was the attitude of the early administrators in Kenya, many of whom had previous Indian experience. This advantage had a legal precedent in the 1888 Royal charter to the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC). It stated that "there shall be no differential treatment of the subjects of any power as to trade or settlement."³⁷ This charter led some early colonial officials like Sir Harry Johnston and John Ainsworth to support the idea of Indian colonization of EAP. Johnston doubted that the Kenya highlands were part of a "Healthy Colonisable Africa" for Europeans. He argued, "Indians would be more welcome to Africans than the European who is apt to be too autocratic and unobliging in his methods of trading."³⁸ Ainsworth also supported Indian settlement of EAP and vowed, in January 1896, "to make effort to encourage the settlement of Indian traders."³⁹ Even the railway officials and Winston Churchill supported Indian settlement and colonization of EAP. While in

London, Indian influence in EAP was evident in the presence of Indian clerical staff, the rupee currency, the Indian Penal Code and Indian troops. By 1900, Nairobi “was more of an Indian than a European township.”⁴⁰ This attitude and advantage put Indians in good stead to dominate Nairobi.

To encourage Indian settlement, Ainsworth ensured that they played a critical role in the management of the town. On 16 April 1900, the Nairobi Municipal Regulations were published, and in December 1901, Ainsworth constituted the township committee to plan and regulate the growth of Nairobi. In putting together the committee, Ainsworth sought to achieve two goals. The first was to deal with the problem of administrative dualism. The second was to regulate the growth of the town and ensure proper sanitary and hygienic standards. Since dualism had impeded proper planning to achieve acceptable sanitary and hygienic standard, Ainsworth took it for granted that reconciling dualism would eventually pave the way for unitary planning. He did not anticipate the divisive power of the racial composition of the committee he constituted. Assuming that it would maintain a numerical balance between Indians and Europeans, he constituted a racially balanced committee in acknowledgement of the mutually complementary roles played by Indians and Europeans in Nairobi. But with time, the committee became embroiled in the racial politics of a settler colony. It became a site of political conflict between these groups, a struggle that intensified with the further arrival of settlers in Kenya.⁴¹ Conflicts intensified because of the power the committee had in resources allocation and planning Nairobi. A study of the committee’s mandate, changing constitution and the decisions emanating from it is useful to understanding the politics of public health and urban development in Nairobi. Whoever dominated the committee swayed its decisions and actions. As a result, the sanitary problem in Nairobi was only partially dealt with in the committee as administrative dualism was replaced by racial suspicion and conflicts.

The first source of rivalry and conflict was that the European settlers arrived in Kenya after extensive Indian settlement of the region. Unlike Indians, they were unwilling to take the risks of venturing in the Protectorate before it had been made safe for settlement. It took the initiatives of Charles Eliot beginning in 1900 to encourage European settlement. Eliot looked to South Africa, taking advantage of the falling-out among settlers that followed the Anglo-Boer war. His idea of making the Protectorate profitable rested on the settlers’ exclusive exploitation of the highlands. He promised willing settlers land in freehold and cheap labour. But the settler

response before 1903 was minimal and disappointing. A meeting called in 1901 in Nairobi brought together fewer than 30 settlers. These became the core group of settlers who formed the Colonists' Association to support white settlement of the EAP. Their support for further white settlement aimed to counter Indian dominance. It was not surprising that this group defined itself in opposition to Indian settlement something that enhanced Indian dominance. At a meeting on 4 January 1902, at which Eliot attended, the 22 settlers present resolved that the white highlands be reserved exclusively for European settlement and called on Eliot to prevent further Indian immigration.⁴² Hostility towards Indians grew with further influx of white settlers from South Africa. By 1903, over 100 settlers had settled in or around Nairobi, and by May 1904, over 168 settlers had been sent from South Africa to EAP. Most of these settlers simply carried their attitudes against Indians and Africans from South Africa and began to articulate them in EAP.⁴³ These settlers became a decisive force in the prewar politics of the Protectorate, and their negative attitudes towards Indians and Africans dominated even in the township committee. Consequently, the committee excluded the views, concerns and interests of Indians and Africans residing in Nairobi.

Politics in the Township Committee

Ainsworth had the misfortune of working under Eliot between 1900 and 1904 because his liberal attitude towards Indians conflicted with Eliot's pro-Settler position. Before he was overruled and later transferred, Ainsworth maintained a racial balance in the township committee. As sub-commissioner, he had the powers to nominate one colonial official, two railway officials and two leading merchants or other residents of Nairobi to the township committee. In exercising this mandate for the first time, Ainsworth selected three Europeans and two Indians, the sub-commissioner being one of the Europeans. This gave Europeans and Indians an equal voice on the committee, since the sub-commissioner chaired it. The committee was to prepare estimates for policing, lighting and cleaning the township.⁴⁴ It was given powers to levy rates on land and buildings and to make "by-laws for the preservation of public health and good order" in Nairobi.⁴⁵ The rules governing the constitution and composition of the committee were flexible. The December 1900 gazette notice that announced the constitution of the committee simply allowed annual nomination of "four of the leading merchants or other residents

in the township of Nairobi (not being government officials) to act with him [sub-commissioner] as a Committee for the purposes of these regulations."⁴⁶ There was no racial quota or limitation on the composition of the committee. It was Ainsworth who prevented racial exclusivism from taking root in the early years of Nairobi, at least with respect to Indians.

Ainsworth represented a consensus in the early days that Nairobi as a whole was unhealthy and that sanitary improvements were required to make it hospitable. He understood that Nairobi in general was located in an unhygienic and unhealthy site. He correctly believed that the town was constructed without due regard to surveying, planning and drainage, these being critical to alleviating the sanitary problems of the site. In 1907, he retrospectively observed that "cases have occurred in Nairobi of houses being built without the plans having been submitted to any authority."⁴⁷ Also, there was the problem of land speculation. Settlers acquired large tracts of land with the hope of reselling it later once its value increased. They in turn left the land unused, creating favourable conditions for disease vectors like mosquitoes. The result was dispersed and uncoordinated settlements and residences whose future plan was imprecise.⁴⁸ His hope was to organize the town through improved sanitary measures.

But comprehensive sanitary improvement was curtailed by the racial politics within the Nairobi Township Committee. Most settlers in the committee opposed Ainsworth's views on the sanitary problems in Nairobi, presenting instead the a priori argument of inherently unhygienic people. Most of them did not like Ainsworth's liberal attitude towards Indians and Africans. Driven by the need to control the township and the economic opportunities this presented, they used the sanitary excuse to limit Indian representation in the committee and their aspiration for colonizing EAP. Towards this end, the Colonists Association issued a virulent anti-Indian resolution in 1906 urging the administration to stop further Indian immigration into EAP and to reserve the Kenya Highlands for Europeans only. By the end of the decade, the European settlers not only controlled the committee, but they had a decisive say in the planning and allocation of resources within the town. This agitated the Indian community. Under the leadership of A. M. Jeevanjee, they mounted a sustained struggle for equal representation in the committee. Invoking the 1888 Royal charter to IBEAC, they insisted on equal treatment of all subjects under the crown.⁴⁹ They contested attempts to privilege settlers through biased allocation of land and services both in and outside Nairobi.⁵⁰ Further, they also contested the bias in provision of services in the town that began to favour Europeans. This bias contributed to the development in which the

settler residences were well kept while the dirt in other parts of the town worsened.

The township committee was therefore an important forum for constituting like-minded Europeans who would promote their interests in Nairobi while, at the same time, excluding Indians and Africans. Between 1901 and 1905 membership to the committee did not just increase but also came to include persons who favoured white as opposed to Indian and African interests. The committee had three Europeans and two Indians. By 1904, it included the sub-commissioner (as Chairman), two railway officials, one protectorate official and three non-official leading merchants or residents.⁵¹ In 1905, the committee had a collector as chairman, three protectorate officials, four European residents, and two Indian representatives. The Medical Officer of Health (MOH) and Town Clerk (all white) were included as *ex-officio* members before being dropped later. This totalled ten Europeans and two Indians. The announced committee of thirteen in 1907 had only one non-European.⁵²

By 1907, the settlers had consolidated their dominance and their opposition to equal treatment with Indians.⁵³ But they remained conscious of the importance of state support. To this end, they maintained a semblance of solidarity with the colonial administration during and after Ainsworth with the aim of gaining support for policies that favoured them and their well-being in Nairobi. But this solidarity was tenuous and calculated. It was calculated to establish the immediate aim of settler dominance over Indians and Africans. But in the long run the settlers also hoped to break off from colonial administrative control. As Parker argues, the history of the Committee became “the story of [settler] efforts to achieve wider powers, to divest itself of Central Government control to an increasing extent and within this struggle, of further efforts to maintain European numerical preponderance.”⁵⁴ Thus, the idea was not solely to increase white solidarity, it was also to create settler numerical strength and, through it, enhance their power while at the same time carving their freedom from the state.

The struggles between settlers and Indians described above took place against a background that silenced the words, stories and aspirations of Africans. It was as if Africans were absent from Nairobi or, if they were present, they had “no words of their own.”⁵⁵ There is no doubt that there were Africans in Nairobi prior to the arrival of the railway. McVigar describes early African settlements in Nairobi that became Pangani, Kileshwa, Maskini and Mombasa villages. Some Africans also lived in the bazaar. These villages were the first African settlements in Nairobi,

though Pangani became the most notable of them.⁵⁶ Built by widowed Kikuyu women, Pangani consisted of grass thatched and mud-walled houses. It attracted Swahili porters who accompanied trade caravans from the coast or from the Congo. These traders settled temporarily in the location before proceeding in their caravans. As Nairobi grew into a colonial town, so Pangani developed into a major settlement. But the colonial administration considered it illegal. An observer described it as “Nairobi’s festering eyesore, a disgrace to the colony and a place apparently unworthy of serious attempts to keep reasonably clean.”⁵⁷ By 1906, Pangani and related African villages had become the targets of the settler campaign to rid the town of “undesirable natives” and their settlement. This attack on Pangani followed closely on that mounted against the bazaar.

The European and Indian community in Nairobi couched their political rhetoric towards Africans in the hegemonic language of racial paternalism. The bylaws enacted to control Africans shared aspects of this hegemonic language. The guiding colonial principle was that Africans would be merely temporary residents in the town, their stay being restricted to their work as laborers.⁵⁸ Parker identifies three different views among Europeans and Indians about African representation on municipal bodies. The first held that “Africans are inherently incapable of participating equally with other races in government, whether central or local.” The second thought African representation as desirable, but proponents of this view saw such representation either as a necessary “period of apprenticeship” within which they would learn “to carry the responsibilities of local self-government” or in “order that first-hand knowledge of African opinion on measures that affect them may be readily obtainable.” However, they rejected any idea of a common roll or the possibility of Africans commenting on aspects that affect Europeans and Indians. The third view, held by a minority of Indians and Europeans, foresaw Africans participating in government “within a not very distant future” if they are suitably prepared.

Generally, Parker concludes that “Europeans and Indians have not sought to foster African participation in local affairs.”⁵⁹ The few who accepted the idea of African self-representation did not do so based on a perception of Africans as respectable human beings. Africans, to them, had no political role in Nairobi. It was not until 1926 that their role was recognized when an African Advisory Council was formed, but this council held only advisory powers. Thus, African settlements in Nairobi in the first decade of the twentieth century were largely ignored until their insanitary condition, coupled with their proximity to European residences in

Parklands and Kileleshwa, roused the attention of the administration in about 1907.⁶⁰ Otherwise, discussion was dominated by Anglo-Indian debates and contestations described above that marginalized African voices. The impasse that this debate threatened to create was tilted in favor of the settlers only when a series of plague epidemics occurred in Nairobi and provided the settlers with a good weapon against the Indians.

To recapitulate, the sanitary problems in Nairobi can be explained by two factors. The first was its location. Commenting on this, an administrator observed that "the surface drainage is not very satisfactory owing to the position of the town in a kind of cup, from which there is very little outfall, and to the nature of the soil."⁶¹ The second was the problem of planning the town. Two factors contributed to this problem. One was the problem of administrative dualism, which led to two competing visions for Nairobi. The other factor was the contestations and struggles between Indians and Europeans for the control of Nairobi through the township committee. These two problems turned the committee into a site of struggle in which decisions were made by racial fiat and not for the greater good of the town. In the committee, the actual explanations for the sanitary problems in Nairobi were avoided in favor of a racialized rhetoric of inherently diseased races. This rhetoric was made easy by the plague epidemics that occurred in Nairobi in 1902 and 1905.

Plague and the Racialized Discourse in Nairobi, 1902–1907

It was one thing for settlers to dominate the township committee and argue for European racial superiority and privilege in Nairobi but quite another to translate the dominance and superiority into actual segregation. The one main obstacle to the official institution of segregation in Nairobi before 1913 was the relative insignificance, in terms of numbers, of the European population in EAP compared to other races. This was the reason given in the colonial office against settler privilege in Kenya. However, this obstacle was overcome by a gradual appeal to sanitary and hygienic concerns in Nairobi following a series of plague epidemics. Like Cape Town in South Africa and Dakar in Senegal, plague epidemics provided justification for separation and, ultimately, residential segregation of people on the basis of race. As excuses for segregation, settler sanitary concerns developed gradually. By 1907, a racialized discourse on sanitation was discernible. But it had not coalesced into an official and

effective settler demand for segregation. The virulence of the plague was not serious enough to sustain settler appeal to sanitary fears before 1907. Instead, as in South Africa, the sanitary discourse in Nairobi was taken up by imperial ideologies that exaggerated and distorted the genuineness of administrative concerns about sanitation and hygiene. The result was that these ideologies undermined the effectiveness of any control measures instituted to sanitary problems while at the same time they enhanced the settler drive for segregation.

To what extent were settler fears about plague rooted in concrete realities of the plague outbreaks in Nairobi? Here, we must distinguish between ideologies as “unconscious distortions or perversions of truth . . . in advancing points of view that favor or benefit the interests of particular groups” and ideologies as “socially determined thought in which the writer’s cultural world view and his more immediate social background condition and define his perception of social reality.”⁶² The former bears an element of intentionality that is not the case for the latter. But the line between these two is often blurred. In the case of settlers in Nairobi, the intention of creating segregation was always there. This was tied up with the socially determined Victorian worldview that indexed the insanitary and unhygienic “attributes” of Indians and Africans and concluded that separation of such people from the civilized Victorians was necessary. This article does not therefore separate the two meanings of ideology though emphasis is placed on the fact that segregation was ultimately intentioned by the settlers. The complex combination of “unconscious distortion of truth” and “socially determined thought” found expression in the instances of plague epidemics and the consequent discourse favoring segregation in Nairobi.

It is intriguing that medical personnel and administrators in Nairobi emphasized plague as a most dangerous disease. The 1907 Williams report on sanitation, for instance, emphasized plague as a major problem in Nairobi. But the earliest existing medical records do not consistently record plague cases as the principal causes of death except in the years when there was a plague epidemic. The best existing source available to me lists pneumonia, respiratory diseases, dysentery, malaria and sleeping sickness, not plague, as the most dangerous diseases if danger is measured in terms of mortality.⁶³ Why, then, did the administration focus on plague? Part of the answer lies with the resonance of plague with segregation. First, its association with contagion “accentuated the tendency to blame epidemics on [others] especially strangers.”⁶⁴ This was convenient in an atmosphere dominated by Englishness. Second, in the European memory

of epidemic disease, the "suddenness and severity of its [plagues] impact" sent chilling signals to the administration and propelled it into urgent action to control the disease. Often, medical personnel resorted to quarantine and separation of people. Thus, in view of the danger of disease contagion and the urgent need for action, plague pointed to isolation of victims as a way of checking its further spread. In a nutshell, plague made the goal of socially controlling Indians and Africans easily attainable. The goals of controlling plague and that of segregation dovetailed in colonial health policy during an epidemic.⁶⁵

The first plague occurred in the Indian Bazaar in Nairobi in March 1902. A private Goanese practitioner, Dr. Ribeiro, directed government attention "to certain suspicious cases of sickness occurring in the bazaar, accompanied by an observable rat mortality, which made him suspect plague."⁶⁶ Once these were confirmed, "the bazaar was . . . dismantled and cut off by military cordon."⁶⁷ The entire bazaar was burned down and rebuilt. Segregation of real or perceived cases followed, including the setting up of camps for people from the bazaar, soldiers, railway coolies, police and prisoners. According to Dr. Spurrier, causation of all the cases which had hitherto occurred was "ascribed to the bazaar, though for some the evidence was but slight."⁶⁸ A review of the development of plague in Nairobi shows the acts of omission that made it possible to blame it on Indians.

Notably, this case of epidemic plague occurred at a time when settlers had initiated efforts to minimize the influence of Indians in Kenya. The coincidence made it possible for settlers to blame the plague on Indians. But equally important was a colonial and settler mindset that associated Indians with disease. This mindset came to Nairobi with settlers from South Africa in 1902 where the idea of the "Asiatic menace" had taken root. The settlers viewed India as "a dangerous disease environment" and associated Indian habits with their diseased 'nature.'⁶⁹ These settlers also blamed African lifestyles as "incompatible with European standards of sanitation" and associated this with the corrupting influence of Indians.⁷⁰ It is this mindset that dominated Nairobi's public health discourse when plague attacked. The fact that plague emanated from the bazaar therefore seemed to confirm the assumptions of the settler mindset and was critical to identifying Indians as its main source. Consequently, any well-intentioned administrative procedure to control the plague was derailed. Subsequently, it was no longer the problem of sanitation in Nairobi as a product of its insanitary location, nor was it the inequitable provision of sanitary services to different races in Nairobi. Yet it is clear

that from the time settlers dominated the township committee, an incipient pattern of differential treatment of people in Nairobi had taken root, backed as it was by incoming settlers. This mindset was responsible for the typical colonial response to epidemics that opted for cost-effective methods of controlling disease since, as they argued, the cost of controlling diseases in a “disease-prone” environment was simply prohibitive and wasteful.

In Nairobi, the township committee adopted differential treatment of Indians and Africans especially with regard to supply of essential sanitary service. This explains why the bazaar was disease-prone in the first place. The bazaar was in a terrible sanitary situation prior to the plague outbreak of 1902. Compared to European residences, it was neglected, unplanned and filthy. Already in late 1901, Indians had successfully filed a case against the township committee complaining about the unplanned and unsatisfactory sanitary condition of the bazaar.⁷¹ Contrasting the two, an observer noted:

The town has already divided into sections. The Indian commercial district and the bazaar sprawls over several acres and adjacent to it is the market for produce, vegetables and meat. The filth is incredible. Garbage rots in uncleared heaps. Rats abound. Meat and other edibles hang within inches of human ordure and all of it stinks in the tropical sun. . . . One crosses the stepping-stones of the Nairobi River to official residences and newly-cut roads leading to the Military Barracks. Here, all is good order and cleanliness [*sic*] but, again, it is evidently thought proper the sewage should run along open cement channels and into a river from which most of the population draws its water.⁷²

Many of the colonial officials acknowledged the filth and overcrowding in the bazaar but blamed it on the naturally filthy and unhygienic occupants. It was rarely considered that neglect and the unplanned nature of Nairobi lay at the heart of such epidemics. Dr. Spurrier, for example, acknowledged that the bazaar contained “damp, dark, unventilated, overcrowded dwellings on filth-soaked and rubbish-bestrewed ground” that “housed hundreds of people.” He added that these people were “of mostly uncleanly [*sic*] habits, who loved to have things so, and were so let.”⁷³ Thus, in Dr. Spurrier’s view, the problem in Nairobi was that Indians preferred to live in an unclean and filthy environment. The government was merely guilty of allowing them to continue living as such. For him, the problem was not so much inequity in service provision but

the inherently unhygienic habits of Indians. However, Dr. Spurrier conceded that the broader context within which the plague occurred was more complex.

Soon the settler mindset influenced administrative judgement on how to control the plague. Control was phrased in the language of separation, quarantine and segregation. But due to objections from the colonial office, segregation in Nairobi was not presented simply as the racial separation of people. It was rhetorically phrased as "control over those diseases each race inherently had and could, by residential proximity, transmit."⁷⁴ Using the empirical data on frequency of plague attacks in the bazaar, the administration receded into a series of legal restrictions on the movement of Indians and Africans. But these restrictions were effective in identifying the bazaar, not Nairobi, as the problem and in labelling Indians and Africans as dirty instead of addressing the broad causes of the attack. For instance, in the gazette notice on 6 March, the state issued an urgent bylaw requiring dead rats to be collected and handed over to the sanitary inspector. It also empowered the sanitary inspector to make house to house inspections, remove suspected cases of plague to the Quarantine Camp, thoroughly clean and disinfect all houses and shops "to the satisfaction of the Medical Authorities."

The bylaw was reinforced by another that declared a quarantine "in and about Nairobi Bazaar" and forbade people from entering or leaving the bazaar until further notice. A third notice dated 7 March declared the bazaar an "infected area" and gave the Principal Medical Officer (PMO) the discretion of destroying "any buildings or parts of buildings or goods which may be infected or suspected infected." Finally, a quarantine notice dated 8 March prohibited all natives of India and Africa resident in or about the infected area from leaving Nairobi by train or otherwise unless accompanied by European masters and with a medical pass.⁷⁵ These restrictions identified and concentrated on the bazaar as the problem area and labelled Indians and Africans as dirty. With the backing of medical personnel who assembled the data, the long held theory of Indians "incurable repugnance for sanitation and hygiene" was reinforced.⁷⁶ Dr. J. A. Haran described plague as "the vermin of Asia."⁷⁷ The net result was that the bazaar was put under a "hygienic gaze" that was useless in the endeavour of preventing the epidemic.⁷⁸

The greatest challenge to the medical department was policing the boundaries of infection to ensure that plague occurrence fitted their idea of the bazaar as the diseased terrain. But this focus on the familiar terrains was itself problematic because it ignored some alternative areas of infections.

By subjecting Indians and Africans to control by *cordon* through isolation and quarantine, the medical officers overlooked the fact that it was the plague vector and not bodies that had to be controlled. Plague vectors continued to cross racial boundaries unpoliced. Thus, one of the victims, Mr. Mehta (a store clerk) “had never been near the bazaar, nor . . . handled anything coming therefrom.” His house, which belonged to the railway, was both clean and of healthy construction with boarded floors raised above the ground. But he died of plague on 28 March. Another victim, Mohan Lal, who lived in a subordinate bungalow in Avenue II, No. 5 fell sick of plague and died on 29 March. These two examples suggest that hygienic gaze directed at the “diseased terrain” failed to address the main means by which plague began and spread. They suggest that the medical officers and administration were in error to focus on the familiar terrain while alternative zones of infection existed.

We can conclude that some of the measures adopted to control plague were a manifestation of a bias or genuine ignorance contained in the medical assumptions of the time. But once the measures were in accord with the broader settler intentions of segregating Nairobi on the basis of race, they were used with little critical reflection. Measures like the evacuation and burning down of the bazaar were standard practices of plague control in many places and Nairobi was no exception. But their effect on people was not seriously taken into consideration. And such effects were explained away using obviously biased and disingenuous accounts. For example, in a memo dated 25 June 1902, Dr. Haran expounded on the sanitary situation of the bazaar and Railway subordinates arguing that the “habits of their occupants were grossly uncleanly [*sic*]. In one case, indeed, was a hole bored in the floor for use as a urinal, w.c., and drain [*sic*] and a gradually increasing heap of night soil and sewage allowed to accumulate beneath the house.”⁷⁹ Even if the occupants were unclean, as Dr. Haran argues, the township committee also failed to provide them with the requisite facilities to ensure better sanitary standards.

Dr. Haran’s report also points to two issues that commanded continued attention after the 1902 plague attack. First is the correlation between habits and the so-called insanitary state of Indians and Africans. This correlation was made, but with the usual anxiety of another plague attack. The fear such anxiety provoked further identified and pathologized Indians and Africans. The basis of this anxiety was unmistakably historical: that plague was a “potent metaphor for utter devastation.” This potency had exercised significant influence in European memory in China, India

and South Africa, where plague occurred before Kenya. In this case, plague had the rhetorical and "scientific" significance that spurred an otherwise reluctant colonial office in London and the local administration in Nairobi into action that was designed mainly to protect Europeans. The rhetoric then accounts for why the administration began to place disproportionate emphasis on plague compared to other diseases prevalent in Nairobi at the time.⁸⁰ By 1906, the potency of plague as a disease had titled the terms of discussion: it was no longer the broad problem of hygiene and sanitation in Nairobi and the dangers of diseases like malaria and pneumonia that sanitary problems could generate. Rather, it was now a specific problem of plague and its imagined association with Indian and African habits.

Second, the logic of diseased people occupying diseased spaces was established. White settlers and similarly minded officials, especially of the medical department in Nairobi, began to relate the insanitary state of the bazaar to the insanitary and unhygienic habits of Indians and Africans residing there. They promoted the assumption that disease was inherent in the habits and customs of Indians and Africans. The fact that plague occurred in India in 1896 prior to its arrival in East Africa gave credence to the theory that Indians introduced plague into East Africa. This, then, excluded the contribution of structural factors like poor drainage, improper housing and overall inadequate provision of services to Indians and Africans which provided an environment that sustained disease vectors like rats and mosquitoes from the explanation. If Indian and African habits were the causes of the plague attacks, so the assumption went, then no amount of sanitary improvement and service provision would alleviate the problem. The solution to the sanitary question in Nairobi had to be sought elsewhere, preferably in the creation of white sanitary enclaves in Nairobi. Of course, there were some officers who did not subscribe to this argument, but they were in the minority. Also, there were those Europeans who thought that better service provision for Indians and Africans would help matters, but they were undermined by administrative inertia and a consistent administrative habit of procrastination. Their beliefs were more in word than in deeds. The bottom line is that the idea of an inherent connection between habits and the insanitary bazaar prepared ground for legitimating the separation of the races in Nairobi.

A number of obvious acts of omission raise doubt about the genuineness of administrative concern with sanitary improvements. For instance, after 1902, the new bazaar was carelessly rebuilt without any plan to deal with its previous sanitary problems. Provisions for drainage,

properly designed housing and adequate plans for sewage disposal were not provided. Instead, previous occupants were compensated to the tune of 67,800 rupees and let back to provide for themselves. This soon created new sanitation problems, and in September 1905, another plague attack occurred in the bazaar. It was a mild attack and within the same month, the MOH declared Nairobi free of plague.⁸¹ But a report of a suspicious case of bubonic plague in the bazaar was again filed on 22 November 1905. As expected, the premise was closed and quarantined. The victim, Jiwan Jughojee, was diagnosed with bubonic plague, isolated and hospitalized. He later died of plague.⁸² Though mild, this episode reinforced the hygienic gaze on the bazaar and helped sidestep the broad context of inequity in service provision. By mid-1906, things had returned to normal and the plague scare diminished. But the focus on the bazaar as a diseased site continued. The sanitary state of the bazaar and the railway subordinate quarters remained unchanged.

The hygienic gaze restricted the view and did not focus on other issues responsible for the sanitary problems in Nairobi. The railway quarter, for example, was the subject of Dr. W. R. W. James's report. In the report, Dr. James reported that no "single house has been provided by the Railway authorities with a Bathroom."

The result of this omission is the cause the occupants to [*sic*] drill holes in the floor boards and the bathe over the holes so cut, the bath water collecting on the ground underneath and so adding to the dampness. In several of the houses larger holes about 8" circular have been cut in the floor, these serve as latrine seats the dejecta dropping through and collecting on the ground below.⁸³

Whether this was true or not is not the issue. The fact that railway-owned quarters lacked essential infrastructure for maintaining hygienic living points to the neglect in colonial Nairobi. But rather than confront this neglect, the PMO focused on the familiar theme of Indian habits. Commenting on this report, the PMO linked this behaviour "to the ablutionary habits of the Indian, and the general laxity shown by Eastern races in the disposal of waste and filthy water."⁸⁴ By the time the colonial office dispatched Mr. George Bransby Williams to "report on the sanitary condition of the town of Nairobi" in 1906, the discourse on Indian repugnance to sanitation was well established and widely acknowledged among Europeans in Nairobi. Williams investigated and reported in the context of such bias.

The Williams Sanitary Report

The Williams report is perhaps the most important document in the early history of Nairobi before the Public Health Ordinance of 1913. It came midway between the arrival of the first of the settlers' communities and the hardening of their views about segregation. The report was not independent of the racial, medical and political attitudes of the time. On the contrary, it was a product of these very processes, borrowing liberally from the attitudes of those who thought the sanitary problem in Nairobi was due, in large measure, to the habits of the inhabitants of the bazaar. It should therefore be understood as part of the process by which European views on segregation hardened.

Williams came to Nairobi in a climate that was hostile to Indians and Africans. Through the Colonists' Association, settlers passed a virulently anti-Indian resolution in 1906 opposing any alteration in the policy of reserving the white highland for Europeans only.⁸⁵ This opposition was then extended to the need to remove the bazaar from the town center to another street. Some medical officers had even suggested the removal of the bazaar from the town.⁸⁶ Upon his arrival, Williams was greeted by this anti-Indian sentiment. His final report did not disappoint this mood. The report noted the general sanitation problem in Nairobi but focused on plague as the major problem.⁸⁷ His analysis begins with the 1902 epidemic and mentions or alludes to it several times in the first ten pages. Stating that it was "outside the bounds of practical politics" to remove the whole of Nairobi, the report however found "very little with which, from a sanitary point of view, it is possible to express even a qualified satisfaction." Rather, there is "much that is necessary to condemn, and some things that can only be considered a danger to the health of the community."⁸⁸

Unlike others, Williams blamed the state of Nairobi on three things: poor or insufficient planning, the weather, and the nature of the soil. He blamed the administration for poor planning, noting that "drains are badly designed, badly constructed, of inferior material, and laid to insufficient gradients."⁸⁹ With the exception of the drains constructed by the railway, he condemned all the drainage in Nairobi. In his view, the drains could not be retained "as part of a comprehensive and permanent scheme of drainage."⁹⁰ The wet weather, he added, "also aggravated the unsanitary conditions of the bazaar and the other parts of the town."⁹¹ Regarding the soils, he noted that the soil on the plain "is liable to be saturated with water in the wet season, and when in that condition is a source of danger

to the health of the town. . . .”⁹² He noted, however, that “even if Nairobi were singularly situated with regard to the soil, subsoil and natural drainage channels, the undrained and overcrowded conditions of parts of the town could not fail to make those districts unsanitary.”⁹³ Though the nature of the soil in Nairobi was itself a problem, Williams faulted the general planning of the town. He argued that the high cost of managing the town was due to “the disproportionate area of the town to the number of inhabitants and the consequent distances that have to be traversed by the night-soil carts.”⁹⁴ He concluded that the “town has grown up haphazard and the arrangement of districts and streets has not been planned on any definite system.”

Though Williams found that the whole of Nairobi was insanitary, he thought it necessary to focus on the bazaar and to explain its unsanitary state to Indian habits. The bazaar, he wrote, was “in so unsanitary a state as to be a constant menace to the health of the public and other parts of the town are in a very unsatisfactory condition.” Then he added:

There are certain districts in Nairobi which are in a very unsanitary condition, and this is not only due to the lack of proper sanitary arrangements, but also to the habits of the inhabitants. I am convinced that the ideas of the Asiatics in the Protectorate on the subject of cleanliness are so far removed from those usually held among civilised people that no matter how perfect the system of drainage may be or how well the houses are built, they will succeed in making their dwellings thoroughly unsanitary unless they are under constant supervision.⁹⁵

Williams recommended the removal of the bazaar in order to end its existing nuisance. Noting that it is a shortsighted policy to allow the bazaar to remain, he pointed to the unsanitary back premises, overcrowding, lack of sufficient latrines and poor drainage as reason for its removal. But there was also a racial/economic reason. On this point, Williams took a cue from Dr. Milne’s report, which had argued that time would come when the land occupied by the bazaar “will be badly wanted for the European business quarter as the town increases, but as long as it [the bazaar] remains where it is it will exercise a depreciating influence on the neighbouring land.”⁹⁶

Though this report was more comprehensive and appreciative of broader causes of sanitation problems in Nairobi than previous reports, it still contained paternalistic and condescending perceptions of Indians and Africans as inherently unhygienic races. The report did not just bring

Africans into the wider purview of the sanitation question, it officially extended the ideas of inherently unhygienic races to them. From 1907 onwards, the concern about sanitation in Nairobi integrated fully the notion of Indian and African repugnance to sanitation and hygiene and perpetuated the practice of blaming the victims while at the same time denying them the required facilities to improve the sanitary situation in their locations. This boiled down to a concerted campaign to remove the bazaar from the centre of the town and the initiative to construct an African location. These initiatives were an important precursor to the eventual goal of racial segregation. The Williams report was useful because it brought to the discussion table the issues of removing the bazaar, of establishing a location and of residential segregation. Its content reflected the thinking of most white settlers in Nairobi at the time.

Conclusion

My primary goal in this article has been to understand the formative years of Nairobi as a backdrop against which subsequent analysis can explore how trends set in these years influenced the politics of racial segregation in Nairobi. The formative years began with indecision on the part of the British about who, between the Indians and settlers, would dominate and exploit EAP. This indecision fired sustained controversy between the Indians and European settlers, especially those from South Africa, over political dominance in Nairobi. The controversy was complicated by the problem of administrative dualism, which set the railway and colonial administration against each other. The two had different visions of developing the town and, because of their controversy, had allowed Nairobi to grow without adequate planning and with no proper drainage and surveying. The controversies were eventually manifested in the Nairobi Township Committee, which was constituted to plan and manage the town. Instead of becoming a forum for impartial and equitable allocation of resources to the town, it became a site of racialized politics where the Indians and Africans were marginalized and where settler dominance ensured white privilege. This dominance limited the state's ability to intervene and pursue a workable sanitary agenda. The 1902 bubonic plague outbreak was as much a result of poor planning as it was a result of unsanitary conditions within the town.

But to what extent was the explanation of plague rooted in an understanding of the concrete realities of the town? The article assumes

that the baseline settler objective in Nairobi was segregation. The key to understanding the origins of segregation in Nairobi lies in the settler explanation of Nairobi's sanitary problem and how they actually dealt with it. Post-1907 attempts to deal with the sanitary problems were bedevilled by procrastination. This habit of procrastination continued even as segregation was declared official government policy in 1914. This habit suggests that explaining the cause of the epidemic was more important than actually preventing it. As such, the focus on the discourses and rhetoric among settlers is useful, since it shows why the explanation of the plague epidemic focused on the victims. This article outlines a shift that occurred in the settler view from a geographical explanation of Nairobi's sanitary problems to a racialized explanation that focused on Indians and Africans and their locations. The shift was based on the prevailing white attitudes towards Indians and Africans that framed them as inherently diseased. The 1902 plague epidemic was decisive in this shift. It created an environment that allowed settlers to argue that it was within the character trait of Indians and Africans to be diseased. This argument, we have shown, sidestepped the original problem of Nairobi as an insanitary site for a settler town. By the time the Williams Report was commissioned, the idea of Indians and Africans as inherently diseased had taken root and was widely used to account for the outbreak of plague.

Overall, the article shows that the discourse and practice of public health in colonial Nairobi went beyond the genuine objective of controlling and preventing disease. This discourse had a priori racial explanations of the origins, manifestations and consequences of epidemics and these explanations were geared towards enhancing white privilege in the town. These a priori assumptions are the base on which the pathologization of black images in the public health discourse grew. The article located the notions of inherently diseased races and the diseased terrain in this context. It has demonstrated that the forces in favour of segregation built their explanation on the twin empirical argument that (1) there was higher plague mortality among Indians and Africans and (2) that the bazaar was a diseased terrain. However, the study found the assumptions and explanations to be circular since they simply confirm each other. They make sense only if we accept the restricting frame set by settlers. Thus, when in 1907 the Williams Report recommended the removal of the bazaar from the town center, the creation of an African location and the establishment of segregated residences, this was based on the unhelpful rhetoric that Indians and Africans were inherently diseased and their locations were well-known diseased terrains. But to what extent do these help the goal of preventing diseases?

Notes

1 KNA, PC/CP 4/2/1, Ukamba Province Annual and Quarterly Reports, 1906/07–1914/15 (Appendix in Ukamba Province Yearly Report for 1907–8 the Medical Officer of Health Report for Nairobi), p. 11.

2 The idea of indexing is borrowed from V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 49. It refers to the process by which western knowledge constructed its perception of the 'Other' by isolating only those features that fit within its general body of knowledge.

3 John V. Pickstone, "Dearth, Dirt and Fever Epidemics: Rewriting the History of British 'Public Health', 1780–1850," in Terance Ranger and Paul Slack (eds.), *Epidemics and Ideas: Essays on the Historical Perception of Pestilence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 126.

4 Timothy Burke, *Lifebouy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption, & Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 18.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

6 See Megan Vaughan, *Curing Their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991); and Vaughan, "Health and Hegemony: Representation of Disease and the Creation of the Colonial Subject in Nyasaland," in D. Engels and S. Marks (eds.), *Contesting Colonial Hegemony: State and Society in Africa and India* (London and New York: Basic Academic Press, 1994).

7 Randall M. Packard, *White Plague, Black Labor: Tuberculosis and the Political Economy of Health and disease in South Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 32. See also Myron Echenberg, *Black Death, White Medicine: Bubonic Plague and the Politics of Public Health in Colonial Senegal, 1914–1945* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002); in it he emphasizes the politicization of plague control measures in Senegal.

8 See Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), for a good discussion of this process.

9 See Paul Maylam, *South Africa's Racial Past: The History and Historiography of Racism, Segregation, and Apartheid* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), for a review of the literature; and Maynard Swanson, "Urban Origins of Separate Development," *Race* 10, no. 1 (1968).

10 Maynard W. Swanson, "The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900–1909," *Journal of African History* 28, no. 3 (1977); Elizabeth Van Heyningen, "Cape Town and the Plague of 1901," in Christopher Sunders, et al. (eds.), *Studies in the History of Cape Town* 4 (1981); and Vivian Bickford-Smith, "South African Urban History, Racial Segregation and the Unique Case of Cape Town?" *Journal of Southern African Studies* (hereafter *JSAS*) 21, no. 1 (1995).

11 I share Maynard W. Swanson's concern that the role of the Indian community in the early history of segregation has either been discounted or unrecognized. See Maynard W. Swanson, "'The Asiatic Menace': Creating Segregation in Durban, 1870–1900," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 16, no. 3 (1983), p. 402. Studies of Indians in Kenya have focused more on the ingenuity of Indian business, their status as minorities, and their overall challenges to the white settler community in Nairobi,

but not on their key role in the early history of public health policy in Nairobi. See E. S. Atieno-Odhiambo, "The Political Economy of the Asian Problem in Kenya, 1888–1939," *Transafrican Journal of History* 4, nos. 1 & 2 (1974); and Zarina Patel, *Challenge to Colonialism: The Struggle of Alibhai Mulla Jeevanjee for Equal Rights in Kenya* (Nairobi: Publishers Distribution Services, 1997).

12 Garth A. Myers, *Verandas of Power: Colonialism and Space in Urban Africa* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003), p. 46; and Bruce Berman, "Structure and Process in the Bureaucratic States of Colonial Africa," *Development and Change* 15 (1984).

13 Brian Pullan, "Plague and Perception of the Poor in Early Modern Italy," in Ranger and Paul Slack (eds.), *Epidemics and Ideas: Essays on the Historical Perception of Pestilence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 112.

14 Mary P. Surphen, "Not What, but Where: Bubonic Plague and the Reception of Germ Theories in Hong Kong and Calcutta, 1894–1897," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 25, no. 1 (1997), p. 113.

15 Susan Craddock, *City of Plagues: Disease, Poverty, and Deviance in San Francisco* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2000), p. 124.

16 Caroline Benedict, *Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 7 and 128.

17 Marc Harry Dawson, "Socio-Economic and Epidemiological Change in Kenya: 1880–1925" (Ph.D. diss. University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1983), p. 66.

18 John Lonsdale, "The Conquest State of Kenya, 1895–1905," in Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa* (London: James Currey, 1992), p. 13.

19 E. A. Brett, *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa: The Politics of Economic Change, 1919–1939* (London: Heinemann, 1973), p. 166.

20 See John A. Carman, *A Medical History of the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya: A Personal Memoir* (London: Rex Collings, 1976), p. 8.

21 Alan Lester writes of the Cape Colony, New South Wales and New Zealand as "being nodes within an imperial network" and proceeds to show how settlers in these far-apart places transacted with one another and with Britain in "co-constructing a particular, trans-imperial discourse of colonialism." One could extend these nodes to include Nairobi, whose settler community was mostly South African in origin. See Alan Lester, "British Settler Discourse and the Circuits of Empire," *History Workshop Journal* 54 (2002), p. 25. See also Susan Parnell, "Creating Racial Privilege: The Origins of South African Public Health and Town Planning Legislation," *JSAS* 19, no. 3 (1993), where she discusses the British connections to South African public health and town planning legislations and how these legislations fostered segregation. This argument connects with M. P. K. Sorrenson's, who shows that South Africa, New Zealand and Australia provided the precedent on which Kenyan settlers attempted to build their ideas and practice of segregation. See his *Origins of European Settlement in Kenya* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968).

22 See Parnell, "Creating Racial Privilege," p. 471; and Swanson, "Urban Origins of Separate Development," p. 31.

23 Paul B. Rich "Ministering to the White Man's Needs: The Development of Urban Segregation in South Africa," *African Studies* 37 (1978).

24 Kenneth S. Ombongi, "A History of Malaria Control Policy in Colonial Kenya, 1897–1963" (Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 2000), p. 71.

25 Letter from Ainsworth to Eliot, 2 April, 1902, quoted in Robert M. Maxon, *John Ainsworth and the Making of Kenya* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1980), p. 100.

26 This pattern of residential growth occurred in most colonial towns in Africa and is central to the later day incidences of forced removals. In the initial days of urban growth, it appeared necessary to have the labour force close to the workplace in order to minimize cost of travel to work. It is also plausible to argue that this pattern of growth occurred before racial considerations acquired their later day salience. Once racial considerations took centre stage, a large segment of the white population frowned upon the mixing of white and black workers. On the Witwatersrand, this mixing became a specific source of concern for the industrialists who separated white workers into boarding houses and black ones into mine compounds. See Charles van Onselen, *New Babylon New Nineveh: Everyday Life on the Witwatersrand, 1986–1914* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1982), p. 6.

27 Winston S. Churchill, *My African Journey* (London: The Holland Press Neville Spearman Ltd, [1908] 1962), p. 13.

28 Diana Lee-Smith and Davinder Lamba, “Social Transformation in a Post-Colonial City: The Case of Nairobi,” in Mario Polèse and Richard Stren (eds.), *The Social Sustainability of Cities: Diversity and the Management of Change* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

29 L. W. Thornton et al., *Nairobi: Master Plan for a Colonial Capital; A Report Prepared for the Municipal Council of Nairobi* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1948), p. 11.

30 Ombongi, “A History of Malaria Control Policy,” p. 71.

31 Letter from Ainsworth to Eliot, 2 April, 1902 quoted in Maxon, *John Ainsworth*, p. 100.

32 Thornton et al., *Nairobi: Master Plan for a Colonial Capital*, p. 11.

33 Patel, *Challenge to Colonialism*, p. 38.

34 Jeevanjee and another Indian merchant, Allidina Visram, owned much of the property in the bazaar. See Mary Parker, *Political and Social Aspects of the Development of Municipal Government in Kenya with Special Reference to Nairobi* (London: Colonial Office Library, 1959), pp. 57–58.

35 On this, see Brett, *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa*, p. 166.

36 Sorrenson, *Origins of European Settlement*, p. 24.

37 Earl Smith, “The Evolution of Nairobi, Kenya, 1888–1939: A Study in Dependent Urban Development” (Ph.D. diss., University of Connecticut, 1984), p. 89.

38 See Harry Johnston, *A History of the Colonization of Africa by Alien Races* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1899), p. 281.

39 F. O. 107/51, Ainsworth to Hardinge, 10 Jan. 1896, quoted in Sorrenson, *Origins of European Settlement*, p. 34.

40 Sorrenson, *Origins of European Settlement*, p. 34.

41 Smith, “The Evolution of Nairobi.”

42 George Bennett, “Settlers and Politics in Kenya,” in Vincent Harlow et al. (eds.), *History of East Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 266. See also George Bennett, *Kenya: A Political History; The Colonial Period* (London, Oxford University Press, 1963).

43 On South African settler attitudes towards Indians see Swanson, “The Asiatic Menace”; and Bill Freund, *Insiders and Outsiders: The Indian Working Class of Durban 1910–1990* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995).

44 Maxon, *John Ainsworth*, p. 110. The committee seems to have included three Europeans and two Indians, with one European being the sub-commissioner. See Parker, *Political and Social Aspects*, p. 211.

45 Maxon, *John Ainsworth*, p. 110.

46 *Official Gazette*, 15 Dec. 1900, p. 2.

47 Thornton et al., *Nairobi: Master Plan for a Colonial Capital*, p. 13; and British East Africa Protectorate, Report of the Sanitation of Nairobi, p. 11.

48 Dorothy M. Halliman and W. T. W. Morgan, "The City of Nairobi," in W. T. W. Morgan (ed.), *Nairobi: City and Region* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 104.

49 At a meeting of the Indian Association held in Mombasa in April 1906, the 180 Indians who attended demanded "equal rights with Europeans." See Sorrenson, *Origins of European Settlement*, p. 165; and Patel, *Challenge to Colonialism*, p. 55.

50 Sorrenson, *Origins of European Settlement*, chapter 4; and G. H. Mungeam, *British Rule in Kenya 1895–1912: The Establishment of Administration in the East Africa Protectorate* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), chapter 4.

51 Parker, *Political and Social Aspects*, p. 211. Of the three non-officials, one was European, one Indian and another Goan. Thus, there were four Europeans, one Indian and one Goan.

52 Andrew Hake, *African Metropolis: Nairobi's Self-Help City* (London: Chatto and Windus for Sussex University Press, 1977), p. 39. There was no African involved in the Township Committee.

53 *Official Gazette*, 1 February 1907, p. 35, has names of the committee members. Ewart Grogan, for instance, was a conservative settler leader who, among other things, publicly flogged Africans to show the administration that it was too lenient toward Africans. He also opposed the appointment of Ainsworth as Chief Native Commissioner because "Ainsworth's views [on natives] were hostile to the bulk of the people of this country." See Maxon, *John Ainsworth*, p. 342.

54 Parker, *Political and Social Aspects*, p. 210.

55 Jonathon Glassman, "No Words of Their Own," *Slavery and Abolition* 16, no. 1 (1995), pp. 131–45.

56 There is no single comprehensive study of Pangani. Scattered information can be gleaned from, among others, Kenneth G. McVicar, "Twilight of an East African Slum: Pumwani and the Evolution of African Settlement in Nairobi" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1968); Roger Van Zwanenberg, "History and Theory of Urban Poverty in Nairobi: The Case of Slum Development," *Journal of Eastern African Research and Development* 2, no. 2 (1972); and Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

57 McVicar, "Twilight in an East African Slum," pp. 7–9 and 37.

58 See Herbert Werlin, *Governing an African City: A Study of Nairobi* (New York: Africana Publishing House, 1974), p. 40; Walter Elkan and Roger Van Zwanenberg, "How People Came to Live in Towns," in Peter Duignan and L. H. Gann (eds.), *Colonialism in Africa, 1870–1960*, vol. 4: *The Economics of Colonialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 663.

59 Parker, *Political and Social Aspects*, pp. 183, 187, 193.

60 See Van Zwanenberg, "History and Theory of Urban Poverty in Nairobi," pp. 163–205.

61 See Report of the East African Protectorate, 1904–6 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1907), p. 45.

62 Peter P. Ekeh, "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17, no. 1 (1975), p. 94.

63 See Kenya National Archives (KNA) DC/NBI. 1/1/1 Historical [1912] Political Record Book, Nairobi District 1899–1915, p. 15.

64 J. T. Alexander, *Bubonic Plague in Early Modern Russia: Public Health and Urban Disaster* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

65 J. N. Hays, *The Burden of Disease: Epidemics and Human Response in Western History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

66 KNA, MOH/1/5998, Memorandum: History of Plague in East Africa Protectorate, 1902–1913, p. 1.

67 KNA, MOH/1/5999, Dr. Harans's Report on the Outbreak of Plague at Nairobi in 1902, p. 2.

68 Ibid.

69 Hays, *The Burden of Disease*, p. 194.

70 White, *The Comforts of Home*, p. 46. For the South African example see Hays, *The Burden of Disease*, pp. 195 and 209.

71 Hake, *African Metropolis*, p. 35. See also Parker, *Political and Social Aspects*, pp. 65–69.

72 Elspeth Huxley, *Nine Faces of Kenya* (London: Collins Harvill, 1990), pp. 201–2.

73 KNA, MOH/1/5999, Dr. Harans's Report on the Outbreak of Plague at Nairobi in 1902, p. 2.

74 White, *The Comforts of Home*, p. 46.

75 Details gleaned from the *Official Gazette*, 15 March 1902, pp. 80–81.

76 East Africa Protectorate, Economic Commission, Final Report, part 1, 1919 (Nairobi: Government Printers, 1920), quoted by White, *The Comforts of Home*, p. 67.

77 Confidential Report on the recent Outbreak of Plague at Nairobi, May 1902, in KNA, MOH/1/5999, Dr. Harans's Report on the Outbreak of Plague at Nairobi in 1902, p. 2.

78 I use the notion of "hygienic gaze" in a broader sense than Susan Craddock to mean the institution of greater medical and political scrutiny over those people or places perceived to be sources of diseases. See her *City of Plagues*, p. 11.

79 Confidential Report on the recent Outbreak of Plague at Nairobi, May 1902 in KNA, MOH/1/5999, Dr. Harans's Report on the Outbreak of Plague at Nairobi in 1902, p. 7.

80 See Dawson, "Socio-Economic and Epidemiological Change," p. 60; and Ombongi, "History of Malaria Control Policy," p. 71.

81 KNA/MOH/1/5768, Declaration of Nairobi Free from Plague, 1905.

82 KNA, MOH/1/5809, Report of Plague Case for Indian Shopkeeper, 1905.

83 KNA, MOH/1/8578, Annual Report, 1907.

84 KNA, MOH/1/8578, Annual Report, 1907.

85 Sorrenson, *Origins of European Settlement*, p. 164; Bennett, "Settlers and Politics in Kenya"; Bennett, *Kenya: A Political History*; Patel, *Challenge to Colonialism*, p. 61. The settlers argued that they had exclusive right to the highlands because the deficit in the Protectorate expenditures was borne by British taxpayers.

86 See Patel, *Challenge to Colonialism*, pp. 50–51 on the shift from the Bazaar to Biashara Street; and Parker, *Political and Social Aspects*, pp. 65–66 for the shift to Eastleigh.

87 According to Ombongi, “most of the sanitary works undertaken in Nairobi in the first decade of the twentieth century were aimed at curbing plague transmission.” See his “History of Malaria Control Policy,” p. 71.

88 British East Africa Protectorate, Report of the Sanitation of Nairobi, pp. 4 and 6.

89 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

90 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

91 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

92 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

93 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

94 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

95 *Ibid.*, pp. 49–50.

96 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

6

URBANIZATION AND AFRIKANER CLASS FORMATION

THE MINE WORKERS' UNION AND THE SEARCH FOR A CULTURAL IDENTITY

Wessel P. Visser

Introduction: Afrikaner Urbanization and Working-Class Formation in Perspective

The first half of the twentieth century in South Africa is characterized by the rise and growth of its cities. The tempo of urbanization in South Africa was accelerated by about 1920.¹ Although research into urbanization as a sub-discipline of South African historiography was neglected to a large extent in the past by historians, a number of academic scholars were nevertheless attracted to the study of urbanization as a historical phenomenon. One of the early pioneers who attempted to come to grips with the social processes occurring in urban centers in South Africa was William Macmillan. In his study, *The South African Agrarian Problem and its Historical Development*,² for example, Macmillan investigated the social and economic conditions that would ultimately lead to the urbanization of rural blacks and whites.

The groundbreaking studies by the American historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, which boldly rejected the Turnerian frontier hypothesis and asserted the importance of the city in American history, had a strong influence on South African scholars who also ventured into the

historiography of urbanization. According to Schlesinger, the American countryside was transformed from a simple agrarian society into a highly complex urban society.³ Although this occurred on a smaller scale than in the United States, similar processes in South Africa initiated huge urban-bound trek movements of its population.⁴

The processes and social and economic consequences of this large-scale urbanization of rural whites has also intrigued the Afrikaner intelligentsia. A number of prominent Afrikaner academics—economists, sociologists, and theologians—compiled the five-volume *Report of the Carnegie Commission on the Poor White Problem in South Africa*.⁵ According to Van Jaarsveld, the Report was influenced by the American experience in this regard.⁶ And in 1947 a conference was organized by the Afrikaner Dutch Reformed Church (DRC)* to discuss the ramifications of the urbanization of rural Afrikaners.⁷

In recent times no one has done more to promote the study of urban history among Afrikaans-speaking historians than the eminent scholar in this field, Floris van Jaarsveld. He has written widely on the historiography and methodology of urban history, as well as on the urbanization of Afrikaners, but did not himself produce any major work on the history of an urban centre. In a collection of articles and other publications, however, Van Jaarsveld mapped out the terrain of the new sub-field and first brought to the attention of his fellow Afrikaner historians the exciting new work being done in the field of urban history abroad.⁸ Partly as a result of his initiative a two-part history of Afrikaners and their migration to and settlement on the Witwatersrand appeared in 1978 and 1986.⁹

Following Schlesinger's views on the process of American urbanization, Van Jaarsveld asserts that Afrikaners were also born in the countryside but migrated towards the cities, thus becoming transformed from a rural people consisting of farmers into an urban population.¹⁰ The urban migration of rural whites was, in essence, an urban migration of Afrikaners.¹¹ The 1947 conference of the DRC also came to the conclusion that three-quarters of urbanized Afrikaners were workers.¹² Therefore Afrikaner urbanization was a cardinal social prerequisite for the emergence of an Afrikaner working class.

Hermann Giliomee refers to the cultural and psychosocial fears of the newly proletarianized Afrikaners and argues that the dislocation brought about by rapid urbanization instilled in them a deep sense of

* For a list of abbreviations used in the text, please see p. 155.

insecurity.¹³ According to Giliomee, the poor urban Afrikaners responded by forming a vibrant community that had moved beyond the depths of despair. They had settled down by organizing their communities around Afrikaans schools and churches.¹⁴ The education of their children, the establishment of church congregations, their close connection with their rural origin and lifestyle, as well as the necessity to fulfill themselves again with pride and self esteem, were important issues for these Afrikaners. Similarly, Afrikaner workers were eager to add a cultural dimension to trade unions in which they could feel at home as Afrikaners¹⁵—therefore creating their own cultural urban space.

However, many studies on Afrikaner political and socio-economic history during the 1930s and 1940s deal with the Afrikaner working class only in terms of its being an ethnic fraction in the mobilization of Afrikaners towards a nationalist unity and not as a class per se. The intricacies of the delicate interplay between urbanized Afrikaner working class ideals and Afrikaner ethnic and nationalist sentiments in this period are to a large extent either ignored or neglected. Up to now, these points of view were rarely challenged but rather accepted as orthodoxy on Afrikaner nationalism, ethnicity and cultural identity.¹⁶ This paper investigates how a fraction of a newly proletarianized and urbanized working class with their rural cultural background responded to the challenges posed to them in an alien urban environment. The paper also challenges the assumption, expressed in nationalist historiography, that the Afrikaner working class, in particular Afrikaner miners, necessarily regarded themselves as an integral part of the organic unity of a monolithic Afrikanerdom. It will propose, on the contrary, that in certain instances these miners pursued their class interests rather than ethnic considerations. It also poses the following central question: What role did class and Afrikaner class-consciousness play in structuring and organizing Afrikaner mineworkers?

Urbanization and the Emergence of an Afrikaner Working Class

The discovery of diamonds in 1867 and gold in 1886 resulted in the economic balance in South Africa tilting towards the interior, where cities such as Kimberley and Johannesburg were founded. The structural changes that took place in South Africa between 1870 and 1900, transforming the country's economy from one based on subsistence agriculture to one based to a great extent on capitalist mining, determined the

modern history of Afrikaners in mining cities such as Johannesburg. The settlement of Afrikaners in Johannesburg was the result of these structural changes as the mining economy provided the impetus that would lead to gradual industrialization and subsequent urbanization.¹⁷

The discovery of gold and the boom that followed lured thousands of diggers, miners, traders, adventurers, agents, and speculators. Among them were Africans, skilled British miners, and rural Afrikaners.¹⁸ Van Jaarsveld asserts that Afrikaner migration had commenced substantially by 1890. By 1896 there were approximately 7,000 Afrikaners in Johannesburg.¹⁹ Between 1904 and 1936 the number of Afrikaners in urban areas quintupled.²⁰ At the beginning of the twentieth century a mere 10 percent of the total Afrikaner population lived in urban areas, 29 percent by 1911, 41 percent by 1926 and 50 percent by 1936.²¹ According to Abel Coetzee, 70,000 Afrikaners left the rural areas permanently for the cities between 1911 and 1921.²² In becoming urbanized workers these Afrikaners lost their distinctive rural identity.²³

Various factors were responsible for this large-scale urban migration—which Van Jaarsveld refers to as the rural Afrikaners' last Great Trek²⁴—particularly to the Witwatersrand gold fields, with Johannesburg as central locus of gravity. The economic changes unleashed by the mineral revolution rendered a subsistence economy and pastoral lifestyle increasingly untenable.

First, rural agricultural conditions became unfavorable. As new land for occupation gradually became scarcer, pastoralists no longer had the option of trekking to sparsely populated regions. Therefore a class of Afrikaner poor whites or *bywoners* (share-croppers)²⁵ soon emerged, who attempted subsistence stock farming on small unproductive pieces of land or share-cropping for wealthier landowners. These *bywoners* became early victims of the growing commercialization of agriculture and the capitalist restructuring of farm production in the Transvaal hinterland as these processes led to the eviction of the *bywoners*. In addition, the practice of subdividing and fragmenting a deceased farmer's estate among his heirs often transformed large farms into small and uneconomic units for subsistence agriculture. The owners of these small tracts of land were incapable of generating and accumulating sufficient capital through their own efforts to obtain additional land for more productive farming. They rather sold off their land and moved to the cities in search of a better economic future.

With their colonial legacy that for generations had associated all menial work with slaves and blacks, many landless white *bywoners* were

unable to overcome their prejudices against such work and rather became dependent on wealthier relatives or moved to the cities. Many of these landless Afrikaners also cut back to transport-riding, which, in the wake of the diamond and gold fields' ever-increasing transportation needs, created lucrative business opportunities. However, the completion of the various railroad links to the Witwatersrand by 1892 virtually destroyed this economic enterprise.²⁶

Natural disasters aggravated their precarious rural economic situation. The devastating effects of the rinderpest epidemic of 1896–97 was a major factor in stimulating large-scale migration of rural Afrikaners to the Witwatersrand. As millions of cattle died, many of these Afrikaners lost their means of subsistence. Droughts, locusts, and cattle diseases also contributed to their economic deprivation. Finally, the tremendous devastation of Afrikaner farms and homesteads wrought by the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902, to be followed by the postwar depression of 1904–9 and the Great Depression of 1929–33, provided important stimuli for urban migration. The net effect of these unfavorable conditions was the increasing material impoverishment of rural Afrikaners.²⁷ By 1931 most of the 300,000 whites (or one-sixth of the white population) classified as “very poor” by the *Report of the Carnegie Commission on the Poor White Problem in South Africa* were Afrikaans speakers.²⁸ According to Solly Sachs, a renowned socialist trade union leader, the poor white problem was in fact a “poor Afrikaner” problem, as the number of non-Afrikaners among poor whites was always insignificant.²⁹ Poverty was the paramount driving force behind the Afrikaner farmers' urban trek to the gold fields in particular in search of better economic opportunities.³⁰ The availability of better social services for the poor in the cities, such as free hospitals, schools, and clinics, also offered an alluring alternative to the countryside.³¹

These new city dwellers were, however, ill-equipped to meet the demands of an urban environment. According to Haasbroek, they experienced the social effects of urbanization as a “painful dislocation” from their previous way of life.³² The Afrikaners' agrarian lifestyle, their disdain for manual labor, and the lack of educational facilities and industries in rural areas offered no opportunities to develop, for instance, industrial skills; they possessed only farming skills. The Afrikaners in Johannesburg, therefore, could not compete with *Uitlanders* (European immigrants) for skilled jobs and found themselves at a huge occupational disadvantage. For the most part they were competent to do only unskilled manual labor. Consequently, the majority of these Afrikaners were unable to secure fixed employment and slowly slid into becoming a new, white, industrial

lumpenproletariat. In the political sphere the former civil servants of Kruger's Republic were also denied their previous jobs after the Anglo-Boer War by the British military regime. These occupational disadvantages, combined with a huge unemployment problem in Johannesburg during 1897–98, as well as a rising postwar white birth rate, served to perpetuate and aggravate the formerly rural Afrikaners' impoverishment and unemployment on the Witwatersrand.³³

As one of the largest employers of labor in South Africa, the gold mines in particular drew the attention of many unemployed, newly urbanized Afrikaners looking for unskilled and semi-skilled job opportunities.³⁴ But the mining of gold on the Rand entailed large-scale and complex capital intensive industrial production. Only big capitalist mining houses were financially capable of undertaking such ventures. In addition, this industrial production required a considerable number of skilled industrial workers. As there were virtually no such workers in South Africa at the time of the discovery and initial development of the gold fields, they had to be imported from Europe and countries with European settlements. According to Frederick Johnstone, this particular system of gold production and the system of ownership of the means of production had the effect of proletarianizing an increasing number of whites, especially newly urbanized, unskilled Afrikaners. Increasingly separated from ownership of or free access to property in the means of gold production, they were compelled to subsist through selling their labor power in exchange for wages as workers in the employment of the owners of such property.³⁵

Thus the proletarianization of the newly urbanized Afrikaners would lead to a process of class formation and the emergence of a wage-earning Afrikaner working class.³⁶ Most (white) workers, skilled and unskilled, lived in working-class accommodation close to the point of production in early Johannesburg. In these working-class suburbs several elements of late-nineteenth-century British working-class culture and labor traditions were produced, reproduced, and accentuated,³⁷ which would also contribute towards fostering a sense of class consciousness among Afrikaner workers.³⁸

The Afrikanerization of the Mine Workers' Union

Many white working-class histories and studies³⁹ erroneously ascribe Afrikaner workers' first large-scale entry into the mining industry to the failed miners' strike of 1907 when roughly 2,000 to 3,000 jobless

Afrikaners⁴⁰ were employed as scab labor to replace striking professional miners from abroad.

However, Elaine Katz convincingly challenged this assertion in her analysis and definition of the job categories implied by the term “miner.” She argues that by the beginning of 1907 Afrikaners comprised roughly 17 percent of the total white workforce on the gold mines and that these Afrikaners represented nearly one-third of a discrete category of skilled underground workmen, namely miners. Supervision of black workers and specialization of underground work whittled away the professional miners’ all-round practical skills. This paved the way for the employment of less fully trained men, particularly Afrikaners. A “specialist” knowledge, confined solely to drilling and blasting, was sufficient to earn them blasting certificates through their own initiative and so to qualify them to become supervisors.

Between 1902 and 1904 F. H. P. Creswell, a mine manager, conducted a “white labor experiment” on a number of mines as he was convinced that unskilled whites were more efficient than their black counterparts. This came about because the postwar labor scarcity was particularly acute as many thousands of black miners withheld their labor, principally because of wage reductions. In addition, there was a growing shortage of overseas professional miners, especially from 1904 onwards, at a time when the industry was expanding strongly after its initial postwar stagnation. The devastating impact of silicosis on the overseas miners was also a deciding factor in the entry of Afrikaner miners into the industry. Many overseas professional miners were no longer attracted to the Witwatersrand, because of its notorious reputation as a silicosis-stricken mining camp. Mine owners believed it was cheaper to train and employ an abundant supply of short-term Afrikaner miners than to implement the costly preventive measures, especially ventilation, necessary to eliminate silicosis. In short, Afrikaners filled the vacancies created by the ravages of silicosis.⁴¹

Even as early as 1897 a few hundred jobless and unskilled Afrikaners were taken on by certain prominent mining groups as part of a poor-relief scheme.⁴² And by 1904 Rand Mines Ltd. employed 445 unskilled whites on a monthly average of which 60 percent were Afrikaners.⁴³ Despite the fact that the 1907 strike aggravated unemployment among professional miners, it also created an opportunity for the incorporation of growing numbers of unskilled Afrikaner workers into the mines.⁴⁴ After the strike mine owners actively launched a campaign to recruit Afrikaner miners, since they believed that the latter would be more docile in responding to their demands and conditions than the overseas miners had been. They

were also convinced that Afrikaner supervision would increase the productivity of black laborers and that a permanent Afrikaner labor component on the mines would eventually replace the floating overseas work force.⁴⁵

Most of the skilled overseas professional miners in South Africa at the turn of the century came from Britain. Therefore the predominantly British character of these miners, the habits of the British workshop and the tradition of the British trade unions established themselves on the Witwatersrand.⁴⁶ In 1902 the Transvaal Miners' Association (TMA) was established in Johannesburg. The majority of its members were of British descent, especially from Cornwall, Durham, and Northumberland.⁴⁷ After the miners' strike of 1913 the TMA was renamed the South African Mine Workers' Union, also known as the Mine Workers' Union (MWU).⁴⁸

The increased Afrikaner presence on the gold mines, which started to dilute the original British character of the mining industry,⁴⁹ inevitably brought them into much closer contact and competition with the English-speaking workers and their well-developed tradition of trade unionism and labor organization.⁵⁰ According to Charles van Onselen, the British miner was no particular friend of the Afrikaner unemployed who looked towards the mines for job opportunities, since the latter could become a threat to the job security of the miners.⁵¹

The flow of Afrikaners into mining was accelerated by the 1911 Mines and Works Act, which created a job color bar that reserved certain skilled and semi-skilled jobs for whites.⁵² Although initially Afrikaner miners stood aloof from organized labor and were not involved in any trade union leadership, many took part in the 1913 miners' strike and the 1914 general strike, demanding better working conditions and wages. Consequently, many of these Afrikaners were jailed for their involvement in the strikes.⁵³ These actions were indicative of a gradual but growing awareness of an Afrikaner working-class consciousness.⁵⁴

World War I saw a continuation of the increasing Afrikanerization of the white labor contingent on the gold mines. At the outbreak of the war in 1914 thousands of loyal English-speaking miners volunteered for the British war effort, thus creating a shortage of white miners. Many Afrikaners who did not share these pro-war sentiments took their places on the mines. By 1916 they comprised the majority of white miners, and by September 1916 approximately one in every fifteen adult Afrikaner males was employed on the gold mines.⁵⁵ By the end of the war these workers formed about 75 percent of the white labor force of the gold

mines, compared with about 40 percent at the start of the war.⁵⁶ These figures reflect the gradual transformation of the white working class on the mines into one that consisted predominantly of Afrikaners;⁵⁷ mining was thus one of the major drawing cards in the urbanization of rural Afrikaners in the early twentieth century.

Afrikaner miners felt estranged from the British labor institutions on the Witwatersrand over which they had no influence. Towards the end of World War I they started to realize that many English-speaking miners would return from the front to reclaim their former positions in the mines. Thus they began to contemplate an independent labor organization that would also cater for the distinct cultural and language needs of the Afrikaner working class.⁵⁸ In 1917 *Ons Vaderland*, a Nationalist, pro-Afrikaner working-class newspaper, expressed the view that the time was ready for Afrikaner miners to use their numbers to strengthen and assert their power.⁵⁹

Sachs aptly described the growing cleavage between Afrikaners and the British-orientated labor organizations:

The masses of Afrikaner people, in spite of their ever-increasing poverty, were neither attracted to the Labour movement nor did they seek entry. They looked upon Trade Unions and the Labour Party as foreign organisations, and the workers' organisations looked upon the Afrikaner people with an air of disdain. . . .⁶⁰

The Afrikaner miners were, however, notably divided on the issue of a distinct Afrikaner union. On the one hand, a moderate group was of the opinion that the MWU should be supported. They believed that the English-speaking miners would eventually take a more pro-South African stand. Constant tension between an Afrikaner union and the MWU would only be exploited by the Chamber of Mines, which represented the interests of the mining houses. Seeing that Afrikaner miners already constituted the majority of the MWU membership, the moderates believed that constitutional changes to the membership rules would eventually ensure Afrikaner control of the union.

On the other hand, the hardliners objected to the MWU's "extremist" and "socialist" methods in using strikes and violence to further its cause, as these methods were considered to be un-Christian and alien to Afrikaner ethics. They argued that the union management consisted only of English-speaking supporters of the South African Labor Party (SALP), which espoused implacable imperialist and anti-Afrikaner views.

Afrikaners should therefore desist from joining both the MWU and the SALP and rather form their own organization.⁶¹ Consequently, a commission was formed, with the support of the National Party (NP), to decide on the most appropriate option.⁶²

However, the hardliners took matters into their own hands and established the *Algemene Afrikaanse Werkersvereniging* (General Afrikaans Workers' Society) in August 1917. Although its name was soon changed to the *Zuid-Afrikaanse Werkers Bond* (South African Workers' League), it was not smooth sailing for the organization. Many Afrikaner workers who supported the *Bond* would not relinquish their ties with the MWU. For instance, E. S. Hendriksz, a founder member of the *Bond*, was also assistant general secretary of the MWU. In March 1921 the *Bond* issued a futile ultimatum to Afrikaner workers to relinquish their membership of the MWU and join the *Bond*. Very few heeded the call. In addition, the Chamber of Mines refused to recognize the *Bond* as a trade union, and the MWU threatened to dismiss those who joined this Afrikaner workers' organization.⁶³ Furthermore, the *Bond* was not meant to be a workers' organization for miners only but rather a general workers' union. Indeed, the majority of its founders and promoters were not miners. And many of its adherents were Nationalists who constantly tried to misuse the *Bond* for the NP's political propaganda.⁶⁴

By the end of 1921 the *Bond* had become defunct and the MWU was once more the only labor organization for Afrikaner miners. But conditions within the union were apparently still not sympathetic towards Afrikaners. English-speaking miners objected to E. S. Hendriksz's election as general secretary of the MWU in 1922 and a new election was called. Due to a substantial absentee vote, J. Cowan, an English miner, was elected general secretary to Hendriksz in the second ballot despite the Afrikaner majority of the MWU membership.⁶⁵

The election result was a huge disillusionment for Afrikaner workers who assumed that their numerical dominance of the union's membership would be sufficient to ensure the election of a general secretary from their own ranks. A complainant wrote to *Ons Vaderland* about the domination of the MWU management by an English-speaking minority and about the "moral defeat" of Afrikaner miners being led by English representatives.⁶⁶ Consequently, a new pro-Afrikaner counter-labor organization, the *Suid-Afrikaanse Werkersunie* (South African Workers' Union), or SAWU, was established in October 1922, with Hendriksz as a member of the executive committee. Structured similarly to its predecessor, the *Bond*, as a general union rather than a union specifically for miners, the SAWU

catered to all white (Afrikaner) workers. Based on a pro-Christian foundation, the organization aimed at countering the MWU by means of anti-socialist and anti-communist propaganda through press statements. In an article published in *Ons Vaderland* in 1922, the SAWU, which appears to have vanished into obscurity by 1924,⁶⁷ maintained that the only hope for industrial peace was mutual consensus on the recognition of rights between employer and employee and that such agreement could be enforced only by a powerful (labor) organization. The SAWU claimed that the international socialist elements (within the MWU) had nothing in common with the Afrikaner worker, but used him only as a useful tool for its own ends.⁶⁸ Therefore the “unholy” doctrines of socialism and communism were regarded as anathema to the Christian principles of the Afrikaner worker.

Thus, contrary to Lis Lange’s argument that there was a growing class-solidarity among Afrikaner and English workers between 1906 and 1922,⁶⁹ the foregoing developments rather suggest, at least as far as the Witwatersrand’s white mining population was concerned, the growth of a distinct Afrikaner working-class consciousness and a sense of cultural difference from English-speaking workers.

The next attempt by Afrikaners to take control of the MWU, albeit a protracted but ultimately successful struggle, took place at the height of Afrikaner nationalism in the 1930s and 1940s—a period regarded by some historians as the era of aggressive Afrikaner nationalism. Afrikaner nationalism in this period is seen in general terms as a broad socio-economic response to the uneven development of capitalism in South Africa, which meant, among other things, that a substantial number of Afrikaners were left behind economically. It was within the context of increasing urbanization and secondary industrialization during this period, as well as the continuing British imperial influence in South Africa, that Afrikaner nationalism made headway.

The period also coincided with the centenary celebration of the Great Trek in 1938, which paralleled the economically driven urban migration of Afrikanerdom during a debilitating depression which had reduced large numbers to the ranks of poor whites. The 1938 celebrations served as a powerful binding agent and represented a truly unique moment of cross-class ethnic mobilization. The celebrations climaxed in urban centers, such as Cape Town, Pretoria, and Johannesburg, which at that time already harbored large concentrations of urbanized Afrikaners. In addition, the period coincided with the launching of cooperative economic ventures, involving the small man in the street and ultimately

culminating in the Afrikaner-based NP's political victory in the general election of 1948. Against this background young individuals from the middle-class Afrikaner intelligentsia and imbued with an idealistic purpose to unite rural and urban, rich and poor Afrikaners under the banner of ethnic Afrikaner nationalism, became involved with the Afrikaner working class, inter alia the miners.⁷⁰

In October 1936 the *Nasionale Raad van Trusteers* (National Council of Trustees), or NRT, was established by young middle-class Afrikaner intellectuals under the leadership of Dr. Albert Hertzog, son of the founder of the NP, General J. B. M. Hertzog.⁷¹ The founding members were all part of the Afrikaner elite and members of the *Afrikaner Broederbond* (Afrikaner Brotherhood), or AB, but none were miners.⁷² These developments coincided with the culturally estranged position of Afrikaner miners in the 1930s. The main object of the NRT was to organize the working class under the wing of a broader Afrikanerdom. Having spent eight years on studies abroad, especially in Britain, Albert Hertzog realized the potential and political significance of the emerging working class. Because the greatest number of the Afrikaner labor force were concentrated in the mining industry—by the 1930s almost 90 percent of all white miners on the Witwatersrand were Afrikaans-speaking—they obviously became the NRT's paramount focus. Consequently, the *Afrikanerbond van Mynwerkers* (Afrikaner League of Mineworkers), or ABM, was established in November 1936.⁷³

The underlying reasons for the founding of the ABM were twofold. On the one hand, its inception took place against the background of the *Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party* (Purified Nationalist Party), or GNP, the SALP, and the United Party (UP) vying for the political support of the Afrikaner working class.⁷⁴ The GNP and its Afrikaner-oriented allies, the AB, the NRT, and Afrikaner churches, understood the key position of the Afrikaner miners in the economically strategic gold-mining industry. Membership of the MWU was not compulsory, and many of the Afrikaner miners were not members of the union. They were either oblivious of any grievances towards the MWU or they mostly remained aloof from trade unionism. In their poverty-stricken urban existence their interests barely reached beyond their daily struggle for survival.

For the Afrikaner cultural brokers, however, these miners had to be weaned from possible susceptibility to "alien influences" in institutions such as the MWU and the SALP, which were dominated by English speakers. They were also convinced that the Trades and Labor Council (T&LC), a coordinating trade union federation with which the MWU

was affiliated, was a menace to Afrikaner miners. Therefore these miners had to be mobilized against “baneful” communist influences within the T&LC, whose non-racial affiliation policies could undermine Afrikaner workers’ position in the mines in favor of blacks.⁷⁵

On the other hand, there were also union-related motives behind the formation of the ABM. There were many grievances and reputed grievances among miners regarding the general working conditions on the mines. As the only officially recognized union, the MWU was the sole conduit through which such grievances could be aired. The union, however, was weak and inefficient, and (in the eyes of the workers) it made no concrete efforts to improve their working conditions and further their interests. The general feeling was that the MWU executive collaborated with the Chamber of Mines to keep the economic standard of the miners at a low level.

The Chamber’s practice, supported by the MWU, of actively recruiting skilled labor abroad rather than employing Afrikaners was regarded as a gross form of economic repression. Profitable and less dangerous work was allegedly reserved for non-Afrikaners. Virtually all less profitable underground work was done by Afrikaner miners, who lived in extreme poverty. Under these conditions many miners became easy victims of phthisis, which shortened their life expectancy substantially. In addition, the pension fund for underground miners was inadequate, and the MWU executive allegedly did nothing to improve the situation.⁷⁶

Many aspects of the management of the MWU were also seriously questioned. Under the leadership of Charles Harris, the general secretary, the MWU was “blatantly” corrupt and autocratic, and was perceived to be in league with the Chamber of Mines. Incompetent union officials were appointed in management positions, which they allegedly also obtained irregularly. Furthermore, there were complaints about the manipulation of elections for union officials, ballot rigging, and illegal representation on the MWU general council by unauthorized outsiders.⁷⁷

The ABM, however, was not well organized and it could not muster a substantial following to challenge the MWU’s position as an alternative miners’ union. The ABM organizers, all Afrikaner miners, were hampered by a lack of recruitment funds. Consequently, the NRT obtained some funds from a few well-off Afrikaner individuals, while Hertzog launched a fundraising campaign to mobilize rural Afrikaner capital to relieve the distress of their urban brethren and inform them of the Afrikaners’ struggle in the trade unions. The rural excursions not only provided the ABM with badly needed funds, but also created a spiritual bond and understanding

between rural Afrikaners and the urban Afrikaner working class.⁷⁸ However, the ABM had to face formidable opponents, since it was initially perceived as an actual threat to the vested interests and position of the MWU and the Chamber of Mines. The MWU's general secretary, Charles Harris, severely attacked the ABM, accusing it of Afrikaner exclusivity and self-interest. The Chamber, while supporting the MWU's criticism, described the ABM as an effort by the GNP to promote a class struggle. The SALP, while promising its full support to the MWU and advising miners to join the organization without delay, vehemently denounced the idea of a separate Afrikaner trade union as a political ploy by the AB. The T&LC, in turn, compared the ABM with trade unions that were established in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.

In an effort to thwart the ABM's challenge to its existence, the MWU pressured the Chamber of Mines to reintroduce the closed shop agreement in June 1937 (the agreement was originally annulled by the Chamber after the 1922 strike). This step had serious consequences for the ABM. The practical implications of the agreement were that white underground miners were forced to join the MWU as the only union officially recognized by the Chamber and pay their union dues. If they refused, the Chamber of Mines reserved the rights to suspend them completely from the mining industry. This reintroduction of the closed shop agreement was a victory for the MWU, and the ABM (temporarily) gave up its efforts to Afrikanerize the mineworkers' union.⁷⁹

Although the ABM theoretically disbanded in June 1937, its adherents, in conjunction with the NRT, were still determined to fight Charles Harris and the officials of the MWU. According to their new strategy, all ABM members were to join the MWU and reform the latter from within. In this way the ABM would continue its efforts to obtain a majority vote in the general council of the MWU, while functioning non-officially as a separate group within the miners' union.⁸⁰

In October 1938, a new organization, the Reformers' Organization, or Reformers, was founded within the MWU. Its head committee consisted of sixteen miners and an executive committee of members, with the NRT's omnipresent Albert Hertzog as chairperson. Membership was open to all white underground miners who endorsed its principles. Its most important objective was to reform the MWU constitutionally from within and to transform it into an Afrikaans-speaking Christian-national trade union by taking over the MWU management.⁸¹

The struggle continued when the Reformers accused the MWU of corrupt practices during World War II. In particular, in the elections for

the post of general secretary, held in March 1940 after the assassination of Charles Harris by a young Afrikaner miner (not connected with the Reformers),⁸² it resorted to ill-concealed ballot rigging. When the Reformers threatened to react to this move with a wartime strike, the state became compelled to intervene and appoint a Commission of Inquiry. The commission acknowledged the existence of corrupt practices and made some recommendations for modification of these practices. These included the removal from office and prosecution of Jan Kukuk, the MWU's candidate, who was replaced by Bertram B. Broderick.⁸³

But Broderick was unpopular and regarded by many as dictatorial. In 1943 he negotiated a wage increase of 30 percent on behalf of the MWU with the Gold Producers' Committee (GPC)—the executive of the Chamber of Mines. This was, however, rapidly withdrawn in return for an annual payment to the union of £100,000 for five years by the GPC for housing and other cooperative schemes to be agreed upon between the GPC and the MWU. The MWU leadership agreed to submit no further wage demands unless "existing conditions should change very materially." The farms purchased with this grant were rapidly bankrupted.⁸⁴

Naturally, the miners were outraged by the lack of wage increases and became incensed at what was regarded as the MWU's capitulation to mining capital. The situation was aggravated as the War Measures Act No. 29 of 1940, which stipulated that no elections for the MWU executive would be held during the war and up to six months after hostilities had been ceased, had still not repealed by 1946. Consequently, the seething discontent among the miners erupted in a general strike in 1946.⁸⁵

By this time the Reformers were only one of several groups of miners who agitated against the MWU executive. During the 1946 strike a so-called Protesting Miners' Committee was also established. Although many protesting miners shared the Reformers' dissatisfaction with the MWU executive, they did not want to associate themselves with the Reformers. The 1940 Commission of Inquiry came to the conclusion that the Reformers' motives were harmful to the interests of the miners and the mining industry and that they were driven by interests outside of the industry, such as the NRT. Clearly, by 1946 the Reformers were no longer the only miners' organization prepared to take on the MWU executive committee.⁸⁶

According to the terms of settlement of the 1946 strike, the government agreed to another Commission of Inquiry into the affairs of the MWU. However, while the commission was still conducting its inquiry, events took an unexpected turn when Broderick was discharged from his

position as general secretary by a MWU general council meeting. As a result, thirteen of the nineteen members of the MWU's executive committee also resigned. Apparently Broderick's autocratic behavior and his poor handling of the MWU's affairs had taken their toll.⁸⁷

When elections for a new postwar MWU executive committee were finally set for July 1946, there was intensive lobbying for votes. On the one side was Broderick and his adherents, and on the other all the protesting factions, which grouped themselves into the United Mine Workers' Committee (UMC). But when election irregularities among shaft stewards led to disputes and the 1946 Commission of Inquiry's arbitration of the matter thwarted the UMC's chances to obtain a majority vote in the MWU's general council (the union's supreme authority), another miners' strike broke out in January 1947.⁸⁸

The strike, which ended only in March 1947, had substantial repercussions. There was overwhelming support for the strike, especially from Afrikaner miners, but also from a section of English-speaking miners. According to Linda de Kock, the success of the 1947 strike was a resounding victory for the UMC. Eventually in November 1948, six months after the GNP's victory in the 1948 general election, the UMC, consisting of a strong core of Reformers, finally gained control of the MWU management. In the November elections for shaft stewards the UMC won 187 seats out of 195, and 35 UMC members out of a total of 49 were also elected to the MWU's general council. In addition, Daan Ellis, an ex-Reformer, was elected as the union's new general secretary.⁸⁹ Thus the long struggle for the complete Afrikanerization of the mineworkers' union was finally concluded successfully.

Coming to Grips with White Political Hegemony: The Phenomenon of Afrikaner Nationalism

The Afrikaners' ascendance to political dominance during the 1930s and 1940s has intrigued many twentieth-century scholars and produced a plethora of studies by revisionists, liberals, and socialists in an attempt to analyze and explain the historical phenomenon of Afrikaner nationalism and the position of the urban Afrikaner working class in the mobilization of Afrikaner nationalism.

According to Dan O'Meara's economic studies, hailed by many scholars as some of the most authoritative structural analyses on the subject of Afrikaner nationalism, the attempts at the Afrikanerization of the

MWU and the organization of Afrikaner miners on Christian-national principles formed an integral part of the Afrikaner cultural entrepreneurs' strategy to mobilize Afrikaner workers in the organic identity of a monolithic Afrikanerdom. It was thus in the 1930s that a fully urbanized Afrikaner nationalism led to a mobilization of the Afrikaner working class for the purposes of ethnic capital formation. Central to the nationalist mobilization of the entire *Afrikanervolk* (Afrikaner people) were what O'Meara identifies as the "petty [petit] bourgeois" Afrikaner professionals and intellectuals within the AB. This petit bourgeoisie identified British imperialism and "foreign" capitalism in South Africa as the source of discrimination against and subsequent economic immobility of Afrikaners. To overcome these economic impediments the AB-dominated petit bourgeoisie had to form anti-imperialist class alliances with all sectors of Afrikanerdom. Therefore the AB became involved in addressing urban issues. Poor whiteism and the position of Afrikaners generally were regarded as urban rather than rural phenomena and the solution lay in Afrikaner ownership of the structure of the industrial economy.

O'Meara argues that the mines were the second largest employers, after the railroads, of Afrikaner workers by the 1930s. For two reasons Afrikaner workers, and miners in particular, were an essential tool in the mobilization strategies of the Afrikaner cultural brokers—something which O'Meara perceives as entailing a "cynical manipulation" of miners' grievances against the hopelessly corrupt MWU for petit bourgeois ends. First, the cultural brokers were convinced that Afrikaner workers displayed an "unhealthy" attraction to "foreign" class organizations, such as the traditional trade unions and the SALP, run by "foreign" leaders in an "unholy" alliance with "foreign" capitalists designed to line the pockets of both. The "foreign" and "communistic" labor leaders were also imbued with the "cancerous" ideology of class.

Given the existence of a large group of urban poor whites, there was a real danger that they could be mobilized along class lines, thereby undermining any potential mass base for Afrikaner nationalism. Therefore, Afrikaner workers had to be "rescued" from the un-nationalistic power of the English-dominated labor organizations and thus "saved" for the organic unity of the *Afrikanervolk* and mobilized in cultural terms. Furthermore, if the Afrikaner workers were mobilized and their material basis secured, they would not only be "rescued" from poor whiteism and from their least-skilled, lowest-paid roles in industry, but also from "foreign" and "communistic" labor leaders, who sought to replace them with cheap African labor, forcing them back into the morass of poor whiteism.

Second, O'Meara argues that the mobilization of Afrikaner workers became the *sine qua non* of Afrikaner nationalist political and economic power and the development of Afrikaner capital. The nature of white industrial employment in the mines changed. In the 1920s an English-oriented, craft union-dominated division of labor prevailed. By the 1930s the roles of these craft unionists changed to those of supervisors. Therefore the process of secondary industrialization and the industrial unionism of the MWU, as the only non-craft mining union, provided less-skilled Afrikaner miners with opportunities to raise their status to supervisors of (black) labor, which in turn improved their material conditions. According to O'Meara, the status of these Afrikaner miners, as part of the new petit bourgeoisie, particularly attracted the NRT. The savings of Afrikaner workers, such as the Afrikaner miners within the MWU, were to provide an important source of capital for the Afrikaner economic movement. It was thus important that they be weaned from the ideological and organizational hold of class groupings and so contribute to an Afrikaner *volkskapitalisme* (people's capitalism) that would eventually replace imperial and foreign capitalism and empower Afrikanerdom economically.⁹⁰

According to Dunbar Moodie, the centenary celebrations of the Great Trek in 1938 provided a huge cultural impetus for Afrikaner nationalism and the eventual Afrikanerization of the MWU executive in 1948. The AB was convinced that the problems of urban Afrikaner poverty were to be solved by organizing and mobilizing Afrikaner workers in the cities via Christian-national labor unions into the organic unity of the *volk*—a strategy that would protect their right to existence against labor competition with blacks. Since communism advocated racial equality and disregarded racial differences, which posed a threat to Afrikaner ethnic existence, the NP was to be the agent to unite the multiple anti-communist forces within Afrikanerdom in support of a single anti-communist organization (the party itself).⁹¹

William Vatcher, who erroneously attempts to equate the Afrikaner nationalism of the 1930s and 1940s with Hitler's Nazism,⁹² asserts that the problem of urbanized poor whites was a significant factor in the development of nationalism by Afrikaner Nationalist leaders. Consequently, efforts were made to improve the position of the poor whites, to develop in them a heightened sense of their identity as part of the Afrikaner people, and to prevent their absorption into an undifferentiated proletariat.⁹³

Isabel Hofmeyr thinks that, since the intellectual Afrikaner petit bourgeoisie were being financially cast off by the wealthy Afrikaner landed gentry in the wake of the Anglo-Boer War, they could only appeal to populist support to back their class base materially. This populist support was

found among the Afrikaner poor and in the broader movement of “moralizing” the poor in the cities, in welfare work of ministry to the poor and fashioning them into workers. Therefore, Hofmeyr argues that the process of becoming a worker was the process of being made into an Afrikaner. The Afrikaner intelligentsia had an overriding interest in creating Afrikaner workers who would refill Afrikaner churches, attend Afrikaner schools and buy Afrikaner books, thus preventing the marginalization of the Afrikaner petit bourgeois class.⁹⁴

Many findings by revisionist scholars, such as O’Meara and others, on Afrikaner nationalism and the mobilization of the Afrikaner working class were based on the earlier publications of labor and socialist personalities from the trade union movement—some of whom were the victims of Nationalist laws and labor policies. They also launched virulent attacks upon aspects of Afrikaner nationalism and its Christian-nationalist labor doctrine.

Alex Hepple, the SALP parliamentary leader in the 1950s asserted that Afrikaner workers “had been entangled in the meshes of all the social and cultural offshoots of the *Broederbond*” and that the AB’s cultural and economic front organizations launched “an all-out attack” upon the traditional trade unions, such as the MWU, “to undermine and destroy” them. For Hepple, the interference by Afrikaner cultural entrepreneurs “brought nothing but division to workers’ organizations.” Because members of the MWU were predominantly Afrikaans-speaking and closely attached to their church, they were “easily influenced” by “Christian-National propaganda” and the “fanaticism” of Albert Hertzog.⁹⁵

The views on Afrikaner nationalism expressed by Solly Sachs, former general secretary of the Garment Workers’ Union of South Africa, who was officially persecuted by the NP government for alleged communist activities in the early 1950s, concur with those of Hepple. Sachs held that the mobilization of Afrikaner workers under the guise of advocating Christian-nationalism was essential to canvass political support for the NP in order to take control of the government in a general election. Therefore the MWU became a mere “political tool” of the NP.⁹⁶

Material and Cultural Considerations of the Afrikaner Urban Working Class: Towards a New Synthesis

The above analyses and discussions on the emergence of Afrikaner nationalism and the mobilization of the Afrikaner working class, however, did

not succeed in explaining the actions of Afrikaner workers in ethnic terms convincingly. For one, they only took scant and partial cognizance of the different historiographic perspectives presented in Afrikaans literature on the struggle of (especially poor) Afrikaners to establish and maintain their cultural identity in an alien urban environment. As their point of departure, these studies conspicuously argue that Afrikaner nationalism was instigated and controlled by the petit bourgeois Afrikaner intellectual clique through the strategies of elite-driven organizations such as the AB, the NRT, and the NP—thus a monolithic ethnic block with a presumably inherent organic unity.⁹⁷ Therefore, the impression is created that the Afrikaner working class only reacted to the impulses and directives of the petit bourgeois elite as willing and docile tools to dutifully execute their obligations to realize the elite Afrikaners' master plan for Afrikanerdom. Thus the assumption was that urban Afrikaner workers had no class considerations of their own that determined their reaction or allegiance to ethnic mobilization.

But recent studies on organized dog racing as a leisure pursuit, particularly of the urban Afrikaner working class, and on the differing perceptions of the Great Trek anniversaries among various Afrikaner interest groups suggest that the class interests of the working classes and the middle classes did not always coincide. Albert Grundlingh argues that elements of the leisure-time pursuit of the highly popular dog racing attractions among the Afrikaner working class reveal the development of inherent class dynamics. By the 1930s Afrikaner workers were not entirely hapless victims of forces beyond their control in an alien urban environment who had to be saved from un-nationalistic (i.e., British) "vices," such as dog racing, as perceived by the petit bourgeois Afrikaner cultural brokers. Rather, the pursuit of dog racing reveals the underlying fissures in the process of creating what was considered a suitable Afrikaner culture. The Afrikaner poor did not necessarily share the same cultural concerns as their middle-class compatriots. Likewise, members of the Afrikaner middle classes became increasingly aware of a growing social divide between them and the working classes as the cleavages between the material interests of the various groups grew.⁹⁸

Similarly, Grundlingh and Hilary Sapire argue that the Afrikaner working classes and middle classes perceived Great Trek anniversaries differently. For a vulnerable and marginalized Afrikaner poor, such celebrations served as a spiritual and cultural balm for their economic woes and insecurities. They felt increasingly betrayed and deserted by the elitism of urban middle-class Afrikanerdom, whose taste for cultural inspiration and

revival at Afrikaner festivals seemed to have diminished and whose economic and social embourgeoisement since the 1960s excluded their poorer compatriots.⁹⁹

Indeed, as mentioned earlier, the NP sponsored a commission that was to investigate the feasibility of an all-Afrikaner miners' union apart from the MWU, which eventually led to the formation of the *Zuid-Afrikaanse Werkers Bond* in 1917. In addition, the Cape Town-based pro-Nationalist organ, *De Burger*, preached unity between rural and urban Afrikaners to prevent them from falling prey to the capitalist class or to un-nationalistic labor organizations. But as early as 1920, the same paper prophetically speculated that the day might soon arrive when the material interests of the Afrikaner working class and those of other Afrikaner classes would diverge, which could in turn dissolve Afrikaner *volkseenheid* (people's unity).¹⁰⁰

O'Meara and others concede that by the late 1930s and early 1940s the economic position of Afrikaner workers, and therefore also their material basis, had been improved considerably due to wartime industrial expansion. By then the poor white problem had been largely overcome. This was an indication that Afrikaner workers were adapting to urban conditions.¹⁰¹ It also suggests that the more secure their material basis became in this period, the more confident these workers became in pursuing their own class interests per se, often independently and not always in tandem with the designs and strategies of the Afrikaner petit bourgeois cultural entrepreneurs. The intelligentsia wanted an ordered and hierarchical world. But it was not quite the world which Afrikaner workers wanted,¹⁰² nor did bourgeois values hold much appeal for them.¹⁰³ O'Meara aptly puts it that workers cared more about their wage packet and about their other material interests than they cared about ideology.¹⁰⁴

An examination of the Minutes of Evidence pertaining to the 1940 Commission of Inquiry into the affairs of the MWU reveals perhaps the most evident examples of Afrikaner working-class dynamics. Clearly, for many Reformers material considerations were of primary concern in their reformist zeal. From their point of view, issues such as the "specter" of communism, the "menace" of racial equality with blacks, and the dilution of the ranks of white labor due to an influx of African labor, which they perceived to be associated with communism, served as important motives for the formation of the Reformers' Organization. For these miners the preservation of the color bar in the mining industry was a fundamental principle.¹⁰⁵ This concurs with O'Meara's conclusion that material factors, rather than the innate susceptibility of Afrikaner miners to the appeals of

Christian-nationalism, explain the Reformers' successful takeover of the MWU.¹⁰⁶

The lack of administrative skills to run the affairs of a trade union properly, rather than an overwhelming loyalty to the ideals of Afrikaner nationalism, also seems to have been an important reason why Afrikaner miners were willing to accept assistance from outside the traditional labor movement and why the ABM and the Reformers' Organization were launched by the NRT, an organization of the intellectual elite.¹⁰⁷

Furthermore, the Minutes of Evidence reveal that not all Afrikaners were ABM members or Reformers, nor were they all Nationalists. Both organizations included a number of English-speaking supporters. The membership of these organizations also included supporters of the SALP, the UP, and loyalists who participated in the UP government's war effort in North Africa on behalf of Britain and her allies.¹⁰⁸ One witness even alleged that a "communistically inclined" miner, Charlie Langeveld, was a Reformer.¹⁰⁹

Thus, these arguments seem to refute the claims that all Afrikaner workers, and miners in particular, were susceptible pawns in the ethnic mobilization strategies of the cultural brokers, or that they necessarily regarded themselves as an integral part of the organic unity of a monolithic Afrikanerdom. Neither does the evidence suggest that reformist organizations, such as the ABM and the Reformers' Organization, were used exclusively for political or ethnic purposes by the miners themselves. Both organizations included members who were not staunch NP supporters or even Afrikaans speakers. Therefore, the evidence supports the argument that for many Afrikaner miners class and material considerations carried more weight than Afrikaner nationalist and ethnic considerations.¹¹⁰ Indeed, in his study on the social and economic history of the Witwatersrand between 1886 and 1914, Van Onselen vividly illustrates the staunch political independence of the early Afrikaner working class and the futile attempts by Afrikaner and labor political parties to capture and hold the allegiance of these workers.¹¹¹

Apart from material interests, the Afrikaner working class also revealed the need to preserve a distinctive Afrikaner cultural identity amidst the prevailing cosmopolitan socio-economic conditions on the Witwatersrand gold fields. Although O'Meara claims that Afrikaner workers displayed scant interest in the culture and politics of the *volk* (people)—mainly as a result of the poor white problem¹¹²—numerous Afrikaner histories tell of an Afrikaner proletariat with its rural background which had to assert itself in an urban environment that was

predominantly alien and hostile to Afrikaner cultural traditions and the Afrikaans language.¹¹³

Afrikaner working-class organizations initially had relatively little cultural ethnic appeal, but over time managed to impart more of a cultural dimension. Perhaps this coincided with the number of English-speaking miners pegged at the same level, which allowed for the growth of Afrikaner parity.

Indeed, the aims of the 1917 *Zuid-Afrikaanse Werkers Bond* were to protect the cultural and language interests of the Afrikaner miners against the dominating British-orientated spirit that prevailed in the MWU at that time¹¹⁴—thus nineteen years before the NRT attempted to mobilize Afrikaner workers for ethnic and nationalist purposes. In addition, the evidence from the 1940 Commission of Inquiry into the affairs of the MWU clearly reveals, as far as ordinary Afrikaner miners were concerned, that the ABM and the Reformers' Organization served as urban cultural havens for those newly proletarianized workers who managed to secure employment on the mines. They harbored a fair amount of distrust of the leadership of the existing trade unions, such as the executive of the MWU. Thus S. S. Schoeman, a Reformer and former ABM member, testified before the Commission:

[T]hese men all of a sudden find themselves in a strange environment under conditions which are strange to them and they are practically lost. That is the state of affairs and if one understands that one can realise how it was that the Afrikanerbond of Myn Workers [*sic*] came into being.¹¹⁵

Therefore it seems clear that as far as the cultural interests of Afrikaner miners were concerned, two considerations are at stake. On the one hand, there were those members of the ABM and the Reformers' Organization who strove as bona fide miners towards creating apolitical¹¹⁶ labor organizations that would also cater for the cultural needs of Afrikaner workers. These miners followed in the tradition of their predecessors who organized the short-lived *Zuid-Afrikaanse Werkers Bond* in 1917 and the *Suid-Afrikaanse Werkersunie* in 1922. In light of this argument O'Meara's assertion that the majority of Afrikaner workers made no attempt to organize themselves along Christian-national lines by the 1930s is partly correct.¹¹⁷

On the other hand, it is also quite evident that the Afrikaner petit bourgeois cultural brokers in the AB and the NRT had their own nationalist designs for the Afrikaner working class as part of their strategy for the

ethnic mobilization of the whole of Afrikanerdom. Therefore it must be conceded that certain ABM members and Reformers not only enthusiastically supported these aims on ideological grounds, but also took an active part in the NRT's efforts.¹¹⁸

The eventual Afrikanerization of the MWU can also be regarded as an attempt by a fraction of the Afrikaner working class to escape poor whiteism by strengthening their material basis and consequently establishing for themselves a distinct cultural niche and Afrikaner working class cultural identity in an English-dominated urban environment.

Conclusion

This article does not attempt to refute the earlier arguments on Afrikaner nationalism and ethnic mobilization. It concedes that many reformist-oriented Afrikaner workers' interests either corresponded with those of the middle-class Afrikaner cultural brokers in organizations such as the AB and the NRT, or they were caught up in the ethnic mobilization strategies of the latter two organizations. These strategies were intended to purify the MWU of a *volksvreemde* (alien to the people) orientation and make it an obedient servant of Afrikaner nationalism. But on the other hand, this article strongly suggests that, in the light of Afrikaner miners' distinct material and cultural interests, the position of the Afrikaner working class in relation to Afrikaner nationalism and ethnic mobilization should be seriously reconsidered. The evidence clearly indicates that Afrikaner-orientated organizations, such as the ABM and the Reformers' Organization, displayed more of their own initiative than is generally recognized and people like Albert Hertzog and the NP drew on this initiative rather than created it.

What is quite evident is the fact that the Afrikaner working class emerged as a consequence of urbanization. In other words, without industrialization and the subsequent urbanization of the South African economy, a distinct Afrikaner working class probably never would have emerged.

As Lange states, much more comprehensive research is still needed on how Afrikaner ethnicity and cultural identity were experienced by ordinary people in their daily lives in an urban setting,¹¹⁹ as well as on the behavioral patterns of the Afrikaner working class in an urban environment. The history of the urbanization of Afrikaner mineworkers is a case in point.

Abbreviations

AB	<i>Afrikaner Broederbond</i> (Afrikaner Brotherhood)
CAD	Central Archives Depot, Pretoria
DRC	Afrikaner Dutch Reformed Church
GNP	<i>Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party</i> (Purified Nationalist Party)
GPC	Gold Producers' Committee
K6	Mine Workers Union Inquiry Commission 1940–1941
MWU	Mine Workers' Union
NP	National Party
NRT	<i>Nasionale Raad van Trustees</i> (National Council of Trustees)
SALP	South African Labor Party
SAWU	<i>Suid-Afrikaanse Werkersunie</i> (South African Workers' Union)
T&LC	Trades and Labor Council
TAD	Transvaal Archives Depot, Pretoria
TMA	Transvaal Miners' Association
UMC	United Mineworkers' Committee
UP	United Party

Notes

I am deeply indebted to my colleagues, Professors Hermann Giliomee, Albert Grundlingh, and Pieter Kapp, for their sound comments and constructive criticism.

1 Floris van Jaarsveld, *Stedelike Geskiedenis as Navorsingsveld vir die Suid-Afrikaanse Historikus* (Johannesburg: RAU Publikasiereeks B3, 1973), 1.3.

2 Johannesburg: Central News Agency, Ltd., 1919.

3 See *The Rise of the City* (New York, 1933) and “The City in American History,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 27 (1940).

4 Van Jaarsveld, *Stedelike Geskiedenis*, 6.

5 Stellenboch: Pro Ecclesia, 1932.

6 Van Jaarsveld, *Stedelike Geskiedenis*, 37.

7 Johannes Albertyn, ed., *Die Stadwaartse Trek van die Afrikanernasie. Referate en Besluite van die Volkskongres* (Johannesburg, 1947).

8 Christopher Saunders, *Writing History: South Africa's Urban Past and Other Essays* (Pretoria: HSRC Publishers, 1992), 6, 12–13. With regard to Van Jaarsveld's writings on urban history see also, apart from note 1 above, Floris van Jaarsveld, *Die Afrikaners se Groot Trek na die Stede* (Johannesburg: Perskor Publishers, 1982); and Floris van Jaarsveld, ed., *Verstedeliking in Suid-Afrika* (Pretoria: UP, 1985).

9 Ernst Stals, ed., *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel I, 1886–1924* (Cape Town: HAUM, 1978); and Ernst Stals, ed., *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel II, 1924–1961* (Pretoria: HAUM, 1986).

10 Van Jaarsveld, *Stedelike Geskiedenis*, 15–16.

11 Chris Schumann, "Die Unie van Suid-Afrika tot 1939," in *Geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika*, Deel II, ed. A. J. H. van der Walt et al. (Cape Town: Nasionale Boekhandel Beperk, 1951), 279.

12 Albertyn, *Die Stadwaartse Trek*, 96.

13 Heribert Adam and Hermann Giliomee, *Ethnic Power Mobilized: Can South Africa Change?* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), 110–11.

14 Hermann Giliomee, "'Wretched Folk, Ready for Any Mischief': The South African State's Battle to Incorporate Poor Whites and Militant Workers, 1890–1939," *Historia* 47, no. 2 (November 2002): 615.

15 Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel II*, 13, 65. See also Van Jaarsveld, *Die Afrikaners se Groot Trek*, 192; David Welsh, "The Growth of Towns," in *The Oxford History of South Africa 1870–1966*, eds. Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 212–13; Pieter Nel, "Die Stad en die Georganiseerde Kultuurlewe," in *Verstedeliking in Suid-Afrika*, 182.

16 It is, however, acknowledged that Charles van Onselen published an excellent study on the emergence of Afrikaner working class consciousness and Afrikaner workers' responses to proletarianization and urbanization in the period 1886 to 1914. See Charles van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand 1886–1914, 1, New Babylon* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1982), 36; and Charles van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand 1886–1914, 2, New Nineveh* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1982), 111–61.

17 Floris van Jaarsveld, *From Van Riebeeck to Vorster 1652–1974* (Johannesburg: Perskor Publishers, 1975), 159; Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel I*, 1, 30.

18 Van Onselen, *New Babylon*, 2–8.

19 Floris van Jaarsveld, *Die Afrikaners se Groot Trek*, 167.

20 Sarel Pauw, *Die Beroepsarbeid van die Afrikaner in die Stad* (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia Drukkery Edms. Bpk., 1946), 126.

21 Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel II*, 10.

22 Abel Coetzee, *Die Opkoms van die Afrikaanse Kultuurgedagte aan die Rand 1886–1936* (Johannesburg: Afrikaanse Pers Beperk, 1936?), 324. See also Sarel van Wyk, *Die Afrikaner in die Beroepslewe van die Stad* (Pretoria: Academica, 1968), 32.

23 Van Jaarsveld, *Die Afrikaners se Groot Trek*, 168.

24 *Ibid.*, 137, 167.

25 According to Lis Lange, *White, Poor and Angry: White Working Class Families in Johannesburg* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 72. The term "poor whites" refers to unskilled workers, largely of Afrikaner descent, who were especially exposed to prolonged periods of unemployment and/or could not find employment due to the racial division of the labor market that characterized South Africa at the turn of the twentieth century. See also Robert Morrell, ed., *White But Poor: Essays on the History of Poor Whites in Southern Africa, 1880–1940* (Pretoria: Unisa, 1992), 1–2.

26 See Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel I*, 2, 30, 33–34, 38; Van Jaarsveld, *Die Afrikaners se Groot Trek*, 136, 138, 141, 146–47; Pauw, *Die Beroepsarbeid van die Afrikaner*, 58, 60–61; Van Onselen, *New Babylon*, 8, 20; Van Onselen, *New Nineveh*, 114, 121; William Macmillan, *Complex South Africa: An Economic Foot-Note to History* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1930), 70, 81; Frederick Johnstone, *Class, Race and Gold: A Study of Class Relations and Racial Discrimination in South Africa* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1976), 50–53; Timothy Keegan, *Rural Transformation in*

Industrializing South Africa: The Southern Highveld to 1914 (London: Macmillan Press, 1987), 20–23, 29, 32, 38–40; David Welsh, “The Growth of Towns,” 183, 204; Albertyn, *Die Stadwaartse Trek*, 16–17, 73, 93.

27 See Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel I*, 30–40; Van Jaarsveld, *Die Afrikaners se Groot Trek*, 147, 149, 167, 170; Pauw, *Die Beroepsarbeid van die Afrikaner*, 64–5, 140; Johannes Albertyn, ed., *Kerk en Stad: Verslag van Kommissie van Ondersoek oor Stadstoestand* (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia Drukkery Edms. Bpk., 1948), 17, 30; Johnstone, *Class, Race and Gold*, 53; Keegan, *Rural Transformations*, 26; Van Onselen, *New Nineveh*, 121, 127.

28 Dan O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934–1948* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983), 37, 82.

29 Solly Sachs, *Rebels Daughters* (Manchester: MacGibbon & Kee, 1957), 31.

30 Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel I*, 33, 35. See also Louis Naudé, *Dr. A. Hertzog, Die Nasionale Party en die Mynwerker* (Pretoria: Nasionale Raad van Trusteers, 1969), 11.

31 Elsabé Brink, “‘Maar ’n klomp factory meide’: Afrikaner Family and Community on the Witwatersrand during the 1920s,” in *Class, Community and Conflict*, ed. Belinda Bozzoli (Johannesburg: Ravan press, 1987), 183–85.

32 Pieter Haasbroek, “Ekonomiese Ontwikkelingsfases: Die Grondslag vir Verstedeliking?” in *Verstedeliking in Suid-Afrika*, 12.

33 Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel I*, 2, 4, 58–59, 72–74; Pauw, *Die Beroepsarbeid van die Afrikaner*, 68–69, 87–90, 185; Van Jaarsveld, *Die Afrikaners se Groot Trek*, 147, 170; Keegan, *Rural Transformations*, 23, 25; Van Wyk, *Die Afrikaner in die Beroepslewe*, 35; Johan Fourie, “Die Vraag na en Aanbod van die Afrikaner se Arbeid as Bepalende Faktor in sy Sosio-Ekonomiese Posisie aan die Rand tot 1924,” *Historia* 26, no. 2 (September 1981): 141, 143–46; Albertyn, *Die Stadwaartse Trek*, 8, 17.

34 Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel I*, 58, 61, 82–86; Luli Callinicos, *A People’s History of South Africa, Vol.1, Gold and Workers, 1886–1924* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1981), 87; Frederik Grobler, “Die Invloed van Geskoolde Blanke Arbeid op die Suid-Afrikaanse Politiek van 1886 tot 1924” (Ph.D. diss., Potchefstroom University for Higher Christian Education, 1968), 71.

35 Johnstone, *Class, Race and Gold*, 51, 57. See also Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel I*, 19–28, 33; Van Onselen, *New Nineveh*, 113; Coetzee, *Die Opkoms van die Afrikaanse Kultuurgedagte*, 361–62.

36 See Keegan, *Rural Transformations*, 35; Robert Davies, *Capital, State and White Labour in South Africa, 1900–1960: An Historical Materialist Analysis of Class Formation and Class Relations* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1979), 57–58; and Gideon Scholtz, *Het die Afrikaanse Volk ’n Toekoms?* (Johannesburg: Voortrekkerpers Beperk, 1954), 111–15.

37 Van Onselen, *New Nineveh*, 5.

38 See Lange, *White, Poor and Angry*, 10–32, 113.

39 See, e.g., Robert Cope, *Comrade Bill: The Life and Times of W. H. Andrews, Workers’ Leader* (Cape Town: Stewart Printing Co., 1943), 92; Ivan Walker and Benny Weinbren, *2000 Casualties: A History of the Trade Unions and the Labour Movement in the Union of South Africa* (Johannesburg: South African Trade Union Council, 1961), 25; David Yudelman, *The Emergence of Modern South Africa: State, Capital and the Incorporation of Organized Labor on the South African Gold Fields, 1902–1939* (Westport,

CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), 75; Eben du Plessis, *'n Volk Staar Op: Die Ekonomiese Volkskongres en Daarna* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1964), 33; Albertyn, *Kerk en Stad*, 30; Pauw, *Die Beroepsarbeid van die Afrikaner*, 202.

40 Van Onselen, *New Nineveh*, 142.

41 Elaine Katz, "Miners by Default. Afrikaners and the Gold Mining Industry before Union," *The South African Journal of Economic History* 6, no. 1 (1991): 61–80 and Elaine Katz, "The Underground Route to Mining: Afrikaners and the Witwatersrand Gold Mining Industry from 1902 to the 1907 Miners' Strike," *The Journal of African History* 36, no. 3 (1995): 467–89.

42 Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel I*, 82–83; Van Onselen, *New Babylon*, 22; Van Onselen, *New Nineveh*, 127–30, 139.

43 Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel I*, 83.

44 Lange, *White, Poor and Angry*, 137; Grobler, "Die Invloed van Geskoolde Blanke Arbeid," 95.

45 Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel I*, 84–85; Van Onselen, *New Nineveh*, 139; Pauw, *Die Beroepsarbeid van die Afrikaner*, 202.

46 Cees de Kiewiet, *A History of South Africa: Social and Economic* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 211–12.

47 Grobler, "Die Invloed van Geskoolde Blanke Arbeid," 40; Cope, *Comrade Bill*, 89; Walker and Weinbren, *2000 Casualties*, 22; Ernest Gitsham and James Trembath, *A First Account of Labour Organisation in South Africa* (Durban: E. P. & Commercial Printing Co., 1926), 65–67.

48 Walker and Weinbren, *2000 Casualties*, 42; Elaine Katz, *A Trade Union Aristocracy: A History of White Workers in the Transvaal and the General Strike of 1913* (Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 1976), 279, 594.

49 Lange, *White, Poor and Angry*, 76.

50 Van Onselen, *New Babylon*, 36; Pauw, *Die Beroepsarbeid van die Afrikaner*, 193, 202.

51 Van Onselen, *New Nineveh*, 142. See also Laurence Salomon, "The Economic Background to the Revival of Afrikaner Nationalism," in *Boston University Papers in African History*, 1, ed. Jeffrey Butler (Boston: Boston University Press, 1964), 232, 238.

52 Morrell, *White But Poor*, 12.

53 Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel I*, 85–87; Pauw, *Die Beroepsarbeid van die Afrikaner*, 194, 202–3, 207.

54 This argument refutes the assertions of Abel Coetzee, *Die Afrikaanse Volkskultuur: 'n Inleiding tot die Studie van Volkskunde* (Cape Town: A. A. Balkema, 1953), 125, and Fourie, "Die Vraag na en Aanbod," 152 that there was a lack of class-consciousness within the ranks of urbanizing Afrikanerdom.

55 Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel I*, 36, 40, 86.

56 Johnstone, *Class, Race and Gold*, 105. See also "Briewe van o'er die Vaal," *De Burger* (28 March 1917), 2. For statistics on Afrikaner job occupations on the mines see Pauw, *Die Beroepsarbeid van die Afrikaner*, 218–59, 283–84; Van Wyk, *Die Afrikaner in die Beroepslewe*, 52ff. and Fourie, "Die Vraag na en Aanbod," 149.

57 Salomon, "The Economic Background," 240.

58 Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel I*, 86, 88; Van Jaarsveld, *Die Afrikaners se Groot Trek*, 181; Albertyn, *Kerk en Stad*, 295; "De Afrikaner Arbeider II," *De Burger* (14 July 1916), 4; "De Afrikaner Arbeider XI," *De Burger* (16 September 1916), 7;

"De Afrikaner Arbeider XII," *De Burger* (23 September 1916), 7; "De Afrikaner Arbeider, XIII," *De Burger* (7 October 1916), 7; "De Afrikaner Arbeider XV," *De Burger* (23 October 1916), 4; "De Afrikaner Arbeider XVI," *De Burger* (31 October 1916), 4.

59 "Mijnwerkers-Moelikhede," *Ons Vaderland* (13 February 1917), 2.

60 Quoted by Pauw, *Die Beroepsarbeid van die Afrikaner*, 207.

61 Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel I*, 88–89; "Vakorganisasie en Politiek," *Ons Vaderland* (13 March 1917), 2; "Afrikaners op die Rand," *Ons Vaderland* (5 April 1917), 5; "Arbeiders-Unies en die Afrikaners," *Ons Vaderland* (8 May 1917), 4; "Industriële Organisasies en ons Hollands-sprekende Afrikaners," *Ons Vaderland* (6 July 1917), 4.

62 "Briewe van oor de Vaal," *De Burger* (11 August 1917), 5; "Afrikaners op die Rand," *Ons Vaderland* (5 April 1917), 5. As early as 1914, in its original party program, the NP identified itself with the Afrikaner working class. See also Morrell, *White But Poor*, xix, 15; Okkie Geysers and Andries Marais, eds., *Die Nasionale Party, I. Agtergrond, Stigting en Konsolidasie* (Pretoria: Academica, 1975), 192–93; Dirk Kotzé, "Die Spotprente van D. C. Boonzaier in *De Burger*, 1915–1924" (M.A. thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 1988), 274; "De Afrikaner Arbeider, VII," *De Burger* (18 August 1916), 6.

63 Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel I*, 89; "Uit die Goudveld," *De Burger* (21 February 1919), 3; "Die Suidafrikaanse Mynwerkers Unie," *De Burger* (18 January 1921), 3; "De Zuid-Afrikaanse Werkersbond," *De Burger* (15 March 1921), 4; "Die Toekoms van die S.A. Werkersbond," *De Burger* (19 March 1921), 4; "Z A Werkers Vereniging Gesticht," *Ons Vaderland* (28 August 1917), 5; "S.A.W.B. Kongres," *Ons Vaderland* (12 December 1919), 7.

64 Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel I*, 89.

65 *Ibid.*, 89; "Die Amptenare van die Mynwerkersvereniging," *Ons Vaderland* (18 August 1922), 3.

66 "De Z.A.M.U. en de laatste Staking," *Ons Vaderland* (26 September 1922), 3.

67 Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel I*, 89–90; "Die S.A. Werkersunie," *Ons Vaderland* (27 October 1922), 7.

68 "S. A. Werkers Unie," *Ons Vaderland* (14 November 1922), 1.

69 Lange, *White, Poor and Angry*, 113. It should, however, be emphasized that Lange's work has more of a community approach towards formal labor organizations.

70 Albert Grundlingh, "Afrikaner Nationalism and White Politics," in *South Africa in the 20th Century*, ed. Ben Liebenberg and Burrige Spies (Pretoria: J. L. van Schaik Academic, 1993), 267–70, 281.

71 Naudé, *Dr. A. Hertzog*, 27.

72 Adriaan Pelzer, *Die Afrikaner-Broederbond: Eerste 50 Jaar* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1979), 150; O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, 63. The AB was founded in Johannesburg in 1918 by middle-class Afrikaner intelligentsia who were concerned about their economic prospects because they believed that cultural and spiritual development was not possible without positive economic prospects.

73 Henning van Aswegen and Linda de Kock, "Afrikanermynwerkers en die Mynwerkersunie, 1936–1948, I," *Historia* 32, no. 1 (May 1987): 22; Naudé, *Dr. A. Hertzog*, 10, 18, 27.

74 Van Aswegen and De Kock, "Afrikanermynwerkers, I," 21, 24. In 1934 the United Party was formed by the fusion of the original NP of General Hertzog and General Smuts's South African Party. Afrikaner dissidents who could not agree with the terms of

fusion broke off to form the GNP under Daniël Malan. See also Grundlingh, "Afrikaner Nationalism," 276.

75 Central Archives Depot, Pretoria (hereafter CAD), Mine Workers' Union Inquiry Commission 1940–1941 (hereafter K6), Band 2, Verbatim Reports, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. 5: MWU Executive testifies (4 November 1940), 308, 314, 316, 321–22, 367–70; *Ibid.*, Vol. 10: J. S. de Wet testifies (13 November 1940), 667; *Ibid.*, Band 3, Verbatim Reports, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. 25: I. L. Walker testifies (12 December 1940), 2109–2113, 2121, 2124; Linda de Kock, "Die Stryd van die Afrikaner in die Suid-Afrikaanse Mynwerkersunie aan die Witwatersrand, 1936–1948" (M.A. thesis, Rand Afrikaans University, 1983), 9, 11–33, 38–46, 130; Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel II*, 64–69; Naudé, *Dr. A. Hertzog*, 13–18, 27–30, 54.

76 Van Aswegen and De Kock, "Afrikanermynwerkers, I," 22–23; Naudé, *Dr. A. Hertzog*, 16–27; Albertyn, *Die Stadwaartse Trek*, 8, 97.

77 CAD, K6, Band 4, File VI: Final Reports, Findings & Recommendations, 2–7, 14.

78 *Ibid.*, 15–16; Van Aswegen and De Kock, "Afrikanermynwerkers, I," 25–26, 29; Naudé, *Dr. A. Hertzog*, 28–31, 34, 96–97, 99–100.

79 Van Aswegen and De Kock, "Afrikanermynwerkers, I," 27–28; Naudé, *Dr. A. Hertzog*, 41–42.

80 Transvaal Archives Depot, Pretoria (hereafter TAD), A1731, S. J. Botha Collection, Vol. 4: Die Stryd om die vakbonde. Persoonlike herinneringe van D. B. H. Grobbelaar, 1; Naudé, *Dr. A. Hertzog*, 50–52, 54–55, 57; Henning van Aswegen and Linda de Kock, "Die Hervormingsorganisasie in die Mynwerkersunie, 1937–1948, II," *Historia* 32, no. 2 (September 1987): 1.

81 CAD, K6, Band 2, Vol. 9: S.S. Schoeman testifies (12 November 1940), 571–72; *Ibid.*, Vol. 10: J. S. de Wet testifies, 686–87; *Ibid.*, Vol. 12: J. S. de Wet testifies (18 November 1940), 823–24; *Ibid.*, Band 4, File VI: Final Reports, Findings, & Recommendations, 17–18, 20 and Appendix D, 1–2; Van Aswegen and De Kock, "Die Hervormingsorganisasie, II," 2.

82 Naudé, *Dr. A. Hertzog*, 128–29.

83 See CAD, K6, Band 4, File VI: Final Reports, Findings & Recommendations, 1–10, 58–73.

84 CAD, MWU Inquiry Commission 1946–1948 (hereafter K145), Band 1, Vol. 1: Minutes, 5; *Ibid.*, Band 3, File III: Mine Workers Union, 1 and Memorandum of Agreement; CAD, A2, J. G. Strijdom Collection, Vol. 78: Mynwerkersgeskil, 88; TAD, A1731, S. J. Botha Collection, Vol. 7: SAMWU Verslag, Deel B, 4–5, 8.

85 CAD, K145, Band 3, File III: Mine Workers Union, 1; CAD, A2, J. G. Strijdom Collection, Vol. 78: Mynwerkersgeskil, 88, 97; TAD, A1731, S. J. Botha Collection, Vol. 7: SAMWU Verslag, Deel B, 8; Naudé, *Dr. A. Hertzog*, 209.

86 See CAD, K6, Band 4, File VI: Final Reports, Findings & Recommendations, 7; TAD, A1731, S. J. Botha Collection, Vol. 7: SAMWU Verslag, Deel B, 5, 8–9; CAD, K145, Band 2, Vol. 2: Minutes of the 82nd Meeting, 1–2; Van Aswegen and De Kock, "Die Hervormingsorganisasie, II," 7, 9.

87 CAD, K145, Band 1, Vol. 1: Minutes of the 18th Meeting, 1–2; *Ibid.*, Band 3, File III: Memorandum, 1; CAD, A1731, S. J. Botha Collection, Vol. 7: SAMWU Verslag, Deel B, 7–8; UG 36, 1946: *Report of the Mine Worker's Union Commission*, 4; Van Aswegen and De Kock, "Die Hervormingsorganisasie, II," 9.

88 CAD, K145, Band 2: Minutes of the 65th Meeting, 7–11 and 66th Meeting, 1; CAD, A2, J. G. Strijdom Collection, Vol. 78: Mynwerkersgeskil, 81–83, 90, 98; Van Aswegen and De Kock, “Die Hervormingsorganisasie, II,” 10.

89 De Kock, “Die Stryd van die Afrikaner,” 204–30, 249–53; Naudé, *Dr. A. Hertzog*, 253–54. See also O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, 91.

90 See Dan O’Meara, “The Afrikaner Broederbond 1927–1948: Class Vanguard of Afrikaner Nationalism,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 3, no. 2 (April 1977): 161, 163, 174, 176, 180–82; Dan O’Meara, “Analysing Afrikaner Nationalism: The Christian-National Assault on White Trade Unionism in South Africa, 1934–1948,” *African Affairs* 77, no. 306 (January 1978): 47–67; Dan O’Meara, “White Trade Unionism, Political Power and Afrikaner Nationalism,” *South African Labour Bulletin* 1, no. 10 (1975): 31–51; and O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, 54–95, 114–16, 157–64, 238–43. See also Dunbar Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 15, 49, 69, 169, 203–4, 251; René de Villiers, “Afrikaner Nationalism,” in *The Oxford History of South Africa, II, 1870–1966*, ed. Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 400–401; Sheila Patterson, *The Last Trek: A Study of the Boer People and the Afrikaner Nation* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1957), 145, 153–61, 167, 195; and David Welsh, “Urbanization and the Solidarity of Afrikaner Nationalism,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 7, no. 2 (1969): 266–72.

91 Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*, 170–73, 197–203, 251–52.

92 William Vatcher, *White Laager: The Rise of Afrikaner Nationalism* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1965), 68. See also Carl Dalcanton, *The Afrikaners of South Africa: A Case Study of Identity Formation and Change* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1973), 152, 311. In his 1952 study on the prevailing political and economic conditions in South Africa, *The Choice before South Africa* (London: Turnstile Press, 1952), the trade unionist Solly Sachs, who had an axe to grind with the NP and Afrikaner Nationalist organizations, also could not resist the temptation to demonize these institutions as imitations of German National-Socialism. See also Charles Bloomberg, *Christian-Nationalism and the Rise of the Afrikaner Broederbond in South Africa, 1918–48* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 2ff, for his analysis of the influence of Nazism on aspects of Afrikaner nationalist ideology, as well as Sachs, *Rebels Daughters*, 14ff.

93 Vatcher, *White Laager*, 50.

94 Isabel Hofmeyr, “Building a Nation from Words: Afrikaans Language, Literature and Ethnic Identity, 1902–1924,” in *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth-century South Africa*, ed. Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido (London: Longman Group UK Limited, 1987), 102–4, 111–12, 115–16.

95 Alex Hepple, *Trade Unions in Travail* (Johannesburg: Prompt Printing Co. [Pty.] Ltd., 1953?), 5–46.

96 Sachs, *The Choice before South Africa*, 8–81, 166–87ff. See also Walker and Weinbren, *2000 Casualties*, 216–20; and Jack & Ray Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa 1850–1950* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund, 1883), 517–26. On the vital importance of the Afrikaner urban working class’ political support to the NP’s electoral prospects see Newell M. Stultz, *The Nationalists in Opposition 1934–1948* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1974), 95, 113, 152.

97 See, e.g., Hermann Giliomee, “Constructing Afrikaner Nationalism,” *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 18, nos. 1–2 (1983): 91, 96, for a critique on O’Meara’s interpretation of Afrikaner nationalism and ethnic mobilization.

98 Albert Grundlingh, “‘Gone to the Dogs’: The Cultural Politics of Gambling—The Rise and Fall of British Greyhound Racing on the Witwatersrand, 1932–1949,” *South African Historical Journal* 48 (May 2003): 174–89.

99 Albert Grundlingh and Hilary Sapire, “From Feverish Festival to Repetitive Ritual? The Changing Fortunes of Great Trek Mythology in an Industrializing South Africa, 1938–1988,” *South African Historical Journal* 21 (1989): 19–37.

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101 See Dan O’Meara, *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party 1948–1994* (Randburg: Ravan Press, 1996), 24; O’Meara, “Analysing Afrikaner Nationalism,” 47; Coenraad Juta, “Aspects of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1900–1964: An Analysis” (Ph.D. diss., University of Natal, 1966), 109–11; Adam and Giliomee, *Ethnic Power Mobilized*, 108, 159; Patterson, *The Last Trek*, 143; Welsh, “Urbanisation and Solidarity of Afrikaner Nationalism,” 266; Richard Ford, “The Urban Trek: Some Comparisons of Mobility in American and South African History,” in *South Africa: Sociological Perspectives*, ed. Heribert Adam (London, Oxford University Press, 1971), 260–61; Salomon, “The Economic Background,” 235.

102 Hofmeyr, “Building a Nation from Words,” 103. See also Lange, *White, Poor and Angry*, 168.

103 Adam and Giliomee, *Ethnic Power Mobilized*, 113.

104 O’Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, 165.

105 CAD, K6, Band 2, Vol. 8: S. S. Schoeman testifies (8 November 1940), 542; *Ibid.*, Vol. 9: S.S. Schoeman testifies (12 November 1940), 565–56, 582; *Ibid.*, Vol. 10: J. S. de Wet testifies (13 November 1940), 668–69, 647–57; *Ibid.*, Vol. 11: J. S. de Wet testifies (14 November 1940), 778–84.

106 O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, 90, 93–94; O’Meara, “White Trade Unionism,” 46.

107 CAD, K6, Band 3, Vol. 19: J. J. Grobler testifies (4 December 1940), 1580. See also Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel II*, 177.

108 *Ibid.*, Band 2, Vol. 19: S. S. Schoeman testifies (12 November 1940), 565, 568; *Ibid.*, Vol. 10: J. S. de Wet testifies (13 November 1940), 668–70; *Ibid.*, Band 3, Vol. 19: J. J. Grobler testifies (4 December 1940), 1581.

109 *Ibid.*, Vol. 25: J. A. van den Bergh testifies (12 December 1940), 2090–91. According to Naudé, *Dr. A. Hertzog*, 37, 39, Langevelt was an English-speaking supporter of the Reformers.

110 See O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, 91; O’Meara, “White Trade Unionism,” 47–48; O’Meara, “Analysing Afrikaner Nationalism,” 66; De Kock, “Die Stryd van die Afrikaner,” 102–3; and Alma Müller, “Die Onderlinge Verhouding tussen die Kapitaliste, die Afrikanerelite en die Afrikanerwerkers aan die Witwatersrand tydens die Dertigerjare” (M.A. thesis, Rand Afrikaans University, 1991), 33, 37, 47, 74–75.

111 Van Onselen, *New Babylon*, 36.

112 O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, 71.

113 See, e.g., Stals, *Afrikaners in die Goudstad. Deel II*, 5, 13, 29, 49–50; Van Jaarsveld, *Die Afrikaners se Groot Trek*, 148ff.; Pauw, *Die Beroepsarbeid van die Afrikaner*, 62ff.; Van Wyk, *Die Afrikaner in die Beroepslewe*, 29, 35, 224–28; Albertyn, *Kerk en Stad*, 29ff.; Eben du Plessis, *’n Volk Staans Op*, 32; Van Jaarsveld, *Stedelike Geskiedenis*, 56;

Albertyn, *Die Stadwaartse Trek*, 6–8, 62, 92–93; Johannes D. Kestell, *My Nasie in Nood* (Bloemfontein: Nasionale Pers Bpk., 1940), 50–51.

114 “Rapport van Arbeidsunie Kommissie,” *De Burger* (26 July 1917), 4.

115 CAD, K6, Band 2, Vol. 9: S. S. Schoeman testifies (12 November 1940), 578–79, 582–83. See also *Ibid.*, Band 3, Vol. 19: J. J. Grobler testifies (4 December 1940), 1582, 1591.

116 *Ibid.*, Band 2, Vol. 10: J. S. de Wet testifies (13 November 1940), 668, 670, 675; *Ibid.*, Vol. 11: J. S. de Wet testifies (14 November 1940), 784; *Ibid.*, Band 3, Vol. 19: J. J. Grobler testifies (4 December 1940), 1582–83.

117 O’Meara, “White Trade Unionism,” 37. O’Meara also erroneously asserts that these workers made no attempt to organize themselves along cultural lines.

118 See Naudé, *Dr. A. Hertzog*, 28ff.

119 Lange, *White, Poor and Angry*, 167.

7

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EDUCATED

STRATEGIES OF AN URBAN PETIT-BOURGEOIS ELITE, SOUTH AFRICA, 1935–50

Corinne Sandwith

In 1935, the total population of the city of Cape Town numbered some 290,000 people. Five years later, for the first time since the early nineteenth century, the size of the black population exceeded that of the white.¹ This statistic speaks to what has been termed the “push-pull” phenomenon in South African society: the “pull” of a rapidly developing urban industry requiring unlimited labor supplies and the “push” of ever-deepening rural poverty resulting in an unprecedented movement towards South African cities.² Cape Town in the 1940s was in the process of transforming itself from a small commercial port into a modern industrial city. The instabilities of this emerging economy, combined with rapid urbanization and industrialization, created a city of extremes: precarious slum-dwellings, juvenile crime, poverty, and malnutrition as well as a prosperous white middle-class elite intent on establishing Cape Town as the political and cultural capital of South Africa. At the same time, a relatively relaxed war-time racial dispensation made for a social environment which was significantly less restricted and more open than most other South African cities. In certain respects—and as I do not wish to gloss over its very real inequalities—the city of Cape Town in the late 1930s and early 1940s stands as an example of racial mixing and cultural exchange which is unequalled in South African history, soon to be eliminated in the

post-1948 period when Le Corbusier-inspired architects went to work on reshaping a vibrant urban landscape into one more attuned to the needs of a developing racial-capitalism. The city of Cape Town in the twenty-first century still bears the marks of this devastating process. In the 1940s, however, substantial communities of Africans and so-called “coloreds” still called it their home. As both the “gateway to Africa” and the “door between South Africa and the rest of the world,”³ this African city was also ideally positioned for a noteworthy and influential traffic in ideas. Cape Town’s large immigrant population, many of whom were Eastern Europeans, both significantly diluted the dominant Englishness of the town, and offered a fascinating glimpse into the momentous changes occurring in other parts of the world. A pre-apartheid city, Cape Town in the early 1940s was also abuzz with radical ideas.⁴

This article explores the intellectual and political traditions of Cape Town’s colored elite⁵ in the period 1935 to 1950, the years before and after the implementation of apartheid in South Africa. An investigation into an alternative public sphere, it is also a description of two distinct political strategies forged in response to an oppressive state. The anomalous position occupied by those classified as colored or of mixed race in South Africa—an identity which, relative to the African majority, offered certain material and social advantages—produced a range of strategic behaviors, many of which were centered on the importance of education. For any oppressed group, the question of strategy is all-important. For the colored elite in the 1930s and 40s, the ensuing debate over tactics resulted in some of the most divisive conflicts in the political history of the Western Cape. Those in the more conservative tradition rejected racism, favored a moderate, collaborationist strategy, and accepted incremental, often piecemeal reform. This meant that they often implicitly accepted the benefits of their more elevated position within South Africa’s racial order. Also opposed to any kind of racial thinking, the radicals on the other hand, rejected any kind of co-operation with the *herrenvolk* or ruling class, emphasized the absolute necessity of Non-European unity, and argued for radical political and social transformation.⁶

In an influential article, which examines the discourse of race in South Africa in the early twentieth century, Saul Dubow points to a “distinct ideological shift in the late nineteenth-century Cape” when a failed liberal integrationism was gradually superseded by an emerging segregationist philosophy.⁷ A belief that so-called Non-Europeans would gradually become assimilated into the dominant culture gave way to an obsession with “racial stocks”, a fear of racial mixing, and new segregationist

policies which sought to preserve racial purity by limiting interracial contact as much as possible. Whilst originally conceived as a compromise between “the discredited policies of ‘assimilation’ and ‘repression,’” segregationist thinking, according to Dubow, did not actually constitute a rejection of the central assumptions of these two schools of thought. Rather, as “a synthesis of divergent political traditions . . . the discourse of segregation . . . continued to carry within its terms resonances of those very elements which it professed to reject.”⁸ The unstable combination of these distinct but similar racial philosophies forms the ambiguous terrain on which the colored elite attempted to formulate a political strategy in the early twentieth century. An already precarious position was made more difficult by both their marginal status within the broader South African polity and the uncertain way in which they were treated by successive white governments, at times courted and embraced as part of the European community, but also just as easily shunned.⁹ During the first half of the twentieth century at least, moderate political leaders responded by putting their faith in the possible rewards of assimilation; in other words, they sought to prove themselves worthy of a dominant culture which had designated them inferior by virtue of their “mixed race.” At the time, this strategy—summed up in the phrase “equal rights for civilized men”¹⁰—was an appropriate response to a powerful argument concerning the nature of human progress and the existence of racial hierarchies that had provided justification for varying degrees of racial exclusion and discrimination since the early nineteenth-century. As Mohammed Adhikari demonstrates it was also a strategy that appeared reasonable in the light of the historical record.¹¹ By the mid-1930s, however, the ruling United Party Government was paying only lip-service to these ideas; nevertheless, the strong conceptual link between “civilized” norms of behavior and political integration still remained. During the 1920s and 30s, under the guidance of the then-dominant African People’s Organization (APO), the pursuit of middle-class respectability remained the principal aim of an oppressed group anxious to prove its good intentions, break down white prejudice, and win social acceptance. These efforts received support from the arguments of prominent African-American scholars like Booker T. Washington, who advocated a philosophy of self-help and economic independence, and encouraged a pragmatic strategy of socio-economic uplift and the avoidance of direct political action. Here, the influential middle-class myth of individual achievement and the possibility of self-advancement through hard work, thrift, and sobriety formed the foundations of a political strategy which looked to self-improvement and

adaptation rather than radical transformation of an exploitative and hierarchical society. For Dr. Abdurahman, influential and highly respected community leader and president of the APO from 1905 to 1940, education was the key to the cultural, economic, and political upliftment of the “colored race.”¹² The Teachers League of South Africa (TLSA), established in 1913 under Dr. Abdurahman’s guidance was one of the principal community bodies charged with this task, and its publication, *The Educational Journal*,¹³ was an important forum for the public discussion of these aims.¹⁴ Alongside this aim (and despite a professed non-racialism) went the explicit promotion of a distinct colored racial identity and—what amounted to much the same thing—the absolute necessity of creating and maintaining a firm distinction between those classified as “colored”, and the “semi-civilized blanketed Natives from the reserves.”¹⁵

In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin notes how, in sixteenth-century Europe, “upper body functions” like reason, delicacy, and refinement became the distinctive markers of a new bourgeois subjectivity.¹⁶ What this tended to produce was an implicit categorizing of human behaviors and preferences, so that a taste for High Culture or an avoidance of lewd or excessive behavior, for example, become the visible signs of a more civilized sensibility, and, as a powerful mechanism of class distinction and differentiation, an effective way of ensuring the continued hegemony of the ruling class. Taking up the implications of this argument for a more contemporary example, Laura Kipnis draws attention to the way in which this opposition between high and low discourses, high and low classes, and high and low culture is “enforced and reproduced” in the interests of “a class hierarchy tenuously held in place through symbolic (and less symbolic) policing” of the threats posed by the lower orders. “The very highness of high culture,” she argues, “is structured through the obsessive banishment of the low, and through the labor of suppressing the grotesque body . . . in favor of what Bakhtin refers to as the ‘classical body.’”¹⁷ In South Africa in the 1930s and 40s, a similar constellation of attitudes, tastes, and behaviors functioned as the naturalized, arbitrary signifiers of a privileged (white) middle-class subjectivity and marked the boundary between those deemed acceptable or civilized and those who were not. The colored elite in the Western Cape in the 1930s and 40s—forced to embrace this hierarchical and exclusionary logic in the interests of their own political survival—sought a remedy for political and socio-economic discrimination through the cultivation and conspicuous demonstration of middle-class manners, tastes, habits, and behaviors. Attempts to carve out a place on the respectable side of the class divide were an essential aspect

of a political strategy made all the more urgent by the widespread (white) perception that colored people were “little better than an aggregate of immoral, or at best, amoral creatures addicted to drink, dagga and dice.”¹⁸

For the petit-bourgeois elite, the rhetoric and practice of protest itself was seen as one of the key areas in which to prove that they were above the level of the rabble-rousing horde. Enormous emphasis was therefore placed on a political strategy that remained well mannered and dignified at all times, even in the face of increasing racism and repression. In this regard, Adhikari cites a telling example from a much earlier period of the way in which community leaders drew particular attention to the anarchic, violent, and irrational behavior of white mine workers during the Rand Revolt of 1922 in order to show up their own far more respectable politics.¹⁹ In the Teachers League in particular, decorous conduct, solemnity, restraint, moderation, and self-control “were amongst the most highly-valued behavioral traits.”²⁰ It is for this reason that community leaders in the mid-1940s responded with such energy to the “uncivilized” behavior of an emerging radical bloc whose uncouth, aggressive, often defamatory style was seen as fundamentally harmful to their cause. Radical ideas amongst black South Africans had been gaining ground since the mid-1930s. Intensified by the events of the Spanish Civil War and the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1936, they were given even further impetus in the same year by the successful attempt by the South African Government to secure the two-thirds majority necessary to introduce the notorious Hertzog Bills, which would deprive Africans of the vote.²¹ Aside from widespread poverty, unemployment, and malnutrition, oppressed peoples in the Western Cape also faced the indignity of a whole set of new segregation initiatives. For those feeling frustrated with the cap-in-hand methods of the APO, new groups like the National Liberation League, the New Era Fellowship, and the Non-European United Front were the principle channels for a new popular radicalism.²² Of even greater import for the colored community was the announcement in 1943 of the government’s plan to form a separate Coloured Affairs Department, which had an overwhelming impact on political and community organizations in the Western Cape, bringing to a head incipient tensions and dividing the community irrevocably. In February of that year, the New Era Fellowship launched the Anti-Coloured Affairs Department Committee or Anti-CAD, and within the Teachers League, antagonisms that had been simmering since the early 1940s between a new generation of radical teachers and a more cautious old-guard finally split the organization in two. What is interesting is that in the unsettled and unsettling days of the

Teacher's League split, the growing antipathy towards this new radicalism was argued as much on the grounds of political strategy as it was on the basis of good manners. For the older generation of leaders, for example, the fact that the young radicals shouted "as though they are on the verge of a nervous breakdown"²³ was as threatening as their radical ideas. Their lack of decorum was "the way to debase and not to raise our people."²⁴

If unbecoming conduct (and radicalism) were to be avoided at all costs, it was also considered necessary to subscribe to Western middle-class norms of dress, language, behavior, social activities, and cultural pursuits. Thus there is a marked preference amongst the professional classes for English (as opposed to Afrikaans), an interest in elite cultural forms like classical music, literature, and theatre, and the participation in middle-class activities such as dances, concerts, conferences, and bazaars. Further confirmation of middle-class status was sought in the conspicuous, almost exaggerated, adoption of middle-class manners and habits. As Adhikari observes, public functions of the Teachers League, for example, were "studied attempts at propriety and were meant to be demonstrations of its members' degree of refinement."²⁵ Respectable in their politics, TLSA members were also noticeably respectable and middle-class in their speech, manners, and behavior.

As an important public forum for community leaders in the Western Cape in the 1930s and 40s, the commercial press played a central role in the creation of a "respectable" colored elite, and in particular the reinforcement of those values and behaviors which were deemed crucial signifiers of a middle-class sensibility. *The Sun*, at that time the only newspaper dedicated to the colored community in the Western Cape, began its life in 1931. The foremost exponent within local politics of the conservative point of view, *The Sun* stressed the need for self-help and the importance of "race pride."²⁶ *The Cape Standard*,²⁷ which emerged five years later in 1936, tended to favor the more radical perspectives of groups like the National Liberation League and the Non-European League. Despite these fairly substantial differences in political orientation, both newspapers were in agreement about the need for advancement and civilization. These preoccupations are reflected in their promotion of a middle-class way of life and middle-class values (particularly the myth of individual achievement, and the virtues of hard work, thrift, and moderation), an emphasis on education and enlightenment, and an abiding interest in the social activities and achievements of community leaders which served to promote and privilege a middle-class way of life, and offered a standard of conduct to which people were encouraged to aspire. The creation of newspapers specifically

devoted to so-called colored news and the subsequent nurturing of a newspaper-reading public (an important marker of “civilized” behavior) had an important place in these broader civilizing aims.

Whilst the public demonstration of middle-class behaviors and attitudes was necessary to ensure social and political acceptance, the attributes and attitudes themselves were regarded as decisive determinants of individual success and hence group progress. In both *The Cape Standard* and *The Sun*, middle-class virtues such as thrift, sobriety, cleanliness, and ambition were articulated and reinforced through weekly sermons and short fiction. Short stories in *The Cape Standard* were virtually indistinguishable from the weekly sermon, plotting the same neat narratives of meek Christian suffering and eventual reward. Stories by regular contributors Roland Cohen, Abdol Gaffoor, and Alfred Chester reinforced the middle-class notion that social mobility was achievable through individual effort and that poverty was almost always self-inflicted. A special birthday edition of *The Cape Standard* published in 1938 foregrounds its role as “watchdog of the Coloured man’s interests,” and reflects on its attempts “to make the Coloured child ambitious and race conscious” and to “[foster] in the Coloured youth the benefits to be derived from healthy exercise.”²⁸ Here, the desire to progress as a race is explicitly linked to the familiar elements of a middle-class world-view: an emphasis on self-improvement, a belief in the ameliorating influence of (in this case) “healthy exercise,” and the conviction that individual disadvantage can be remedied through discipline, diligence, and hard work. Substantial coverage of cultural institutions and the many debating societies, which flourished in Cape Town during this period, also signals the newspaper’s strong faith in the benefits to be derived from critical thinking, intelligent reading, and rational debate.²⁹

The inculcation of middle-class values formed a substantial part of a general program of education and “improvement” which located political exclusion and economic distress within the ambit of individual failure and inadequacy. Seen as a powerful “civilizing factor” and “the strongest aid to the observance of law and order,”³⁰ education was routinely held up as the key to general socio-economic transformation, and widely regarded as an effective solution to a variety of social evils such as hooliganism, crime, alcoholism, and unemployment. This kind of thinking forms the basic presupposition of much of the social intervention undertaken on behalf of the working class majority, who were believed to be particularly susceptible to degenerate behaviors such as “drunkenness, shebeening and thieving.”³¹ As Adhikari observes, many of the petit-bourgeois elite, relatively

secure in their attainment of middle-class respectability, were “very embarrassed by the behavior of the Coloured working classes and [were] concerned that the progress of the more ‘advanced’ sectors within the Coloured community was being retarded by their misconduct.”³² The argument that there is a racially inherited predisposition amongst colored people towards laziness and excess which could be held in check and ultimately corrected through the ameliorating and shaping influences of education and industry derives its logic from the pseudo-scientific and racist discourse of early-twentieth-century eugenics, and ignores obvious factors such as structural unemployment, low wages, and job reservation to name a few. In a particularly short-sighted example, given the deliberate attempts by government to create a black laboring class through the imposition of color bar legislation, a writer for *The Educational Journal* who went by the name of Advance suggests that waste and an inability to save were to blame for extreme poverty amongst working class communities.³³

These assumptions suggest a deliberate effort on the part of an educated elite to incorporate, domesticate, or train what they saw as an unruly and uncivilized mob. In a move which bears a strong resemblance to a well-established Western tradition which pursued its civilizing aims with equal energy amongst the working classes in Europe and the “primitives” abroad, community leaders concentrated on civilizing the “barbarian” working classes in their midst. It is interesting to note how closely these preoccupations mirror the efforts of white liberals in South Africa in the early twentieth century amongst urban Africans. In his study of playwright H. I. E. Dhlomo, Tim Couzens draws attention to the role played by white liberals in 1920s Johannesburg in the creation and encouragement of a moderate African middle-class as a means of minimizing the threat of rapidly expanding and increasingly militant urban populations.³⁴ In the words of one commentator, it was a question of “moralizing the leisure time of Natives.”³⁵ A similar concern with leisure, particularly with regard to the working class majority, characterizes the public discussions of the colored elite. Whilst white liberal preoccupations centered on diverting an incipient radicalism, the hopes of community leaders lay in the possibilities for education, civilization, and reform. Organizations specifically established for this purpose included such groups as the Cape Literary and Debating Society, founded in 1932; the Eoan Group, a cultural organization formed in 1934;³⁶ and the Hyman Lieberman Institute,³⁷ a social and cultural center established in 1937. Similarly, extra-curricular activities in schools such as drama, art, choir competitions, debating, participation in eisteddfods, and Physical Culture displays provided many

opportunities for the improvement of wayward youth. Of all the civilized and civilizing pursuits, Physical Culture, which trained young children in the discipline of physical exercise and teamwork, was the one most explicitly directed towards the creation of the civilized, middle-class body. Similarly, the emphasis on “upper body” qualities such as refinement, sensitivity to virtue, and a capacity to appreciate the “nobler things in life”³⁸ was reflected in an interest in elite cultural forms like classical music, art, and literature, widely regarded as powerful antidotes to both racial “backwardness” and socio-economic distress.³⁹ Interestingly, those who routinely invoked the rich spiritual and moral resources of a privileged Western Culture also warned against the dangers of new, popular forms like jazz music and *Superman* comics. The belief in the redemptive power of the European classics echoes a long-standing and extremely influential Western intellectual tradition—including, amongst others, such notables as Matthew Arnold and F. R. Leavis—which reacted to the ominous modern phenomenon of an expanding democracy, an uneducated mob, and an unscrupulous and “tasteless” commercial ethos with arguments about the need to disseminate the moral and spiritual values of Great Art.⁴⁰ Of perhaps greater importance for the present discussion is that these efforts constituted a deliberate strategy of policing and excluding low discourses, low classes, low culture, and “grotesque” bodies.

From the late 1930s on, a younger generation of petit-bourgeois intellectuals schooled in the left-wing traditions of groups like the Workers’ Party of South Africa and the New Era Fellowship, rose to prominence in the Western Cape, launching a systematic attack on the politics and practices of what they regarded as a reactionary and compromised older generation of leaders. Their growing disillusionment with existing community leaders and politicians was expressed within the terms made available by a new anti-imperialist ideology. Particularly eloquent on these matters and passionate about their import for the liberation struggle was Ben Kies, a gifted young intellectual who spearheaded many of the attacks on the conservative old-guard, and quickly rose to a prominent position in the liberation movement. For this younger generation of radicals, which also included, amongst others, Dr. Goolam Gool, Jane Gool and I. B. Tabata, the older generation of community leaders, many of whom were teachers, had reneged on their responsibilities towards the working-class majority. Their preoccupations with respectability and the pursuit of material gain had compromised the liberation struggle, and isolated them from the bulk of working-class South Africans. Self-serving and obsequious, they attempted to ingratiate themselves with white rulers

by pursuing moderate political aims. Even worse, they were prepared to accept the arbitrary racial classifications handed down by a state that employed vicious divide-and-rule tactics in order to dissipate black resistance. As the organization most representative of the opinions of established community leaders, the Teacher's League of South Africa was the obvious target for this growing anger. In an address to the New Era Fellowship (NEF) in 1938 entitled "The Revolt of Youth," Ben Kies articulated this growing dissent: "Defeatism and despair [are] not necessarily the unanimous characteristics of the present day Coloured man, despite the assertions of the novelist Sarah Gertrude Millin, the statements of the Coloured Commission Report, and the tacit admittance of all the Coloured leaders." Arguing that the TLSA had pursued its "gentlemanly" fight for "petty" educational reforms "with a patience hitherto associated with angels and certain dumb animals," he pointed to a growing class divide: "More than anything, [what] is dividing the teacher from his people is his spurious cult of respectability. His pride in his profession and his new-found dignity and culture make him ashamed of his rough, untutored parents who made his education possible."⁴¹ Here, Kies undermines one of the central assumptions guiding the strategy of the conservative bloc, namely that education and respectability would change the minds of the oppressors and result in more democratic privileges for the oppressed. It was time, argued Kies, for a reassessment of the "old theory [which] ran that an 'educated' coloured man by virtue of the fact that he [had a degree] would prove to the rulers that he was worth more than a kick in the pants and an inferior place in the country's affairs."⁴²

Kies concluded his 1938 address with an alternative proposal: an emphasis on a critical education, the exchange of ideas, and the "objective analysis" of history and society. In particular, students in the NEF should avoid the unquestioning acceptance of conventional wisdom, and "look with as much suspicion upon a University Professor or a Bishop, as upon a parade monger."⁴³ These comments anticipate the arguments which took shape a few years later and which centered on the nurturing and development of a critical, independent, and enlightened black intelligentsia which would act as a vanguard for the developing liberation movement as the first step towards radical change. Kies's 1938 address sought a solution to the widespread problem of mental slavery amongst the oppressed. Like many others in the movement, his arguments prioritized careful planning and theoretical preparation over spontaneous mass-activism, which he and others tended to characterize as "adventurist" and likely to result in unnecessary bloodshed rather than social transformation.⁴⁴

Drawing on the historic example of the role played by the intelligentsia in liberation struggles around the world, Kies and others maintained that the black intelligentsia had a decisive part to play in the development of an “emancipatory theory” and in “practical leadership” in South Africa.⁴⁵ The workers, “exhausted and bowed down by arduous toil,” did not have the time or resources to examine the causes of their oppression. As those who “had sprung straight from the loins of the working class,” they also had the moral authority to provide leadership to a politically backward and illiterate proletariat.⁴⁶

As these comments suggest, the young radicals placed enormous emphasis on education as part of a broader liberation strategy. Unlike the conservatives, however, it was always understood as the first stage towards liberation rather than a remedy for social ills. Education was not about civilizing barbarians, the inculcation of middle-class values, or the formation of character. Neither was it the means whereby a subjugated class would eventually take its rightful place in a democracy of which it had finally proved itself worthy. As we have seen, the argument that a demonstrable middle-class respectability would automatically lead to full political and economic integration was regarded as fatally flawed. Indeed, the young radicals vehemently rejected a system that promised rewards to those who came closest to approximating Western definitions of the civilized, and ridiculed those who attempted the task. *The Torch* newspaper, mouthpiece of the young radical bloc in the 1940s and 50s, offered the most damning criticism of these tendencies amongst conservative leaders, to whom they mockingly gave the term “human zebras.”⁴⁷ Regular columnist Roamer attacks the greed and subservience of the Coloured aristocrat or snob. Pot-bellied and cigar-smoking, he is either collecting slum-rent, trying to slip in at a ‘white’ cinema, or standing at the kitchen door of some Government authority.⁴⁸ In contrast, they emphasized a subversive, critical education, which arose in part from an acute awareness of the historic role that education had played in establishing and legitimizing oppression and social exclusion. These sentiments, echoed by African teachers in publications like *CATA*,⁴⁹ only intensified in the post-1948 period as the overwhelmingly negative effects of a newly minted Bantu education policy under a new Nationalist government began to be felt.

In 1946, A. C. Jordan—writer and lecturer in African languages at the University of Cape Town—delivered an address at the annual conference of the Teachers League of South Africa, which went to the heart of the debates. In what is possibly the first (African) post-colonial reading of Shakespeare’s play, Jordan uses *The Tempest* to expose the emptiness of the

liberal promise that education and civilization are the necessary precursors of political rights, and offers a penetrating critique of the role of education in a colonial context. In a critical appropriation of the play that consciously resists mainstream Western readings, Jordan offers an interpretation of *The Tempest* which attends to its colonial dimensions, something which, he argues, Western scholarship in its preoccupation with character and “abstract moral truths” has tended to overlook.⁵⁰ In Jordan’s reading, the play offers a lesson in miniature on colonial education. In the first place, what Prospero’s behavior towards Caliban reveals is that a restricted education encourages deference for an unattainable culture and fosters subservience. Second, Jordan suggests that *The Tempest* offers a corrective to the widely held assumption that participation in culturally elite forms could challenge notions of racial inferiority, and lead to an improvement in socio-economic conditions. According to Jordan, *The Tempest* offers a clear message: no matter how educated Caliban becomes, he will always be a Caliban to Prospero.

Whilst NEF intellectuals were painfully aware that the fruits of Western civilization were only grudgingly and partially apportioned in the interests of colonial rule, it was also necessary for them to come to terms in some way with its much vaunted moral, cultural, and technological superiority. The “problem” of Western culture was tackled in a number of ways. First was the rejection of any notion of pure or white culture and a refusal to elevate the achievements of the West. Culture was understood as hybridized, shifting, and continually expanding. Rather than the grateful recipients of the treasures of Western culture, they saw themselves (in an argument very similar to that articulated by W. E. B. du Bois) as heirs to a world culture. Another important aspect of this strategy was an explicit rejection of the widely held notion of Western moral superiority. This was helped especially in the post-Ethiopia, post-Spanish-Civil-War era which had done much to expose the “savage beneath”⁵¹ the benign exterior of Western civilization. In an argument that bears a strong resemblance to those advanced by Walter Benjamin and Raymond Williams, respectively, one writer for *The Cape Standard*, for example, underlines the “barbarism” of Western civilization and questions its moral superiority.⁵² Responding to the increasingly influential segregationist discourse in the late 1930s, the writer draws attention to the fact that far from posing a threat to Western civilization, Africans as “the hewers of wood and drawers of water” have done much to make it possible.⁵³

For the young radicals, the historic involvement of the West in imperial plunder, oppression, and discrimination gives the lie to its

insistent moral posturing. In the same way, an alleged moral superiority was consistently undermined by the injustices and exclusions metered out in depressing regularity by the South African state. By the 1950s, it had become abundantly clear that the government had abandoned all plans to incorporate a respectable middle-class elite. Segregationist initiatives were well underway, the colored vote had been lost, and a new ideology of separate development made plain the desire to deny civilization and culture to the majority of South Africans who had been abandoned to the ambiguous pleasures of “developing along their own lines”. There was therefore strong resistance in the post-1948 period to separate cultural institutions and amenities, and there were constant calls that the benefits of Western culture be distributed equally amongst all South Africans. Acutely aware of their role as civilizing agents for a backward race, the young radicals also condemned liberal cultural institutions like the Eoan Group for their tacit support of an unjust order, this by virtue of their very existence as well as their tendency to defer to white leadership and control.⁵⁴

The emphasis on education amongst the radical intelligentsia in the late 1930s revealed a remarkable prescience concerning the direction that South African politics would take in the post-war period. The formation of the New Era Fellowship in 1937 under the guidance of Dr. Goolam Gool marked the beginning of a radical program of education and empowerment as a first stage in a non-racial unified mass movement against the state. The intellectual and philosophical groundwork laid in the discussions and debates of the NEF was a crucial element in the radicalization of existing organizations as well as in the formation of new political groups like the Anti-CAD and the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), respectively, which set out to respond to the significantly different political and economic environment of 1940s South Africa. “An open forum to ‘discuss everything under the sun’—South Africa’s Jacobin or Cordelier club,” the NEF, according to Hosea Jaffe, became for the NEUM “what Lord Milner’s ‘Kindergarten’ was for Smuts and the Cape Liberals between the Boer War and the 1910 Act of Union: an apprenticeship in the theory and art of politics.”⁵⁵ Described as a “sorting house of ideas,”⁵⁶ one of its most valuable contributions to South African intellectual life was its emphasis on critical thinking and inquiry, and its refusal to defer to established authority. Disingenuousness, obfuscation, and deliberate distortion both in the mainstream press and in the official historical record had to be countered by objective analysis, fearless exposé, and rigorous critique. Arrogant and scornful towards the

shortcomings of other liberation groups (including the African National Congress) and the endless hypocrisy of government, their idiosyncratic political and discursive style established both the bounds and bonds of their imagined community. After its emergence in November 1943, The NEUM became the principal focus of the young radicals, with the now numerous fellowships continuing their function as “a sorting house of ideas,” and a conduit for a new black intelligentsia, which continued to influence local politics in the Western Cape. What is even more impressive is that a generation of teachers, their intellectual development and political goals fostered and directed in the fellowships, drama groups, and political organizations that formed part of what became known as the Unity Movement, took these ideas and aims into the schools in which they taught. As one teacher explained:

Lectures and debates in meetings of the New Era Fellowship gave us an education outside of the narrow confines of school syllabuses and a philosophy of questioning, analysis and assessment of events, situations and beliefs. In the classroom we were able to apply, in our teaching, what we had absorbed through reading and participation in the lectures and debates. We were enabled to counter the racialistic and restrictive attitudes which officialdom expected teachers to foster.⁵⁷

Teachers in the Western Cape had an enormous responsibility to counteract a state education, which gave ideological support to existing race structures. As Richard Dudley put it: “[W]e had a mission to teach the oppressed, to teach in a broad way, and to impede the racist education of the state.”⁵⁸ Similarly, Amelia Lewis recalls: “[W]e had to devise strategies to nullify and neutralize the efforts of the education departments to ‘Colourise, ‘Indianise’, [and] ‘Bantuisse’ the pupils through their syllabuses, textbooks, snooping school inspectors, and other agents of racial thinking.”⁵⁹ The spirit of resistance and independent critical inquiry was extended in particular to the disciplines of history and literature, regarded by many as two of the main areas in which an ideology of inferiority was cultivated. The efforts of teachers like Richard Dudley and Amelia Lewis produced generations of students in the Western Cape whose educational training was far superior both to many elite white schools and to other non-European schools which, by the 1940s, were facing the imminent threat of ghettoization and tribalization⁶⁰ under the newly formed Coloured Affairs Department (CAD). Trafalgar and Livingstone High Schools were the early centers of this intellectual and

political “renaissance,” as Dudley described it.⁶¹ Well-known both for their political outspokenness and academic excellence, these Unity Movement schools became the centers of student revolt against the 1940s state offensive against the colored vote.⁶²

The critique of existing knowledge and the promotion of an alternative canon can be seen as an important way in which Western superiority was challenged and interrogated by those who stood on its margins. Aside from fellowships, schools, and political associations, *The Torch* newspaper—published in Cape Town from 1946 to 1958—played an important role in disseminating this alternative view.⁶³ As an important forum for the NEUM, it was also the site of an influential oppositional discourse and the focal point of an alternative “counterpublic,”⁶⁴ which offered a significant challenge to the dominant order. *The Torch* was an outspoken paper with a distinctive style. Caustic, scornful, ironic, and witty, it employed black humor and comic hyperbole in order to bring out the absurdity of South African society and the stupidity of its leaders. This oppositional stance was also reflected in its regular book reviews. The significance of *The Torch*’s literary journalism is best understood in the light of Martin Orkin’s thoughts concerning the relationship between literary criticism and questions of consensus and social control. In his examination of the role of English Studies in South African schools, Orkin argues that the particular critical approach employed in most South African schools—drawing as it did on a long-standing (Leavisian) critical tradition which emphasized the contemplation of abstract moral truths over the particulars of history and politics—sought to foster a calm acceptance of human suffering as a means of deflecting African dissent.⁶⁵ Terry Eagleton makes a similar point about the way in which, in the aftermath of World War I, a shattered British nation turned to literature from “the nightmare of history.”⁶⁶ In sharp contrast to these idealizing critical approaches, literary critics in *The Torch* draw attention to the “nightmare of history” at every possible opportunity, making explicit reference both to their manifest socio-political references and concerns as well as to their more covert ideological agendas. This political criticism in the service of the liberation struggle, which denounced racism and was critical of the South African liberal tradition, represents an important alternative to conventional literary-critical practice in Departments of English Literature in South Africa at the time. A positive review of Alan Paton’s *Cry, the Beloved Country* by well-known Cape Town theatre director and teacher Isaac Pfaff, for example, led to an avalanche of letters and an explosive debate between a politicized criticism (which rejected its re-tribalizing message)

and those approaches which looked for abstract moral truths.⁶⁷ The intensity of the debate and the levels of acrimony it generated bear witness both to the enormous political and practical importance of literary judgments, as well as to the existence of an intellectual tradition which took seriously the coded political lessons of an ostensibly transcendent literary canon.

The intellectual traditions of the NEF and the NEUM constituted an explicitly counter-hegemonic intellectual project that sought to disrupt the dominance of accepted truth whether in the form of government propaganda, common sense, or academic knowledge. This treading on the corns—to use Bill Nasson's phrase⁶⁸—of contemporary thought in South Africa was an effort to revise and critique contemporary political and intellectual orthodoxies, not for the sake of scholarship itself but in the direct interests of an oppressed majority and the struggle for liberation. Established knowledge is challenged rather than deferentially accepted. The new knowledge, the alternative “truth”, offered a way in which subordinated groups could understand the causes of their present oppression and come to a position of self-knowledge and self-validation. While its politics have been criticized from all possible angles,⁶⁹ and whilst its uncompromising rhetoric was perhaps more forceful than its practical achievements, its political and intellectual legacy cannot be easily dismissed. Their attempts, sometimes crude, to apply Marxist paradigms to South African history, society, and culture resulted in a substantial body of texts, “a fecund deposit,”⁷⁰ which preceded the university-based tradition of left-wing historiography and literary criticism by at least thirty years and established a legacy of critical thinking in South Africa, whose value it is impossible to quantify.⁷¹ While radical historiography challenged orthodox interpretations of the past, a radical literary criticism provided the means by which subordinated groups could interrogate and challenge a dominant culture that designated them inferior, their experiences marginal, and their tastes irrelevant. In addition, an abiding interest in literature, art, and theatre, which included the writing and staging of left-wing plays, music, and art appreciation, was both an assertion of the right to world culture and a humanizing activity which offered much needed relief from the routine degradation of society at large.

From the outside, there is little to distinguish the two groups considered in this article: educated, middle-class, and predominantly English-speaking, they occupied the same urban environments and were connected by close familial, social, and political ties. A strong emphasis on education by both groups seems to indicate that social transformation was understood in primarily idealist rather than materialist terms. However,

there are crucial differences in the ways in which this educational emphasis was inflected in relation to wider political and social aims. Whereas the older generation of leaders accepted the assimilationist rhetoric of a ruling order which promised (but never delivered) political and material rewards to those who most closely approximated its definition of the civilized being, a younger generation of radicals—educated in the much tougher socio-political environment of the pre-war years—harnessed a radical education as a preparation for revolutionary change. The first strategy emphasized the creation of a respectable, educated elite in an attempt to negotiate the always-unstable line between the civilized and the uncivilized, and worked in tandem with white liberals in the co-option and pacification of a degenerate working-class majority. For the conservatives, this was the only possible means whereby a marginalized constituency could become recognizable (politically and economically) by the state and avoid being sunk into obscurity through association with an allegedly even more backward African majority. If they embraced the hierarchical discourse of a fractured society in an attempt to secure political advantage, their efforts to accommodate themselves to that order also offered powerful confirmation of its oppressive and exclusionary codes. In their pursuit of social justice, in other words, they locked themselves into the very categories they sought to challenge, and ended up reproducing the same exclusionary hierarchies within their own communities. For the younger generation, an outright rejection of a race- and class-based order and a conscious allegiance with all of the oppressed was a significant form of resistance to those categories. Whilst education and culture also occupy a central place, the emphasis here is less on the creation of a civilized bourgeois subject than on the use of education and culture as empowering and conscientizing tools. Loud, irreverent, and ill-mannered, the young radicals demonstrated an oppositional ethos in their “uncivilized” behavior. Through mockery, laughter, and wit, they challenged middle-class seriousness and pretence; through radical appropriations of High Culture and High History, an untiring ideological interrogation of literary texts, and the constant attention given to contexts of production and consumption, they drew a traditionally elevated academic practice (literary criticism in particular) down to its material roots. In summing up the achievements of the NEUM, many commentators have criticized in particular its elitism, its middle-class roots, and its failure to connect with working class struggles. There may be some truth to these claims; certainly the emphasis on education, theory, and preparation may unwittingly have played into a damaging intellectual elitism.⁷² Notwithstanding a strong desire amongst members

of the NEUM to hold on the kudos of education, and taking into account the complexity of the arguments put forward, I would nevertheless argue that the intellectual and political traditions of the NEUM—invariably shaped and to some extent constrained by a particular historical moment—offered a substantial challenge to a powerful class and race consensus in South Africa, the effects of which are still felt in the present.

Notes

1 See Vivian Bickford Smith, Elizabeth van Heyningen, and Nigel Worden, *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1999), 71.

2 This brief overview of the history of the city of Cape Town is drawn from the following sources: Smith, Van Heyningen, and Worden, *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century*; Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson, eds., *The Oxford History of South Africa*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); Don Pinnock, "Ideology and Urban Planning: Blueprints for a Garrison City," in *The Angry Divide: Social and Economic History of the Western Cape*, ed. Wilmot James and Mary Simons (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989); and John Western, *Outcast Cape Town* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1981).

3 Unity Movement of South Africa, "Jane Gool-Tabata" 18 May 1996. UMSA/Tabata Collection. African Studies Library, University of Cape Town.

4 For more details concerning Cape Town's socialist traditions, see, for example, Baruch Hirson, "The Trotskyist Groups in South Africa, 1932–48," *Searchlight in South Africa* 3, no. 2 (1993): 72–115; Allison Drew, "Social Mobilization and Racial Capitalism in South Africa, 1928–1960" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1991); Allison Drew. *Discordant Comrades: Identities and Loyalties in the South African Left* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

5 The word colored refers to a cultural, political, and historical identity and not to a fixed racial essence. The use of this word to describe these communities is in many ways inappropriate: first, because it appears to accept South African racial thinking, and second, because it is inaccurate. The individuals who formed part of the communities I explore were not always what the state would have classified as 'colored.' Some were African; others were 'white.' Without wishing to endorse South Africa's arbitrary race classifications, I retain the term only because it is a convenient way to describe the majority of those discussed in the article, and because it was this very identity (albeit constructed) which determined their place in South Africa's racial order. For a useful discussion of some of these issues, see Zimitri Erasmus's introduction to *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place: New Perspectives on Coloured Identities in Cape Town* (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2001).

6 The broad labels conservative and radical fail to convey adequately the complexities of the two positions outlined in this article. I have chosen to retain them in the interests of a readable text.

7 Saul Dubow, "Race, Civilization and Culture: The Elaboration of Segregationist Discourse in the Inter-War Years," in *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa*, ed. Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido (London: Longman, 1987), 73.

8 Dubow, "Race, Civilization and Culture," 74.

9 My summary of the social and political history of the Western Cape is drawn from the following sources: Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1983); Gavin Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall: A History of South African 'Coloured' Politics* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1987); Ian Goldin, *Making Race: The Politics and Economics of Colored Identity in South Africa* (London: Longman, 1987). I have also made extensive use of Mohammed Adhikari's detailed and carefully researched history of the Teacher's League of South Africa. See Adhikari, *"Let Us Live for Our Children": The Teachers League of South Africa, 1913–1940* (Cape Town: Buchu Books, 1993).

10 See Gavin Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, 49.

11 As Adhikari points out, legal reforms such as the repeal of punitive vagrancy laws in the Cape in 1828 and the emancipation of slaves in 1834, amongst others, seemed to indicate that there was some substance to liberal promises of gradual social reform. See Adhikari, *"Let us Live for our Children,"* 15.

12 See Adhikari, *"Let us Live for our Children,"* 25.

13 Founded and published in Cape Town, the *Educational Journal* was the official organ of the Teachers League of South Africa. Originally associated with the moderate politics of the African People's Organization and its president, Dr. Abdullah Abdurahman, the journal was taken over by radical elements in 1943 after a split over the question of whether the League should be engaged in political activity. In the 1940s *The Educational Journal* become increasingly associated with the NEUM, its editors, Ben Kies and W. P. van Schoor both prominent activists in the NEUM.

14 In an address given to the Teacher's League in 1941, C. R. Rhoda, for example, argues that education is the key to a people "advancing in civilization." Teachers should "continue in the noble work of educating the Colored child and thereby [develop] his powers—morally, physically and intellectually, so that he can by virtue of his attainments prove to be a true citizen in the land of his birth." See *The Cape Standard*, August 1941:3. See also *The Cape Standard*, 7 September 1940:3.

15 This phrase occurs in the context of an argument which rejects solidarity with oppressed African groups, arguing instead for the absolute necessity of protecting colored interests from the 'threat' of cheap African labor: "We'd be very puny, backboneless men indeed if we allowed the Native to come into our very midst and oust us from our jobs, drive us from our homes, and threaten us in the streets where we have lived all our lives." *The Coloured Opinion*, 20 May 1944:1–2.

16 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, translated from the Russian by Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

17 Laura Kipnis, "(Male) Desire and (Female) Disgust: Reading *Hustler*," in *Popular Culture: Production and Consumption*, eds. C. Lee Harrington and Denise D. Bielby (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 137.

18 *The Sun*, 25 October 1940:3.

19 Adhikari, *"Let us Live for our Children,"* 49.

20 Adhikari, *"Let us Live for our Children,"* 98.

21 The summary which follows is drawn from Gavin Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1987); Vernon February, ed. *From the Arsenal: Articles from the Teachers League of South Africa, 1913–1980* (Leiden: African Studies Centre, 1983), and R. van der Ross, *The Rise and Decline of Apartheid: A Study of Political Movements among the Coloured People of South Africa, 1880–1985* (Cape Town: Tafelberg,

1986). For details of this radicalization, see also Eddie and Win Roux, *Rebel Pity: The Life of Eddie Roux* (London: Collings, 1970), 142; and Allison Drew, "Social Mobilisation and Racial Capitalism in South Africa, 1928–1960," 226–28.

22 Taken together, the National Liberation League (1935), the New Era Fellowship (1937), and the Non-European United Front (1938) sounded a new note in Western Cape politics. While differing in terms of specific aims, they can be understood as part of a more militant, left-wing response to contemporary politics which was in conscious opposition to the tactics of the APO. For more details, see Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, 184–98.

23 *The Educational Journal*, May 1943:7.

24 *The Coloured Opinion* 20 April 1944:1.

25 Ahikhari, "Let us Live for our Children," 90.

26 Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, 156.

27 *The Cape Standard*, edited by George Manuel, was a commercial newspaper which in 1938 claimed a readership of 45,000. See Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, 184.

28 *The Cape Standard*, 29 March 1938:10.

29 See for example, *The Cape Standard*, 6 October 1936:3.

30 Cited in Adhikari "Let us Live for our Children," 80.

31 *The Educational Journal*, August 1942:3. "Shebeen" is a South African term for a township bar; "shebeening" in this context refers to excessive drinking and carousing.

32 Adhikari, "Let us Live for Our Children," 151.

33 "Advance", *The Educational Journal*, April 1932:8–9.

34 Tim Couzens, *The New African: A Study of the Life and Work of H. I. E. Dhlomo* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1985).

35 Cited in Couzens, *The New African*, 93.

36 According to Sheila Patterson: its aims were to "[train] coloured children in elocution, acting, ballet and singing, and [to give] general character-training and instruction in hygiene." Sheila Patterson, *Colour and Culture in South Africa* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953), 138.

37 Established with money donated by a former Cape Town mayor, the Hyman Lieberman Institute was a center for "social and cultural upliftment" and a place of "mental recreation" aimed especially at working class coloreds. See *The Cape Standard*, 31 January 1938:7. It was under its auspices that the Cape Literary and Debating Society was formed. For more information on the life of the institute's well-known librarian, Colin Ziervogel, see Robert R Edgar, *An African American in South Africa: The Travel Notes of Ralph J. Bunch* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1992), 332–33.

38 Cited in Adhikari, "Let us Live for Our Children," 152.

39 See, for example, J. R. Pfaff, "Art and Music in our Schools," *The Educational Journal*, April 1940.

40 For a history of this influential intellectual tradition, see Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism, 1818–1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) and, more recently, Francis Mulhern, *Culture/MetaCulture* (London: Routledge, 2000). David Johnson's *Shakespeare in South Africa* looks at South African versions of these debates. See David Johnson, *Shakespeare in South Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

41 Ben Kies, "The Revolt of Youth," *Cape Standard*, 7 June 1938:9.

42 *The Sun*, 17 January 1941:3.

43 Kies, "The Revolt of Youth," 9.

44 Ronnie and Chystel Britten, Interview with the author, Cape Town, 26 January 2001. See also Bill Nasson, "The Unity Movement: Its Legacy in Historical Consciousness," *Radical History Review* 46/47(1990): 193.

45 Ben Kies, "The Background of Segregation," Address delivered to the National Anti-CAD conference, 29 May 1943 in Allison Drew, ed. *South Africa's Radical Tradition: A Documentary History, vol. 2: 1943–1964* (Cape Town: Buchu Books, 1997), 53.

46 Kies, "The Background of Segregation," 53. This close union, according to Enid Williams writing in *The Educational Journal*, also meant that the working classes would exert a necessary check on its activities and ideas. See Enid Williams, "The Intelligentsia," *The Educational Journal*, 1944:10. However, as many have argued, the dialectic which they anticipated between intellectual leadership and working class discipline which drew from classic left-wing theory nevertheless proved almost impossible to achieve in practice. See, for example, Nasson, "The Unity Movement," 189–211; and Linda Chisholm, "Education, Politics and Organization: The Educational Traditions of The Non-European Unity Movement, 1943–1986," *Transformation* 15 (1991):1–24.

47 *The Torch*, 19 January 1948:4.

48 *The Torch*, 22 July 1946:4.

49 *CATA* was the journal of the Cape African Teachers Association. Many of its members were also members of the NEUM.

50 A. C. Jordan, ". . . that our children may live," *The Educational Journal*, August 1946:4.

51 Cited in Martin Orkin, *Drama and the South African State* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1991), 33. The phrase also provides the title of one of the chapters.

52 Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt. (London: Fontana, 1973); and Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973).

53 *The Cape Standard*, 10 May 1937:5.

54 See, for example, *The Citizen*, 3 March 1956:2–3. A Claremont newspaper, *The Citizen*, was established in 1956 as a rival to *The Torch*. Part of the movement against the conservative old-guard, but disillusioned with the NEUM, it was the mouthpiece of an alternative group, the Heatherly Civic Association.

55 Hosea Jaffe, "Signposts of the History of the Unity Movement," two lectures presented at the University of Cape Town History Department, September–October 1992. African Studies Library, University of Cape Town, 1992:14–15.

56 Cited in Vernon February's introduction to *From the Arsenal: Articles from the Teachers League of South Africa, 1913–1980* (Leiden: African Studies Centre, 1983), 13.

57 Amelia Lewis, Letter to the author, November 2002. Amelia Lewis was a primary school teacher in the Western Cape and a member of the Teachers League. She later joined the Anti-CAD movement and was a member of the NEUM.

58 Richard Dudley, Interview with the author, Cape Town, 17 July 2002. Richard Dudley was a member of the New Era Fellowship and the NEUM, and wrote articles for *The Torch*. He graduated from the University of Cape Town with an M.Sc. in 1943. After obtaining a B.Ed. degree in 1944, he joined the staff at Livingstone High School, where he remained until he retired in 1984.

59 Amelia Lewis, Letter.

60 These terms were part of the movement's distinctive lexicon.

61 Richard Dudley, Interview.

62 Alan Wieder, "Informed by Apartheid: Mini Oral Histories of Two Cape Town Teachers," in *The History of Education under Apartheid, 1948–1994*, ed. Peter Kallaway (Cape Town: Pearson Education South Africa, 2002), 198.

63 This weekly newspaper, which relied on the voluntary contributions of a dedicated editorial board, was sold on street corners and distributed through the networks of the NEUM around the country. Its first editor, Solly Edross, was replaced in 1948 by Joyce Meissenheimer who, along with Ben Kies, took overall responsibility for what was always a highly collaborative and democratic news-gathering effort. Richard Dudley, Interview.

64 The term is Nancy Fraser's. See Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 1–32.

65 Martin Orkin, *Shakespeare after Apartheid* (Johannesburg: Ad Donker, 1987), 10.

66 Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 26.

67 Isaac Pfaff, *Torch*, 27 September 1948:5. For some of the responses see *The Torch*, 25 October 1948:5 and 1 November 1948:5. *Torch* readers rejected the novel's endorsement of the suspect political notion of re-tribalization. Under the guise of protecting a traditional African way of life, those in favour of re-tribalization advocated that Africans return to rural areas so as to be protected from the evils of a modern city. The removal of urban Africans from South African cities was, of course, a fundamental aspect of the grand apartheid plan.

68 Nasson, "The Unity Movement," 208.

69 See Jack and Ray Simons, *Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850–1950* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1983); A. Lerumo, *Fifty Fighting Years: The Communist Party of South Africa, 1921–1971* (London: Interscience, 1987); Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*; Baruch Hirson, "A Short History of the Non-European Unity Movement—An Insider's View," *Searchlight in South Africa* 3, no. 4 (1995): 64–93. Bill Nasson and Linda Chisholm offer more nuanced accounts. Nasson, "The Unity Movement"; Chisholm, "Education, Politics and Organization." Robin Kayser's thesis is very sympathetic. See Robin Kayser, "The Struggle for Land and Liberty in South Africa: The Revolutionary Path of the NEUM/UMSA 1933–1970," Honor's thesis, University of Cape Town, 1997.

70 Nasson, "The Unity Movement," 195.

71 For a full discussion of the contribution of Unity Movement scholars to South African historiography, see Nasson, "The Unity Movement." For information on prominent Unity Movement literary critic, Dora Taylor, see my article, "Dora Taylor: South African Marxist," *Current Writing* 29, no. 2 (2001): 5–27.

72 It is difficult to find a way through these debates, which still remain unresolved and very contentious. Lewis, for example, argues that Unity Movement members were "blind to their elite status." Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, 253. In his recollections of the work of the NEUM, on the other hand, Richard Dudley spent a lot of time talking about efforts of Unity Movement members amongst trade unions in the Western Cape, all of which had to be conducted in secret so as not to threaten workers' employment. Dudley, Interview.

PART III

Shifting Space and Transforming Identities

Global influences have long had an effect on the development of African cities, but the degree of influence was enhanced by the increased frequency of contact with the outside world in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. African cities are home to Africans from throughout the continent as well as foreigners who came to the cities at different times and for various reasons. The hybrid nature of the urban environment was determined by immigration, religious factors, and the continuing conflict between “traditional” and “modern” space. Global influences, however, do not imply a lack of African agency. We must recognize the cultural and political synthesis that was undergoing continual transformation. The essays in this section reflect these themes and show that identities were also linked closely to these processes of change.

The early colonial era witnessed an increased flow of people and ideas between African areas and from abroad. Jeremy Rich looks at the connections that tied Libreville, Gabon, to the Atlantic and imperial worlds and attracted Africans from not only the interior but from the coastal regions of West Africa. Senegalese workers, sailors, soldiers, and religious clerics, for example, immigrated to Libreville during the early colonial era and helped shape the physical and social space of the city. Vietnamese laborers, brought into the region by French administrators to do menial labor, also contributed to the diverse character of the port community. Both groups faced difficulties in adapting to their new environment but were instrumental in determining the spatial development of the city. Rich calls for historians to pay greater heed to the level of global influences in the early colonial era and acknowledge their importance in the economic, social, and cultural development of coastal African cities.

For many years, the focus of urban scholarship in Africa was on the changes that rural-urban migrants underwent during their early adaptation to the urban environment. Too often, however, their histories stopped there. Maurice Amutabi looks not only at the problematic legacy of colonialism in Kenya, but also suggests a move away from migrationist histories toward an analysis of what happened to immigrant groups once they had settled in their new cities. Historians, he argues, must begin to look at the combination of precolonial and colonial legacies and rural-urban migration in relation to the present and future. In his study of Isiolo, Kenya, he does just this and shows that Isiolo has a long history of contact with global influences. Unlike the major cities of Kenya, Isiolo portrays the importance of the pastoralist economy but it also reveals a colonial legacy of religious conflict between Christians and Muslims and the military importance of northern Kenya in the colonial attempt to control the borders with imperial Ethiopia. The British brought in predominantly Muslim soldiers from Somalia and other areas. The presence of Islamic institutions today conflicts with the western ideologies of non-profit aid and development organizations and has led to conflicts relating to construction, food preparation, women's roles, spatial organization, and even nightlife.

The global nature of Islam is the focus of the third essay in this section. Eric Ross shows how the urban space of Touba, Senegal, is determined by African, Islamic, and global religious forces. Islamic brotherhoods, not colonial or postcolonial administrations, have controlled the planning and development of Touba. Occasional conflicts between members of different brotherhoods led to divisions of urban social and physical space and, in some cases, entirely new religious neighborhoods. What is unique is that cities such as Touba are largely independent of the control of the national government but they are also aligned to a larger network of Muslim towns throughout Senegal and in international circles as well.

Urban centers served as a focal point for cultural and intellectual revolutions that fostered debate about the nature of foreign cultural influences and African cultural authenticity. James Genova explores these ideas in his analysis of African cultural renaissance in literature of urban representations during the 1950s. While French colonial power was declining, Francophone novels began to appear, focusing in large part on the major issues, ideologies, and actions present in the urban environment. These included class, identity, and the problematic binaries of "traditional" and "modern." Authentic African culture, some writers claimed, could be

found only in precolonial and rural African cultures and could be expressed only in indigenous languages. *Négritude* reiterated many of the same ideas, calling for a return to the African past, but practitioners of *négritude* also believed that French could serve as a viable language of African literature. This debate over the authenticity of African culture and its companion debate over the nature of urban and rural society can be found in the products of Francophone African novels in the 1950s, and in particular, three novels that take very different views on the nature of African urban space. Genova contributes fictional life stories of urbanites that complement the earlier essays of this section. He blends historical and literary analysis to show that West Africa's early novelists wrote from a realistic urban viewpoint. That reality of the urban environment portrays the nature of global influence but it also comments on earlier scholars who looked for remnants of an idealistic African past that was somehow preserved in the rural areas, a past that was based in an unrealistic idea of an unchanging and unadulterated traditional culture that has never existed.

8

WHERE EVERY LANGUAGE IS HEARD

ATLANTIC COMMERCE, WEST AFRICAN AND ASIAN MIGRANTS, AND TOWN SOCIETY IN LIBREVILLE, CA. 1860–1914

Jeremy Rich

All colors and languages meet in Libreville. Whites, blacks, yellow men, and those of coffee or milky tint come there. French, German, English, Chinese, Mpongwé, Pahouin [Fang], Boulou, and Akélé [languages] all can be heard. . . .¹

Mary Kingsley landed in the French African port of Libreville in May 1895.² Her meanderings exposed her to the cosmopolitan background of the settlement's inhabitants. She watched a French official interrogate an English-speaking African. When the administrator had finished with the man, a Senegalese soldier dragged the prisoner out of the room. Afterwards, she visited fields grown by Vietnamese convicts recently banished to Gabon. Kingsley met other foreign residents of the colony after she left the safe confines of the port. Kru workers from the coast of Liberia accompanied her aboard English steamers that stopped at Libreville.

The Englishwoman's experiences demonstrate the connections that tied Libreville to a wider Atlantic and imperial world in the late nineteenth century. French Catholic missionaries in the 1890s marveled at the bewildering mixture of languages spoken in their hospital. Nuns cared for men from Senegal, the Gold Coast, Kru towns, southern

Vietnam, and the interior of Gabon.³ The small local population of Libreville, made up of free and slave people claiming a common Mpongwe ethnic identity, did not satisfy state and private demands for specialized and menial labor. Americans and European residents turned to immigrants as a result.

The case of Libreville both supports and challenges histories of the African Atlantic world. The Atlantic slave trade has furnished a central point for understanding contact and movement between African coastal communities. Formations of multiracial intellectual communities in the black Atlantic during the rise and fall of trans-Atlantic slavery have recently received attention from a range of perspectives.⁴ Within these studies, the use of unfree labor as slaves and unpaid contract laborers has rightly been the main topic under review. Even after the formal abolition of slavery, cheap foreign labor and constrained workforces continued to play a key role in Fernando Po, São Tomé, and Angola.⁵ Libreville at first glance fits into this discussion. Taking its name from a short-lived French attempt to resettle repatriated slaves on the same lines as Sierra Leone, the town certainly had a heritage built on servitude.

However, an examination of foreign communities in Libreville shows that the Atlantic slave trade and the search for cheap labor for plantations were not the only reasons why Africans moved along the Atlantic coast. Financial opportunity and shifting commercial patterns also motivated some Africans to leave their homes to work elsewhere. Kru workers from Liberia headed to destinations as distant as Liverpool and Angola; their accounts assert that young men, though sometimes forced into working abroad, also could build up capital for social advancement at home.⁶ Excepting the case of the Kru, the impact of colonial expansion and new economic demands on intra-African coastal movements after 1860 has been neglected.⁷

This essay will explore a series of connections between French colonies and African ports in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An overwhelmingly male workforce gravitated to Libreville. The first section of this study will consider how and why the local labor market made foreigners attractive to Libreville employers. Next, I will review the varied reasons and settlement patterns of two disparate parts of the town community: Senegalese and Vietnamese people. Each made lasting contributions to town life. Far from homogeneous, immigrants had disparate backgrounds and made varied sets of choices that led on occasion to strife. They helped to create a diverse port community, much as foreign laborers in the Caribbean during the same period.⁸

A Port Economy in Bloom and Decline: Foreign Workers, European Employers, and the Libreville Labor Market, ca. 1860–1914

Between roughly 1860 and World War I, Libreville went through a series of dramatic changes.⁹ French officers established a fort on the northern bank of the Gabon Estuary in 1843 to buttress the meager French presence in the region. The poorly funded settlement faltered early on. Even so, the fort continued to be the sole French colony in Central Africa until Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza pushed for greater control over the Gabonese interior in the late 1870s and 1880s. With the advent of imperialist ambitions in Paris, the port changed from an unpopular post to the center of French expansion in the region. European traders set up operations to obtain rubber, ivory, and lumber. Its heyday did not last. By the mid-1890s, Brazzaville to the south supplanted Libreville in economic and political importance, and the French administration moved its headquarters there in 1904. Libreville became again in the eyes of visitors and European residents a sleepy town.

The colonial administration and private firms in Libreville throughout this period hired local workers for skilled office positions. Mission schools founded by rival French Roman Catholic and American Protestant efforts in the 1840s ensured a steady supply of local clerks and commercial agents.¹⁰ Mpongwe villagers, who had lived on the shores of the Gabon Estuary prior to French conquest, welcomed schools as a way for male children to obtain skills useful in trading and working with Europeans. Libreville men became guides, interpreters, bureaucrats, and store managers. By the end of the nineteenth century, Libreville men served employers in need of literate clerical workers from Dahomey to the Congo of Leopold II.¹¹

Free Mpongwe people, though willing to rent out slaves to individual French and American residents, scorned jobs involving menial labor and low pay. Commandants lamented that Libreville households showed little interest in unloading and restocking supply ships.¹² Members of rural Fang-speaking clans coming from the north and east took posts as general laborers by the early 1880s, but they also had drawbacks. Interclan feuds and the lack of foreign language skills among Fang men made them an unreliable workforce.¹³

Competition for labor also posed obstacles for some employers wishing to find reliable labor. Mpongwe men often rejected offers from officials and instead signed contracts with prominent firms.¹⁴ Catholic

and Protestant missionaries bewailed the fact that their school graduates shirked low wages as lay evangelists to enter commercial work.¹⁵ Mpongwe working for stingy American missionaries chided their employers for not providing free rations while, as one indigenous preacher put it, “[The British] sends his [*sic*] traders up to the rivers to trade [and] gives them their stores such as beef, rice, biscuits, preserved meat in tins, coffee, sugar and all that is fit to them.”¹⁶ A scarcity of competent educated carpenters and masons from Gabon also led to difficulties at times.¹⁷

Foreign workers arrived in Libreville to do menial work and staff the military garrison. European and American employers, particularly the less generous ones, thus recognized the inability of the indigenous labor market to sate their demands. From the beginning of European settlement in the 1840s, workers from Kru villages in Liberia had accompanied French and Americans establishing themselves at Libreville.¹⁸ West African laborers and soldiers faced hard times in the tiny port. A potent combination of poor funding, isolation from supply centers in Senegal, and duplicitous employers put contract laborers at risk.¹⁹ West Africans continued to work in Gabon despite these challenges, but Europeans in town could not count on unhappy employees to settle in Libreville once their contracts ended.

Europeans began to hire more foreigners once the town began to grow in importance in the 1870s. Officials bemoaned the fact that local labor could not keep up with demand.²⁰ The construction of new buildings required carpenters and masons. English-speaking traders wanted clerks and interpreters with previous business experience. The uncooperative indigenous population of Libreville limited choices for Europeans who wanted workers, while expeditions and a growth of commercial activity increased the need for auxiliaries. Outsiders thus filled the pressing state and private needs. Individual immigrants adapted to port society and struggled for advancement, but as the following examination of Senegalese and Vietnamese immigrants reveals, migrant groups had vastly different experiences negotiating with employers and surrounding townspeople.

Building and Guarding a Colonial Community: The Senegalese of Libreville

Several hundred Senegalese lived in Libreville under the auspices of French authorities throughout the late nineteenth century. For travelers passing through the region, the image of Senegalese in Central Africa was

that of the colonial infantryman.²¹ Though Senegalese often first came to Libreville in military uniforms, others walked onto the town's docks dressed in the flowing robes of Muslim healers or in three-piece suits. Less fortunate men came in shackles. Gabon became a convenient dumping ground for supposed threats to French interests. Senegalese immigrants in Gabon engaged in activities as diverse as their disparate origins. They took advantage of their specialized skills to make a niche for themselves in town society.

Sailors and troops probably comprised the majority of Senegalese in Libreville. Senegalese served as police in town and in combat in the interior up until World War I.²² French officers had little success recruiting Mpongwe and Fang men to become colonial guards.²³ Administrators rated Mpongwe townspeople poorly in their ethnic classification schemes of "warrior" and "effeminate" races. They depicted Mpongwe as lazy, decadent, and prone to drunkenness as opposed to the supposedly virile and faithful Senegalese.²⁴ Libreville administrators complained of their pressing needs to their counterparts in Dakar and Saint Louis when French military representatives had difficulty attracting Senegalese to Gabon.²⁵ Particularly in the 1880s, as French forces battled anti-colonial movements in Senegal, competition for recruits became more intense.²⁶ Soninke men from the interior of the colony enlisted in the army and migrated to Central Africa willingly to make their fortunes.²⁷

Even with such praise, West African soldiers acted often as unruly as Gabonese and European military personnel. The Libreville administrator gave a Senegalese NCO stationed near Libreville this dubious recommendation: "If Corporal Ousmann Sow, a good worker when he has no alcohol, does not return to his habitual drunkenness . . . it will be possible to keep him since he is energetic and a good teacher."²⁸ Outside of the capital, Senegalese soldiers often exploited their favored position. Some traded. Others became petty tyrants who extorted bribes from rural people.²⁹ In Libreville, townspeople had apparently become so fearful of soldiers that treacherous civilians donned the red fezzes that denoted military status to extort money and commit fraud.³⁰ Troops endured hardship at times despite profiting from their intermediary role. Some soldiers suffered from beriberi.³¹ Other sailors requested that commanders not send them to Gabon: poor pay and harsh labor made Libreville an unpopular destination.³²

The unscrupulousness of some soldiers did not represent the actions of the entire Senegalese expatriate community. Dakar and Saint Louis furnished Libreville with skilled carpenters and masons. Between 1870

and 1914, Senegalese hands shaped the walls and beams of Libreville's stores, churches, state buildings, and homes.³³ Military officers repeatedly encouraged more craftsmen to settle in Gabon despite their high salaries and their taste for brandy and wine.³⁴ These men did not come cheap. American missionaries complained Senegalese workers charged high prices and ate only imported rice.³⁵

A third category of Senegalese in Libreville were political prisoners. From the 1870s through World War I, prisoners and their relatives from Senegal found themselves in Gabon. Ahmadou Bamba, the founder of the Muridiyya Sufi brotherhood, was exiled to the colony in 1895. He complained of the suffering he faced in living in Mayumba and Lambaréné far from the capital. His travails are celebrated in stories and songs performed at Mouride festivals. Legends claim French authorities tried to kill Bamba by tossing him to lions and roasting him in a furnace.³⁶ Though these stories are hardly accurate, they do succeed in presenting Gabon as a wild and harsh land.

The life of Muhammad Kerno, however, suggests that not all those banished to Central Africa endured tremendous adversity. Like Bamba, Kerno was sent to Gabon on charges on insubordination but was allowed to live in Libreville. He lived well in the decade following his exile in 1869. Kerno became one of the wealthiest independent traders in the Estuary region and openly competed with European firms for ivory and rubber.³⁷ French naval authorities relied on Kerno as an ally.³⁸ This Senegalese merchant also had the questionable honor of unwittingly introducing the annoying sand chigger to Gabon in 1873 after his ship ran aground near Libreville.³⁹ Though unable to leave the colony, Kerno had room to maneuver and enrich himself.

The search for wealth abroad aided the formation of another community. Itinerant *marabouts*, Sufi religious specialists who manufactured talismans and claimed to have mastered esoteric supernatural knowledge, made homes for themselves in Libreville by the 1890s. It is unclear if Muslim religious practitioners accompanied soldiers, prisoners, or craftsmen into the town, but they left a dramatic impression on townspeople who feared their amulets and powers.⁴⁰ Catholic missionaries fretted that *marabouts* had become feared by indigenous Mpongwe people as supposed masters of "poison" and had become "the veritable sorcerers of the country."⁴¹ A Mpongwe woman confided to American pastor Robert Nassau that a "Senegal man" had saved her through mystic arts from an invisible creature that harassed her by passing through the walls of her house at night.⁴² Military personnel also dabbled in selling their purported

magical abilities. An American missionary mocked Fang villagers near Libreville for buying “gun medicine” hawked by the Senegalese.⁴³ In characteristic fashion, Libreville townspeople sought out mystical power without endorsing foreign dogmas.

A final category of Senegalese people in Libreville were clerks.⁴⁴ Some veterans landed jobs as office workers after their military service ended. Samba So began his career as a sailor, then entered the Libreville police force and finally found work at the capital’s post office between 1879 and 1909.⁴⁵ Senegalese clerks sometimes moved from working for Europeans to acting as independent entrepreneurs.⁴⁶ Some West African office workers rose to prominence after living in Libreville. Before becoming the leading African politician of the Four Communes in Senegal, Blaise Diagne spent a tour of duty as a customs officer in Libreville in 1898.⁴⁷ Diagne seems to have been as much of a scourge of racist bureaucrats in Gabon as he later would be in his homeland.

Libreville authorities brought Diagne up on charges that he had embezzled funds from his post, forged the signature of his superior to allow Africans to leave Libreville without authorization, and had acted with “reprehensible insolence” towards a French official.⁴⁸ He was suspended for two months for his insubordination. In the criminal investigation, police reported that Diagne had dared to speak of administrative matters at his temporary home at a local boardinghouse and spread doctrines of “Africa for the Africans” to indigenous people. Officials feared Diagne and other clerks would spread dangerous ideas of liberation to Gabonese people. He may have helped the development of a dissident group of Libreville townspeople before World War I. Gabonese intellectual Laurent Antchouey asked for Diagne’s assistance against local administrators in the 1920s. Perhaps the bitter memory of the slights he received almost thirty years earlier drove Diagne to aid his associate in Gabon.⁴⁹

Senegalese people received mixed reactions from other Africans in Libreville, yet many founded families and households in their new home. Some soldiers came with wives before the 1880s,⁵⁰ and other Senegalese men intermarried with local people or obtained girls from Mpongwe families.⁵¹ One Frenchman who supervised West African artisans noted in 1892, “The majority [of Senegalese] are seduced by some pretty Gabonese woman, get married and stay there for a long time. I will cite for example one of my chief masons who has not left Gabon in 30 years.”⁵² These individuals became a part of Mpongwe society. Descendants of carpenter Lamine Diop’s late-nineteenth-century union with a Mpongwe woman

have kept Senegalese names to this day.⁵³ Soldiers returning from duty in rural areas with concubines did not always act with such loyalty. The head of Gabon and French Congo noted in 1903 that Senegalese troops had a habit of abandoning their mistresses from Chad and Oubangui-Chari in Libreville before returning home.⁵⁴ One point is relatively clear; Senegalese immigrants, especially artisans, often ended up living their adult and elderly years in Gabon rather than returning home. Though sailors and troops might come and go, other individuals stayed for decades.

Besides the presence of *marabouts*, it is hard to follow how Senegalese continued to practice their Christian or Islamic faith in Libreville before 1914. Catholic missionaries boasted of baptizing a few Senegalese Muslims, but no outcry among other Senegalese in Libreville took place.⁵⁵ Many Senegalese had a reputation as heavy drinkers.⁵⁶ This trait, though contrary to orthodox Islamic practices, was typical in the port. Some Senegalese came from the Catholic minority of townspeople from Saint Louis. On Christmas Eve in 1881, elderly American missionary William Walker heard the sound of a noisy procession of Africans marching by his Baraka church.⁵⁷ Convinced he faced a group of Mpongwe performing a mask ceremony, Walker stormed out of his house and flailed his cane as passers-by. Unbeknownst to the crusading pastor, he assaulted a mixed company of Senegalese and indigenous people celebrating Christmas by visiting homes and carrying lanterns. French commandants, amused by Walker's actions, noted that a riot ensued between the parade group and Mpongwe Protestant mission staff because Walker was unfamiliar with this Senegalese innovation that immigrants had brought.⁵⁸ It does not appear that religious differences brought on radical social divisions between migrants in Libreville.

Several incidents between 1901 and 1905 do point to disagreements among immigrants. Soldiers and clerks, often from very different backgrounds, entered into quarrels that made their way into colonial correspondence. In May 1901, the French director of the Libreville post office reported that a group of former clerks calling themselves the Union Sénégalaise [Senegalese Union] had begun to foment disturbances with others from French West Africa.⁵⁹ A social association of elite Wolof townspeople of the same name existed in Saint Louis and other Senegalese cities that promoted dances and festivities.⁶⁰ Their activities sparked criticism. The troubles centered on a dance and party organized by clerks working for the government and for private trading houses. One writer claiming to represent the "Senegalese of the Guards" asked the head of the

colony to stop the gathering. In his rather unversed hand, the author declared:

Not all the Senegalese have confidence in those people [who work in trading houses]. . . . They insult us all the time. . . . They are slaves in their own land. They are not real Senegalese. Thus, all the others who want to have a great ball in town do not want us who wear the fez there [part of their military uniform] because we are the slaves. If they see us at their dance, they will want to fight us guards. . . .⁶¹

The writer also lamented the poor pay and general misery of military men.

The letter alludes to distinctions in Senegalese society that can be only partially reconstructed. Resentment over wages may have resulted in conflict. Clerks in the 1890s made double or triple the salaries of common infantrymen.⁶² Since some soldiers had begun their career as slaves, perhaps their insults towards the better-educated clerks derived from jealousy or heightened anxieties about their humble origins. Another reason may have come from the boorish behavior of some guards. In defense of the party, some clerks asserted they had excluded only those who might ruin the festivities by becoming drunk and causing a commotion.⁶³ The commandant of the Libreville district in his investigation uncovered another motive behind the dispute. He concluded after meeting with some clerks that their association was simply an apolitical group of "serious and calm" Wolof men.⁶⁴ His informant stated they were simply following in the tradition of their homeland where "there exists groups of blacks who give parties and use invitation cards."⁶⁵

Perhaps the organizers were Dakar and Saint Louis mixed-race people disdainful of rural and uneducated troops; their common Wolof origin may also have separated them from men recruited from all over the colony of Senegal. Finally, the Union may have had ulterior political motives that they hid under the facade of a dance. The case of Diagne shows how poorly authorities reacted to open expression of political ideas in Libreville. Whatever the actual reasons for the disputes, the government agreed to let the ball continue and ignored the complaints of soldiers.⁶⁶ No further information on this issue exists in Gabonese archives, but the incident points to the diversity of backgrounds and aspirations among Senegalese immigrants in Libreville.

The Senegalese community in Libreville varied greatly in experiences, occupations, and in their motives for coming to Gabon. Political exiles and slaves pressed into military service had no choice but to move

abroad just as slaves and unpaid laborers did elsewhere. In contrast, artisans, many soldiers, and ritual specialists arrived on the shores of the Gabon Estuary of their own free will to pursue economic opportunity as part of an Atlantic network of colonial employees in search of skilled labor. Some used their relatively favored position to take advantage of local people; others brought religious and political innovations to Libreville town life. Their efforts heralded the increasingly large presence of West African laborers in Libreville in the twentieth century who now dominate the city's economy. Whereas the case of Senegalese immigrants calls into question a focus on unpaid labor and slavery alone in understanding migrations between different parts of the African Atlantic coast, the relatively short-lived presence of Vietnamese prisoners in Libreville illustrates the role of French imperial connections and policies in shaping international settlement patterns in Central Africa.

Industrious Convicts and Idle Freeman: Vietnamese Prisoners and Colonial Labor in Libreville, 1887–1900

Compared to the migration of Senegalese to Gabon, Vietnamese settlement was a short but dramatic episode. Vietnamese led to Libreville probably had as little understanding of why they were taken halfway around the world as did Gabonese slaves sent off to Brazil and Cuba earlier in the nineteenth century. Imperial power tied concerns over labor in French Congo with an equally pressing demand in central Vietnam to remove prisoners. With French military occupation of both Indochina and Central Africa radically expanding in size and ambition, exchanges made between the far-flung members of the colonial administration illustrates the ad hoc nature of French colonial governments in the late 1880s. Unlike the Senegalese, the several hundred Vietnamese in Libreville did not try to make a permanent home in Gabon. Despite their short presence in Libreville, they did make their mark felt through the gardens they tilled and their endurance.

Documentation on Vietnamese prisoners available in missionary and French Congo state archives does not offer much information on individual convicts. However, the sources are clear on the specific goals of the Gabonese administration in bringing this exotic source of labor. Marshy areas in the present-day Mbatavea and Nombakélé neighborhoods cut off the European section of Libreville from the Mpongwe agglomeration

of villages known as Glass. In 1887, administrators decided to enroll Vietnamese men to drain the swamps and construct paved roads along the shore.⁶⁷ An overwhelmingly male contingent of roughly 100 inmates arrived by ship and began work.

Why did the French administrations in French Congo and Indochina set up this program? The motivations for devising this project came from a need for menial labor and the recalcitrance of Libreville people to satisfy European employers' hopes. These same points led to the importation of Chinese indentured servants to the Gold Coast and South Africa.⁶⁸ Commissioner General of French Congo de Brazza wrote in 1894 that he could not overcome the supposed inbred laziness of Gabonese people and lauded the Asian migrants; "The arrival of Vietnamese convicts gave great results, unlike [African labor]."⁶⁹ Brazza, fully aware that local and foreign Africans alike charged high wages for domestic service in Libreville in the 1890s,⁷⁰ pleaded in his request for a shipment of incarcerated men with experience as cooks and gardeners.⁷¹

French officers in Indochina also had motivation to support the deportation of Vietnamese men. Just as in Gabon, the initial years of military occupation in northern and central Vietnam involved a series of bloody regional campaigns.⁷² Tu Duc, the ruler of Vietnam and a staunch opponent of French imperialist designs against his independence, died in 1883 without a direct successor. After French forces gained victories over royalist troops and independent regional leaders, minister of war Ton That Thuyet and anti-colonialist members of the imperial household fled from the royal capital of Hue with the 14-year-old heir to the throne Ham Nghi in the summer of 1885. The French faced bitter opposition from scattered groups of educated scholars and peasants known as the Can Vuong ("supporters of the king") movement between 1885 and 1891.⁷³ French authorities, seeking to preserve the fiction of a Vietnamese client state, organized central Vietnam as the protectorate of Annam. Administrators governed colonial subjects under a very disordered system before they consolidated their power and defeated most sources of military opposition by the mid-1890s.⁷⁴

During this troubled period, French authorities did not follow well-defined procedures in dealing with opposition members. A confusing mixture of Vietnamese and French legal institutions judged trials.⁷⁵ Some prisoners were housed in poorly staffed and cramped jails.⁷⁶ Political dissidents such as Ham Nghi were expelled to Algeria, French Guyana, and New Caledonia in the 1880s and 1890s.⁷⁷ If Congo authorities wanted an unpaid and subjugated group to do hard labor, the French government in Annam had a wide selection of prisoners and captives to choose from. Little

care was given to legal niceties. On reviewing legal records of deportees ten years after their removal to Africa, high-ranking administrators noted that convicts often had been charged with what they termed “non-existent” crimes such as “piracy” (often merely a euphemism for anti-colonial activity).⁷⁸ Inmates, regardless of their actions as common criminals or anti-colonial activists, were certainly undesirable to European authorities. It thus comes as little surprise that one French Congo governor in 1895 called the convict exchange “a friendly agreement of a temporary nature.”⁷⁹

This alliance was far less pleasant for the Vietnamese themselves. The first group in Libreville suffered appallingly. Besides the brutality of hard labor, exposure to mosquitoes in the swamped led to outbreaks of malaria that wiped out well over half of the hundred inmates in a matter of months.⁸⁰ A Catholic priest recalled, “When the Annamites were deported to Libreville, they dropped like flies.”⁸¹ African guards tormented some Vietnamese with beatings.⁸² The head of the colony in 1895 admitted that these sickly workers often could not contribute much towards rebuilding roads.⁸³ Even after the high death toll, commandants in Gabon kept asking the Governor General of Cochin China and the Minister of Colonies for more prisoners.⁸⁴

The reason behind the desire of Libreville administrators to have more convicts in town came from their agricultural talents. Although few Vietnamese were good for shoveling swampy earth, they did prove to be skillful farmers who adapted to the foreign ecology of the Gabonese coast. A French retail store manager in 1888 decided to grow vegetables for sale after watching the blossoming gardens of Vietnamese inmates.⁸⁵ Other American and French residents and visitors lauded these Asian innovations. At annual agricultural competitions organized by the colonial government in Libreville, prisoners’ produce often caught the attention of other people in town. Authorities awarded the deportees prizes for vegetables and their skill in raising livestock;⁸⁶ one American missionary wrote after attending an exhibition that he “was surprised at the abundance and variety of vegetables raised by the Annamites.”⁸⁷ Southeast Asian techniques impressed Africans in Libreville as well. Gabonese historian Anges François Ratanga-Atoz has noted how some varieties of bananas and other foods grown in Libreville were introduced by the Vietnamese.⁸⁸

The willingness of Vietnamese immigrants to grow and sell food at the town market was particularly attractive since Libreville suffered from periodic food shortages. Poor environmental conditions, the violence of early French rule, battles between rural Fang clans in the surrounding Estuary region, and the association of farming with slave status among

Mpongwe people led to high prices.⁸⁹ Vietnamese farmers supplied the French military campaign in Dahomey in 1890 with several tons of vegetables.⁹⁰ A commandant soon afterwards noted the “sole industry” of the Vietnamese in Libreville was food sales.⁹¹ French officers finally had found a relatively powerless group of foreigners they could count on to provide them with vegetables. As a result, they received from Vietnam roughly between 200 and 400 more convicts between 1889 and 1893.⁹²

Vietnamese farmers had little choice but to farm. The government cut off rations to those who survived after two years since inmates could usually grow enough for their own sustenance.⁹³ Commandants also gave some prisoners land if they continued to sell food at prices set by the administration.⁹⁴ Those who refused to participate in the program could be forced out of Libreville.⁹⁵ The government reincarcerated freed individuals if they refused to follow state instructions. Nguyen Van Tai, a former prisoner described as a “drunk and a marauder by night” by a French official, was jailed again for stealing a cow.⁹⁶ His actions suggest that not all inmates were keen to obey the rules.

Archival material from Gabon gives only slight insight into the views of Vietnamese prisoners or their interactions with other townspeople. A few prisoners decided to stay in Libreville and take land, but most preferred to return home if they were offered the choice.⁹⁷ Most died before they had the opportunity to leave Africa. Commissaire General Lamothe, head of French Congo, estimated that by his count 119 inmates had died, 70 still lived in Gabon and Congo, and 3 had received pardons and left for home in 1898.⁹⁸ One of his successors asked the Minister of Colonies to send back a woman named Lé Thi Cam a few years later.⁹⁹ After being exiled in 1888 on a charge of complicity to theft, she had been a prisoner in Libreville for eight years before gaining her freedom. She had lost two children in Africa. A few other Vietnamese stayed in Libreville after 1900. Some joined the colonial guard while others farmed and served as judges of agricultural fairs with indigenous people and West Africans.¹⁰⁰ Unfortunately, the Vietnamese people did not leave behind their own writings in Africa.

Even less clear are indigenous attitudes towards this small community. Their inability to communicate with others and their lack of freedom must have limited their interactions with others. Their housing in the central jail in the first years and their mandatory gray uniforms set them apart from both foreign and local Libreville residents.¹⁰¹ Few, if any, Mpongwe men or women seem to have created alliances with the foreigners. Some Libreville residents viewed them as marginal captives of French power. French priest Father Maurice Briault and some of his students encountered some gardens

grown by poor Angolan farmers in the late 1890s. According to Briault, one child was so “scandalized” by the fields that he spit on the ground in disgust and told his teacher, “These Portuguese blacks are ‘shakas’ (slaves). They work like the Chinese [a popular appellation for the Vietnamese].”¹⁰² Many in Libreville thought only slaves or backward rural people lived off the land. Perhaps the sight of prisoners coerced to obey French interests served to reinforce popular perceptions that connected servitude to farming. Unlike the Senegalese, who often became welcome members of a town community, most Vietnamese remained outsiders.

Why did exiles stop coming from Vietnam? Changes in colonial policy in Indochina provide one possible explanation. By 1891, the French had battered most supporters of the Can Vuong movement into submission. No armed movements challenged French military supremacy. The disorderly period of French rule in the late 1880s had ended due to more coherent attempts to centralize policy and administration.¹⁰³ Unlike Gabon and French Congo, which remained a site of violent anti-colonial struggles and in financial disarray,¹⁰⁴ Vietnam was more successful. Perhaps officials in Indochina felt less need to indulge in complicated schemes to exile prisoners. The reordering of colonial law enforcement institutions also may have lowered potential numbers of convicts. More research is necessary in archives on the Vietnamese end of the relationship before more light can be shed on these issues.

No new Vietnamese arrivals came to Libreville after 1900. Yet the legacy of the Southeast Asian exiles remained behind in the use of unfree labor as well as the introduction of new styles of gardening and plants. The incident demonstrates the continued stubbornness on the part of Africans in Libreville to rebuff European employers’ desires. Administrators turned from Asia to the Gabonese interior as the government exacted *corvée* unpaid work details from rural people. Unlike the case of the Senegalese, whose actions undermine the focus on coercion in determining why and how populations shifted in Africa in the late nineteenth century, the Vietnamese experience shows that unfree migrations also had influenced the development of coastal African colonial towns.

Conclusion

Vietnamese and Senegalese members of the Libreville community exemplify the diversity in coastal African Atlantic towns. Imperial networks led to settlement patterns that both resembled and broke with older patterns

of movement set during the zenith of trans-Atlantic slavery. French administrators might have indulged in shuffling workers from another part of the empire to the Gabonese capital, but these draconian efforts to use foreigners to solve the town labor crisis did not last long. High wages rather than weighty chains became motivations for outsiders to live and labor in Gabon. World War I brought radical changes to the African Atlantic trade and politics and altered migration strategies by workers and employees alike, but the arrival of Hausa traders and coastal fishermen from West Africa indicates the importance of individual choice rather than force in enticing immigrants in Libreville.

Both sets of foreigners left their imprint on town life. Vietnamese farming influenced local agriculture. Exiles from Southeast Asia and Senegal eventually could become full participants in local life if they survived their first years in the colony. Besides those brought without their consent, other individuals used their position to find work. Indigenous Libreville people, particularly in the case of Senegalese artisans, welcomed newcomers as sources of technology and religious knowledge. Senegalese people in Gabon had disparate origins and engaged in alliances with Europeans and indigenous people in Libreville that resist easy categorization. Vietnamese convicts, although they stayed only for a short period compared to West Africans, undoubtedly came from varied regions and backgrounds; more research may unearth differences within their community.

These examples show an evolution of imperial Atlantic economy and politics that led to the movement of workers to serve the changing interests of urban employers and colonial regimes. Such shifts had tremendous impact on the formation on towns and cities in Africa outside of Gabon. The stories of foreign artisans and soldiers living in different parts of West and Central Africa cry out for far greater attention than they have received up until now. Coastal diasporas in colonial Africa, though often mentioned briefly in the historical literature, deserve research in their own right. A multinational approach would be better suited to examine the origins, experiences, and motives of these communities than a scholarly and institutional framework still wedded to geographic regions and the nation-state as primary units of research.

A further point to be drawn in this brief survey of immigrations in Libreville is the global nature of imperial rule in the opening moments of high imperialism. The scramble for European occupation led to common needs for labor and the extension of new city communities spread out along lines of empire. Libreville's Vietnamese connection is fairly unique, but the convoluted process of indigenous negotiations, resistance

movements, and the creation of colonial cities and administrations writ large occurred in Southeast Asia and Central Africa. From the shores of the Gulf of Vietnam to the Gabon Estuary, local people responded to these cultural flows and population movements in multiple ways. Historians should become more willing to trace these often surprising colonial connections instead of exiling them in the margins of their narratives.

Notes

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11 Many oral and written sources make reference to Mpongwe workers abroad and in the Gabonese interior. See “Communauté de Saint Pierre de Libreville,” *BSCE* 24 (1905–10), 183; Robert Nassau, *My Ogowé* (New York: Neale, 1912), 175–76; Gerard Morel and Maria Rohrer, *Sur la route de la sainteté: Mère Cécilia* (Paris: Éditions du Bosquet, 1994), 31; Phyllis Martin, *Leisure and Society in Colonial Brazzaville* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 24; Interview, Marc-Luc Ivanga, Montagne Sainte, Libreville, 27 November 1999; Interview, Simone Saint Denis, Plaine Niger, Libreville, 11 December 1999; Interview, Herniette Izouré, Glass, Libreville, 1 September 2000.

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16 PCUSA Archives, Stanford University Microfilm Reel 14, Ntoko Truman to John Laurie, 31 July 1880.

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9

CAPTURED AND STEEPED IN COLONIAL DYNAMICS AND LEGACY

THE CASE OF ISIOLO TOWN IN KENYA

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Introduction

This article addresses the history of Isiolo town from its creation in 1901 to the present. I argue that Isiolo is a colonial town that has remained stuck in the colonial moment. The political, economic, and socio-cultural dynamics that were established during the colonial period persist forty years after Kenya attained independence. It provides an important case study; yet, Isiolo does not feature prominently in the historical discourses on urbanization in Kenya. Historians of urbanization in Kenya have for a long time concentrated on Nairobi and Mombasa, and for valid reasons. They have tended to look at several critical developments that have transformed social, economic, political, environmental, and cultural life in Nairobi and Mombasa to the exclusion of other urban areas. Why is this the case? Why are these two cities privileged at the expense of other urban centers? Many reasons might account for the privileging of Nairobi and Mombasa in historical discourses in Kenya. Mombasa is not only one of Kenya's oldest cities but has the largest natural harbor in East Africa, and is thus the gateway to Eastern Africa. On the other hand, Nairobi is Kenya's capital city and has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention, much of which celebrates its so-called rich history that dates from 1899.

Isiolo town is peripheralized due to its location in northern Kenya, a region that is usually regarded as marginal and at the backwater of Kenya's economic mainstay, agriculture. Yet many scholars fail to realize the importance of the pastoralist economy to Kenya and the important role that Isiolo town plays. Nor do scholars acknowledge Kenya's great heritage and the significant contributions that Isiolo makes to this heritage, especially since it is surrounded by three national game parks, and since it is the center of Borana culture in Kenya.

Robert Obudho, Kenya's foremost researcher on urbanism, has concentrated on Nairobi and Mombasa as if they were the only two urban areas of any importance in Kenya. This privileging of Nairobi and Mombasa has enormous implications for our understanding of Kenya's urban spaces. Still, there are other questions that have to do with the pursuit of colonial legacies, including ethnic divisions, the establishment of martial and military zones, enhancement of racial divides, and the role of ethnicity and class in determining development imperatives. These factors of analysis can all be found in Isiolo town. Further questions need to be asked. Why, for example, did some urban centers such as Isiolo, Timau, Kitale, Eldoret, and Nanyuki retain colonial flavors in terms of tastes, entertainment, lifestyle, settlement, and planning? These are issues that scholars have ignored, as if ethnicity disappears with the processes of urbanization, the creation of occupational groups, and emerging class divisions into proletariats and bourgeoisie. This paper focuses on this small and less-studied town, a town that has not enjoyed as much attention as Nairobi and Mombasa; here, historians are to blame.

The writing of history in Kenya has failed to address urbanization and topics of cultural identity, ethnicity, cultural difference and cultural community in these times of rapid global change. This omission and neglect of the histories of small towns goes against the various ways through which knowledge can be accessed in Kenya. It reinforces the belief in the meta-narratives, where the focus has been on the great events and cities. In such beliefs, ethnic groups and other areas of study in the rural and urban milieu are seen as unchanging. I believe that addressing these critical issues of cultural identity and the organization of residential areas in Isiolo town is pivotal in removing these omissions at a time when there are deepening patterns of cultural balkanization that were established during the colonial period. I use Isiolo town as a site where divisions begun under colonialism have been retained. I critique the historical preoccupation with major urban areas in Kenya, and the disciplinary insulation pursued by political historians who do not recognize the dynamics

of cultural history, especially the agency of the marginalized and the voiceless. I situate the local population in Isiolo, whose story I tell, in a more cogent and representative way, removed from the political historians that have inundated us with stories of colonial governors, post-colonial presidents, and the stories and biographies of “big men” in Kenya. Thus, this essay gives voice to the voiceless, those who have not been captured by existing grand narratives in the telling of Kenya’s history.

Some Theoretical Reflections on the Writing of History in Kenya

“Why is urban history suddenly important in Kenya?” one might ask. The simplest answer could be, “because that is where everybody is headed.” But we can complicate this a little by asking, “What is new in these urban areas that we do not know already?” To answer this question, we must first appreciate the fact that there are many processes of social change and intensification that involve the movement of people, ideas, and economic and cultural capital across ethnic boundaries that have not been studied adequately by historians in Kenya. Kenyan historians have been preoccupied with the so-called pre-colonial period and colonial period. These scholars include: John Osogo, 1966; Bethwel Allan Ogot, 1967; and pre-colonial and colonial periods covered by Gideon S. Were, 1967; H. Mwaniki, 1973; Benjamin Kipkorir and F. B. Welbourn, 1973; Godfrey Muriuki, 1974; William Ochieng, 1974; Henry Mwanzi, 1977; H. O. Ayot, 1979; Towett, 1979. To them, there were no people, and therefore, no history in urban areas. In their grand narratives, the Kenyan “world” was driven forward by the engines of migration, an unending plethora of people looking for free space, imbued with an insatiable spirit for adventure, and living within a tumultuous existence of fiefdoms steeped in rivalries among kings and interspersed with civil wars.

Thus, migration became the key preoccupation of these “migration scholars,” similar to post-modern, post-colonial, and “globalization” scholars who see the world in terms of the massive movement of peoples and ideas, with the west at the center. To be fair to the “migration scholars,” they might be correct to a certain extent in their analyses, since many Kenyans have both urban and rural homes. Studying them in their rural habitation, therefore, is likely to capture an important aspect of their lives, especially, for example, during the Christmas period. But there is a growing generation of Kenyans who have lived in urban areas throughout their

lives and have never stepped into rural areas. It is possible that ethnic migrations might have occurred rapidly, shrinking spatial relations and identity divisions of hitherto unrelated societies in far-flung parts of the country. This might have intensified the politics of identity at a later stage of societal development, where clans that had been assimilated into ethnic groups began to ask questions about their identity at the national and international levels and vice versa, as E. S. Atieno-Odhiambo (2001) and Anthony Giddens (1991) have argued.

However, having told us how these ethnic groups moved into the space that became Kenya, they (the “migration scholars”) did not follow them into the urban areas. From their studies, it seems that the migrating Agikuyu, Abaluyia, Luo, Kamba, Nandi, Kipsigis, Abagusii, Embu, Mbeere, and Abasuba ceased to be of relevance to historians as soon as they left their designated ethnic area. Why then are there ethnic enclaves in Kenya’s urban centers? Can ethnic groups in Kenya still be studied as viable and visible entities? Can their pre-colonial migration be viewed as an ongoing process or have they stopped? Apart from similar linguistic convenience, cultural pursuits such as ethnic foods and entertainment, social networks and familiarity, why do members of ethnic groups from different classes always reside in particular residential sections in urban areas in Kenya? Why do the majority of the poor and some rich Kenyan Somali always converge in “Kambi Somali,” the Luo in “Kisumu Ndogo,” and the Miji Kenda in “Majengo”?

Of the historians who have studied the movements of people in Kenya—apart from Idha Salim who studied the Islamic State in Mombassa and a few others who examined urban themes—the majority focused mainly on rural themes and subjects. They were infatuated by the “permanence” of their “specimens” or study entities—the rural ethnic groups—or “tribes” in the colonial lexicon. The rural dynamics and the pretended uniformity that they purported to represent both stimulated and bolstered the intensification of research work on these rural communities, and they were very susceptible to all kinds of hypotheses. It was very easy to justify and establish a rationale for studying a people without a written history. However, the expansion of representational technologies and capacities has meant that people now put together their sense of past, present, and future, their very destinies and their sense of self, in collusion with new identities, some of which have evolved very recently. Ethnic stereotypes, “folklore,” and mores have been replaced by class-based jargons and religious affiliations that are counter to ethnic allegiances and that have sometimes produced ethnic animosity and/or the development

of new identities. This diminishing of ethnic groups has not only complicated the equation of Kenyan history but it has also raised new questions.

These new identities, mentalities, and self-imaginings are propelled by an ever-expanding sense of possibility and identity transformations formed around ethnicity, class, and other allegiances. It is very visible that peasants and the lumpenproletariat on one hand, and the middle class and bourgeoisie on the other, cultivate new interests, needs, desires, and fears. What is interesting is that these have all been born and amplified in the rural cultural landscape but destabilized by the allure of the new aesthetic culture of the urban centers, where there is increasing bastardization of the rural representations through television and movies from Hollywood and Bollywood (the Hollywood of Asia, in Mumbai, India) as well as a variety of other media forms.

There is also increasing hybridization, through interethnic marriages that are breaking the traditional ethnic affiliations that were very strong and more emotional. Urban mix is creating new identities of “ethnicity” without culture and language. The rural cultural practices (such as ethnic marks and other physical marks) are disappearing and are practiced and preserved by only a few nostalgic members of the old generation, and ethnic cultural nationalists. Cultural villages are being constructed at museums, learning institutions such as universities and cultural centers that perform and nostalgically reenact life in the village to please cultural diehards who cling to the “glorious past” of ethnic heroes and heroines. For instance, the ideal cultural Luo with six lower teeth removed through initiation is missing; instead the Luo with golden teeth has replaced him. A newly repackaged tourist Maasai, who is “generic,” has replaced the original Maasai, and other Kenyan ethnic groups replicate this in varying ways.

Apparently, new critical discourses and technologies of truth have been generated, largely outside the field of history, to address the challenges of this new historical period of the disappearing ethnic group and its attendant identities. Anthropology pioneered this, as urban anthropologists were busy studying the new identities in the urban milieu. New realities demanded new tools of analysis and the abandonment of old frameworks. That is why Bethuel Ogot produced volume 1 of the history of the southern Luo but has never produced volume 2 after the Luo suddenly refused to perform according to the text; some disappeared into the urban crowd leaving Ogot, perhaps, confused. Even Godfrey Muriuki’s analysis of the Kikuyu ends in 1900. What happened to the Kikuyu after 1900 would be a very interesting question to ask Muriuki. Gideon Were’s

account of the Abaluyia ends in 1930. Again, one may ask, where did the Abaluyia go after 1930? We must concede that we are living in an age where there are competing interpretations and new genres that will continue to shape the way we look at history. Here, the history of a place can be a useful space for interrogating and illuminating the history of a people. As a consequence, new critical discourses abound.

In the academic realm, these discourses include programs of thought such as cultural studies, postmodernism, multiculturalism and post-colonialism—the latter being the framework that informs and integrates the various disparate elements and threads of our argument in this essay. But in the realm of the popular, there are various interpretations that are formulated in the language of moral panic and its obverse as well as the language of panaceas and instant fixes now deluging the study of history. I am talking here about the panic/panacea discourses of the history of the body, of the night, of food, of sex, of extreme sports, of kitchens, of tears, of sexuality, of maternity and the like that now dominate historical conferences and journals. All of these developments represent the triumph of multiplicity and the carnival of difference now overshadowing historical occurrences. They also incite, in the Foucauldian sense, new tasks and new challenges for the practices of cultural reproduction generally and the practices of history—writing more specifically. This is not entirely unproductive. Indeed, we are being compelled at every point to reconsider what history means in these circumstances, as Cohen and Atieno-Odhiambo (1992) demonstrated in *Burying S. M.* in producing a socio-cultural history of the Luo and the Kikuyu based on a court case between S. M. Otieno's clan and his widow, Wambui Otieno (Cohen and Atieno-Odhiambo, 1992).

Against the tide of these currents of change, however, historians have tended to diminish bright lines of distinction between economic, political, cultural, social, and environmental histories in the teeming worlds of multiplicity and hybridity that now flourish in both rural and urban areas. Historians brought up in the realm of the meta-narrative still insist on projects of homogeneity and normalization, and the production of a history that is relevant to the socially functional citizen, and the nation. This is true, even of contemporary progressive approaches to writing history, such as multiculturalism, which has sought to bring the problems of multiplicity and difference into a framework of institutional intelligibility and manageability. Thus, proponents of cultural history and post-modernism have sought to emphasize a technicist discourse—a discourse of experts, professional competence, and boundary maintenance that has separated,

for example, multiculturalism from more critical discourses such as Marxism, pragmatism, the Frankfurt school of critical theory, cultural studies, post-structuralism, and post-colonialism.

One consequence of this self-isolation from critical scholarship has been the fact that concepts such as “culture” and “identity”—concepts integral to cultural history projects such as multiculturalism—are under-theorized and undigested within the history field in Kenya. Culture and identity are treated problematically in the works of history. The contemporary hierarchical, religious, and class arrangement of urbanization in Kenya works to produce differentiating processes, such as “Islamization,” “global citizens,” and “global tastes,” which undermine and fragment people’s identities. These differentiating processes, in turn, help to generate a powerful ground of culturally significant distinctions between the rich and the poor, between Muslims and Christians, and between the agriculturists and pastoralists in the case of Isiolo town.

One sees all of these dynamics at work among historians, especially now in the fratricidal wars going on in the scramble for theories, models, and paradigm shifts in Kenya and abroad. The most common concern is over the question of the meta-narrative versus the micro-narrative, the canon versus multiculturalism and traditional research methods versus interdisciplinary approaches and alternative forms of discovering knowledge such as participatory research, cultural studies, and post-colonial theory. But, we also see this antipathy to difference in popular culture and public policy in Kenya—a country in which the professional middle class, who are dwellers of the suburbs and who constitute the intelligentsia and professional class, have appropriated certain societal advantages onto themselves. They occupy the space of social injury, the space of social victim and plaintiff, and they have strategically positioned themselves as gatekeepers and spokespersons for the entire nation. Thus, the history that is produced is mainly a middle-class history, with other voices marginalized or silenced.

Granted that a society’s culture and gauge of progress is the middle class, this cannot stop us from asking, who speaks for the silenced? How do we recuperate their voices and reinstate them into national discourses? How do we involve tiny Isiolo town and juxtapose it to giant Nairobi in our narratives on urban history? A quick response is that by focusing on the dominant voices, many of the Kenyan historians are leaving out alternative viewpoints. In so doing, this suburban professional class denies avenues of social complaint to its “Other”: the peasant and proletariat in the slums and/or ghettos. It projects its suburban worldview out into the

social world as the barometer of public viewpoint in Kenya, and it influences national policy, displacing issues of inequality and poverty and replacing them with demands for better roads, water, security, balanced budgets, tax exemptions, and greater surveillance and incarceration of the poor on petty offenses; all while the rich continue to steal millions. The middle class robs from the poor and gives to the rich through the pen, through history. All of this is accompanied by a deep-bodied investment in Anglo-American cultural forms by middle-class families that consume western goods and television programs liberally and are influenced by western movies and lifestyles. Their European and North American connections, through globalization, neo-liberalism and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the urban and rural spaces in Kenya, are proselytizing. Thus, even remote Isiolo town has not escaped such forces as marketism (corporatization, liberalization, and privatization), nor has Nairobi. Isiolo has class, religious, and ethnic differences, but has also not escaped global encapsulation.

Of course, this framework of oppositions and influences can be mapped onto every urban area in Kenya. But, ironically, these developments are taking place at a time when all over the world the processes of migration, electronic mediation, and the work of the imagination of the great masses of the people have resulted in the disruption of culture from place to place (Appadurai, 1996; Giddens, 1990, 1995). For example, the movement of peoples from rural to urban areas in Kenya has had the effect of changing not only Kenyan urban culture and its very demographic character from within, but the whole realm of ethnicity. In many residential areas in urban Kenya, it is now not unusual to encounter areas where the ethnic mix defies categorization. This situation can be seen more broadly in the linguistic and cultural patterns that follow migration from rural to urban settings in many parts of Kenya. New cultural forms are produced at the point of encounter between indigenous groups and those groups from outside the physical area of the urban society. Groups that were previously dominated, such as women and ethnic minorities, are receiving voices and becoming empowered. Interethnic marriages are becoming common and ethnic identities are weakening or disappearing. This new cosmopolitanism and hybridization places enormous strains and offers radical challenges to formal histories of society (Appiah, 1998). In Isiolo, this is very visible in two residential areas, Kula Mawe and Puda Pesa, where the level of ethnic mixing is very high and past ethnic enclaves are disappearing as the Meru, the Somali, and the Borana mix freely and create new identities and new cultures.

These vastly transformed circumstances affect the movement and collision of ideas and have also created differences. In the selfsame Isiolo town where there is increasing ethnic harmonization along class rather than ethnic identities, there are still religious and linguistic allegiances, and new ideologies and paradigm shifts impose new imperatives on the writing of history in Kenya. In our era, however, we seem still to lack the qualities of empathy, the desire for collaboration and cooperation and negotiation, and the magnanimity of spirit to engage with the “Other” as a member of our community or ethnicity or even our species. How should we address the topics of culture and identity, or gender and class in the organization of Kenya’s urban spaces, especially the spread of violence through urban mobs such as “*Mungiki*,” “*Jeshi la Mzee*,” “*Taliban*,” and now terrorism? Why is urban violence becoming a common feature in Isiolo? Why have the Meru, Borana, and Somali clansmen resident there suddenly realized that they are different? Why have they become violent? Why is Islamic fundamentalism a key suspect in this violence? Is this the reality or is Isiolo being fed the global yarn?

Urban History in Kenya: Why Isiolo’s History Matters

The urban space is the next subject for historians in Kenya as the country becomes increasingly urbanized. The rate of urbanization in Kenya is one of the highest in the world. While the estimated annual rate of growth of urban population in Kenya is 7.05 percent for the period 1995–2000, the average for African cities is 4.37 percent and 2.57 percent for the world. This has stretched the capacity of infrastructure and services in the large towns, to the extent that large sectors of population have to squat or live in slums, exposing themselves to numerous hazards. These include lack of sewerage and reliable water supply, exposure to fires, high crime rates, epidemics, lack of schools, and limited access to medical facilities.

More than half of the urban residents in Kenya live in poverty. They dwell in peripheral urban areas, have limited incomes and low education, subsist on poor diets, and live in unsanitary and overcrowded conditions. Since they rely on boreholes that are manually dug, safe drinking water remains a mirage; and since many structures are not planned for, the disposal of solid waste is a big problem; decent housing and transportation are particularly lacking. Urban residents are exposed to increased levels of contamination from factories where environmental protection is minimal. The case of Kenya Tanneries, situated in Roysambu in Nairobi, is an

obvious example of environmental degradation, visible to all, laymen and experts alike. The poor construction and unplanned nature of these informal settlements, such as Kibera and Mathare Valley (Africa's second largest slum after Soweto in South Africa), expose residents to the effects of congestion, pollution, landslides and flooding. Kibera and Mathare are two of the fastest growing areas in Nairobi, together with other slums such as KwaReuben, Kinyago, and Marigoini.

Thus, the urban areas have become more vibrant and dynamic than the rural areas, making them ideal sites where change can be observed and investigated. The migration studies that so dominated historical studies in Kenya are dying, thanks to rapid urbanization. Isiolo is a typical colonial town, established by white settlers in colonial Kenya. Situated between settler farms and ranches and African nomadic grazing fields, Isiolo town is located in Kenya's geographical center and was often proposed as an ideal site for Kenya's capital because of this geographical advantage. Isiolo was created as a center from which to mount military expeditions to penetrate and pacify hostile groups of northern Kenya and monitor the activities of Emperor Menelik II's Ethiopia. The British had reason to be worried about Ethiopia, which had vanquished Italian forces at the battle of Adwa in 1896, a time when no African state would have dared confront a European power.

Due to the Italian presence in Eritrea and Somali, the British never ceased to cast their eyes over their eastern shoulder in Kenya, hence the heavy militarization of Isiolo. This suspicion and arms-building around Isiolo was later vindicated by the activities of Mussolini, whose forces engaged British forces during the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. During his 1935 campaigns, Mussolini was on a mission to avenge the earlier defeat of Italy. Of great significance is the fact that Isiolo town was the launching pad for the rescue of Ethiopia and restoration of deposed Haile Selassie. Isiolo town has been a frontier zone since its establishment, at least from the colonial records. The colonial project in Kenya, as elsewhere on the continent, engaged in the rearrangement of societies in order to make them fit into the colonial enterprise. The colonial project engaged in "processes of neutralization, recreation, and rearrangement" of particular ethnic groups and areas (Mudimbe, 1994: 134–40).

Isiolo town was thus the base of operations for the colonial forces in Northern Frontier District (NFD). Major operations for pacification of Northern Kenya were launched from there. Thus, the linkage of Isiolo town to the global discourse goes back to World War II. It was here that both African and European soldiers who fought and died in the campaign

against the Italians in Ethiopia are interred. A huge memorial plaque stands at the entrance to the District Commissioner's offices in Isiolo town to this day. The stone has names of those soldiers who died. They came from the whole of East Africa and were members of different battalions under the British colonial army, especially the King's African Rifles (KAR). Many people do not realize how significant this tombstone is to the history of Isiolo as not only a "martial town" but also as a town of converging cultures. Thus, Isiolo town, as home of the largest cemetery of World War I and II veterans, African and European, contains an emotional feature of Kenya's colonial history and has historical war memorials similar to those in European cities. Isiolo town plays host to many family memorials, especially British. In 2001, Isiolo town played host to the crew of *Survivor III*, the popular CBS reality show that was savored by millions of people across the world.

Since the colonial period Isiolo town has been the meeting point between Southern and Northern Kenya. The white settlers were mainly in the south; they instituted quarantines protecting their livestock from diseases that they alleged were inherent in the pastoralist stocks. Thus Isiolo town was a screening center for livestock from the north before the animals were allowed to go to the markets in the south. Even after independence, the marshalling/stock holding and screening point has remained, and the quarantine is still maintained. Research has revealed that the Contagious Bovine Pleura Pneumonia (CBPP), a cattle disease that was so prevalent in northern Kenya and that necessitated the quarantine, has been eradicated, but the quarantine still remains in place. This isolation of the Borana and Somali from the rest of Kenya gave them certain solidarity in Islamic religion that has been visible in Isiolo town until recently with the advent of multiparty politics in Kenya.

Immigration of Ethiopian clans into Kenya has also impacted greatly on Isiolo town's history. That is why transnationalism, or cross-border nationalism, which can also be described as a form of globalization, is also of critical concern to Isiolo town. The Borana are Oromia-speaking peoples who originally came from Ethiopia, where they were part of the Oromia-speaking "nationality" of southern Ethiopia, who are their cousins. They stretched from southern Ethiopia to the Tana River at the coast of Kenya. The Borana moved to Northern Kenya in large numbers, probably at the end of the nineteenth century. The Amharic conquest of Southern Ethiopia by Emperor Menelik II triggered migrations towards the south of Ethiopia, causing the Borana to cross into Kenya. Since they were already pastoralists, the Borana moved to the rich grazing areas and

wells between the present Wajir and Mandera districts, currently occupied by the Gashes. The evergreen Lorian swamp, into which the Uaso Nyiro pours its waters also attracted them. In this new area, the Borana came into contact with the Somali, who are mainly Muslims. They thus lost their powerful religious identity and rituals. They also lost the attachment to their cousins in Ethiopia, although they continued to participate marginally in the *gada* system¹ (Baxter, 1954; Hogg, 1981; Legesse, 1973; Amutabi, 1996). The men were completely transformed, as they were the active contact persons, whereas the women retained much of the Borana or Oromo traditional worship rituals (Aguilar, 1991). From that point, women took over as the vehicles of worship in the Borana community as the men increasingly converted to Islam (Aguilar, 1991; Fugich, 1999: 8). Recently, however, there has been a revival of traditional religion, especially the “sacrifice of coffee beans” or incense and the pouring of traditional libation. This revivalism is associated with the Oromo nationalist fervor currently raging in Ethiopia.

However, recent events outside Isiolo have also shaped Borana reaction. This is mainly due to the apparent collaboration between the Somali and Meru ethnic groups. The Somali-Meru alliance revolves around the international trade in *khat*.² In the recent past there has developed a booming trade in this shrub extending to Somalia and even the Middle East.

Despite these recent developments, the Somali and Borana have always shared isolation from the rest of Kenyan life. This was also true in the screening of their livestock since the colonial period. It has become clear that this screening of livestock done at Isiolo allowed the colonial government to gauge the economic production and even keep track of taxation in the north among pastoralists. Quarantine laws helped keep the market prices competitive for the white ranchers by keeping pastoralist livestock away from the markets in the south. A colonial source for 1937 reveals this to have been the case. Quoting an earlier government report, Raikes wrote:

For many years the pastoral native reserves have been in perpetual quarantine. This has been caused partly by the presence of disease, but largely by economic considerations. The expenditure at any time of comparatively small sums on veterinary services for these areas would have enabled them rapidly to be liberated from quarantine with *disastrous effect upon the price of stock and stock products within the colony* (Raikes, 1981: 118; emphasis in original).

It also managed to establish the centrality of Isiolo in the economy of the northern Kenya. In fact, among other markets and towns in the north, as elsewhere in Kenya, Isiolo town was developed as a center of

trade, taxation, and control. Thus, having moved the Somali and Borana to Isiolo, the colonial government sought to control their activities from a central location. It is under these circumstances that an Islamic world was created and thrives to this day despite emergent differences.

Apart from strategic and economic factors, Isiolo town also gained prominence in the eyes of the British due to religious reasons. The British were suspicious of any Islamic influence in Northern Kenya, having participated in the dismembering of the largest Islamic Empire in the world, the Ottoman Empire. Besides, Isiolo was the only town in Kenya divided almost equally between Christians and Muslims,³ where churches and mosques were built on opposite sides of the town. It was the Presbyterian Church and Church of Scotland missionaries who first chose Isiolo as a location for their settlement. In the NFD the British government was slow to move in because of the semi-arid, arid and hostile nature of the land and climate. But forty years after colonialism, Isiolo town remains heavily militarized and remains the town in Kenya with the largest number of military barracks and installations. Also, besides strategic and religious considerations, Isiolo town became a landmark point between northern and southern Kenya during the colonial period, a role that it still serves. The tarmac (paved) road from Nairobi to Northern Kenya ends at Isiolo, and divides the town into almost two equal parts between Muslims and Christians.

Isiolo town, like Embu, Kisumu, Kakamega, and Nyeri towns, started off as a district headquarters. Isiolo later served as a provincial headquarters of the colonial NFD from 1901 to 1922. Like these other settler towns, Isiolo owes its origin and ascendance to the needs of colonial administration, where it provided a home for garrisons and missionary activities, the collection and trapping of resources, and the recruitment of labor. The military role for Isiolo has persisted even after independence, as the British armed forces still routinely use the area for their military exercises, practice sessions, and combat maneuvers. Over time, Isiolo became the refuge for displaced and destitute pastoralists who had lost their livestock for one reason or another. Because of the garrisons surrounding Isiolo, it became a focus of residence, schooling, and entertainment for an ethnically mixed population during the colonial era. The urban centers also served as areas where new technological developments had an impact on such populations earlier, and often in different ways, than those impacting the larger rural population of colonial Kenya.

The colonial objectives in the strategic location of Isiolo, within agriculturally rich surroundings settled earlier by the white missionaries,

are very obvious. The colonial government used Isiolo to tap and exploit the interior and even to enjoy the magnificent parks and picturesque topography. The colonial presence brought about changes that impacted residential and cultural patterns. There were technological innovations in architecture, road construction and irrigation, together with political and social change in Isiolo town. Since the British favored Christianity at the expense of Islam, there were religious tensions that often broke into open animosities. Such animosities often fueled protests. Apart from Mombasa and Nairobi, Isiolo town features prominently in early urban protest in Kenya, protests that should be seen as a significant element of the anti-colonial or nationalist movements. This has not been acknowledged adequately by historians.

Isiolo town is a cultural kaleidoscope, with inhabitants of Borana, Meru, Samburu, and Somali clans (Degodia, Murule, Aulihyan, and Abduwak), as well as Turkana. The Borana is the most populous and dominant ethnic group in Isiolo town, followed by the Meru. The Borana are dominant in livestock keeping and marketing, as they are mainly pastoral, whereas the Meru, who are mainly agricultural, dominate garden farming and retail business. The nomadic pastoral groups in the driest parts of the district, like the Turkana, Samburu, and Somali, are also prevalent in the district. There are also some sedentary groups in the wetter areas of the district, including the Meru and a few Borana, especially the Waaso Borana found in Garbatula, Malkadaka, Merti, and Kinna where they engage in irrigation farming. All these groups settled in the hinterland of Isiolo town but made frequent visits into town to purchase supplies. Merti, Garbatula, Sericho, Kinna, Malkadaka, and Habaswein are some of the prominent outlying areas (Amutabi, 1999: 6). Why is Isiolo the way it is today? It is due to historical forces and processes both pre-colonial and colonial.

Isiolo at the Crossroads

Isiolo town is at the center of two distinct weather and climatic conditions, serene and harsh. It is here that the rich highland weather and climate end and the semi-arid climate begins. Isiolo has a steady water supply supplied by the Isiolo River throughout the year. There are also three other rivers passing within reasonable distance from the town. These are the Uaso Nyiro, Kinna, and Bisanadi. This made Isiolo a natural choice for the missionaries and explains why the government made it the headquarters for British rule in Northern Kenya. The colonial government

posted the first District Commissioner (DC) to Isiolo in 1919. There was also a pioneer Christian evangelical team of Catholic priests who settled at Garbatula, an area that enjoys a good water supply from the Nyambene Hills and Mount Kenya. Their activities spread in the whole region. The Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (FMM) and missionaries from the Presbyterian Church of Scotland (PCS) transformed Isiolo and Garbatula into modern towns. They built churches, hospitals, schools, water supplies, roads, and bridges; they began irrigation schemes and introduced new crops in the area. The dominance of the FMM and PCS in Isiolo was checked, however, when the British colonial administration brought in Somali soldiers recruited in Aden and Kismayu. "The Somali had been soldiers and policemen accompanying settlers like Lord Delamere and empire builders like Lord Lugard" (Nangulu-Ayuku, 2000: 190). The predominately Islamic Somali were regarded as a "martial tribe" and served in the security forces; this image exists to this day.

The Somali gave up their nomadic lifestyle and became livestock keepers and retail traders in Isiolo. The British brought in Muslim Borana from Wajir and Mandera districts in 1932. The Borana were constantly warring with their Somali neighbors, so the British relocated and settled them in Isiolo. After World War II, the British brought in more Somali, many of whom were demobilized soldiers from war campaigns. These actions culminated in the presence of Islam in Isiolo town, where it has remained for many years now. The Somali developed and cultivated an Islamic culture into which the Borana, who were late arrivals in 1930s, were co-opted. Thus the Borana and Somali shared not only Islam but also economic activities. Islam and new global influences have transformed the urbanization and cultural appearance and orientation of Isiolo town. I use the case of local NGOs to illustrate the role of globalization in Isiolo town, especially among the Somali and Borana ethnic groups.

Isiolo town is under the inevitable spell of global forces. Many NGOs have poured into this town with a great zeal since the 1980s. These forces are shaping the town's growth and development and also altering the Islamic faith. Isiolo town is the head office of the Friends of Nomads International (FONI), an NGO that represents the interests of indigenous people of Northern Kenya against oppression and violation. FONI, founded by Daudi Tari, has been represented at international meetings, including the UN Commission on Human Rights. Daudi Tari himself has represented FONI at the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities Working Group on Indigenous Populations in Geneva. FONI has been vocal on matters affecting the rights of indigenous people. Tari is

also the Executive Director and its main ideologue. He is a young man of great vision and impeccable charisma. He is a man of many identities. He is a Muslim, a pastoralist, a Borana, a development activist and a resident of Isiolo town, multiple identities that he seems to carry around without any confusion or conflict. As a jet-setter, Tari is at comfortable with any development topic affecting indigenous peoples from the Maori in New Zealand and Aborigines in Australia, to Native Americans in the Americas. Tari has an incredible knowledge of events around the world and how they relate to his people. To Tari and FONI, the fate of the pastoralist and Islamic Borana is linked to that of the rest of the world. There is a certain connectivity between his people in this remote part of Kenya and the world at large that is very clear to Tari. There is a new awareness of the global implications for all local issues. It is precisely because of this awareness that NGO actions have intensified in Isiolo town.

This is indicative of the fact that the societal ordering and hierarchical structures are shifting. Together with the fact that younger men have taken positions of leadership in Borana *manyatta* (homestead), accompanied by new religious revivals, there has emerged a certain decentralization of the mosques as spheres of influence in Isiolo town. In the past, malims, sheikhs, and imams were feared, if not respected, because they were not only spiritual leaders but were important in identifying funding priorities for the Islamic foundations. Today the emergence of secular NGOs like FONI in Isiolo town is challenging this stronghold on power. Younger men with a wider worldview and sophistication are also increasingly being employed by NGOs and using development plans and models from developed countries, hence their networks and connections are beyond the traditional spheres. Also, these younger people are at times employed by NGOs sponsored by Christian churches like the Catholic Relief Services, Lutheran Relief Services, and the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Many of these churches are based on premises of local traditional, communal consensus, and traditional knowledge. This affects their perception of Islam. Thus, while assuming that most Borana and Somali in Isiolo perceive themselves as Muslims, there has been a considerable shift in the power of elders as occasioned by outside forces. These new centers of power as perceived by communities who respected older men and their connections with the mosque and Islamic leaders or foreign Muslim missionaries resident in Isiolo and in neighboring towns such as Garbatula, Kinna, or Merti are altering the entire structure of society.

There is also *Mji wa Rehema* (Village of Mercy), a local NGO dealing with the problems of AIDS and AIDS orphans in Isiolo town and its

surrounding areas. One of its activists, Dorothy Kabiro, is very clear about their mission. AIDS, like elsewhere in Kenya, is spreading very rapidly in Isiolo. Isiolo is a military as well as a tourist town, and this status affects the town's life. Kabiro argues that the dynamics of everyday life, of local and global forces, can be ignored only at the expense of the residents. The AIDS pandemic is definitely an international issue, but the fact that it is getting attention at the local level is indicative of the seriousness of this scourge that is ravaging the world today. The campaigns against AIDS by both men and women go against religious and even traditional sanctions. The isolation of female from male action, as happens in mosques, is being challenged. There are many NGOs now employing women in Isiolo town, among them Action-Aid (Kenya), Farm International, and Plan International. There is a new solidarity and partnership built on commonality of purpose rather than on gender. The internationalist movements like feminism and women's liberation are taking hold through these NGOs as gender equity, equality, egalitarianism, and empowerment are emphasized.

In the traditional Islamic setting, women are generally seen as subservient to men because men support the family (Koran, Surah IV: 34). In public places women do not mix with men, even in the mosque. The NGO concepts of partnerships and people-centered development are debunking these traditions. Men and women brought up in these sexist separations are being forced to unlearn them and mix with each other as equal partners in development. They are increasingly being told that the greatest development ideas and models are neither male nor female. To sit together, talk and plan, lay strategies, and intervene in local situations requires a joint approach and holistic communal participation. This is altering society's perception of gender roles and even the position of men and women in society. The tenets upon which Islamic teachings are held are the same issues, like female circumcision and polygamy, that some NGOs are challenging. Thus the influx of these NGOs in Isiolo town is shaking Islamic institutions and structures to their very core.

Isiolo's engagement with global forces is an old phenomenon. It goes back to the beginning of the twentieth century when the Ethiopian state intensified its control of the Oromo country; this led to many Oromo clans taking flight to what was then British East Africa. These Oromo clans, like Obbu, Waso, Saku(ye), and Gabra, constitute today's Borana ethnic group in Kenya. The Kenyan Borana still maintain their allegiance to the Gada system, which brings together all the Oromia (Ethiopian Oromo and Kenyan Borana) speakers in Eastern Africa. Global forces

were revisited before, during, and after World War II, when Isiolo played host to the British army during the colonial government campaign against Mussolini's forces.

Another global phenomenon of great concern in Kenya's urban spaces is religion. It has been a major part of urbanization in Kenya. There is no town in Kenya that has escaped the influence of a mosque or a church. Factors influencing the growth of towns and cities have differed from one country or town to another in Africa in general and Kenya in particular. Many of these developments have been documented, and much research has been done relating to the role of religion in urbanization (Aseka, 1990; Fezzerhatzion, 1976; Gugler, 1970; Little, 1974; Luventi, 1972; Mbithi and Barnes, 1975; Obudho, 1983; Nangulu-Ayuku, 2000).

The role of the media in spreading radical Islam and other external influences has been more significant than any other single factor. Globalization is also impacting Sufism, as the Islamic teachers who arrive in Isiolo town are informed by global discourses. The influence of the media is seen through video houses and dens (similar to movie houses), where young people are socialized into radical Islam as well as western values that come with the proliferation of Hollywood videos and cinema. Thus, besides radical Jamihiriya Youth movements in Isiolo, western lifestyles and mode of dress are also visible. It is common to see youngsters wearing the latest Nike and Reebok sports gear, with clean-shaven heads like Michael Jordan, who have replaced the *kanzu*-wearing youngsters.

The previously mosque-loving people are to be seen in the disco halls at night dancing to the latest music from the United States Universal Studios and watching the latest show on MTV, sometimes even on a live satellite feed. A cursory glance at Bomen Hotel and Mocharo Lodge, the two biggest hotels in Isiolo town, reveals a changed lifestyle in Isiolo. Even the parking lot reveals that the inhabitants are trying to be trendy by going for the latest makes of cars and donning the latest fads in fashion. More homes own VCRs and DVDs today and most collections in family libraries express a strong western bias. Also, children spend more time watching television in Isiolo nowadays, as is increasingly the case in the rest of Kenya. Thus the Borana and Somali are redefining their relationship in their Islamic brotherhood amidst these competing centers of interest.

The ethnic differences between the Somali and Borana, which heightened in 2000 and in which about one hundred people were killed (*Daily Nation*, 2 May 2000), are a colonial creation. Whereas the role of

globalization is to blame here for heightening tensions, the government of Kenya has not done enough to relieve the tensions. The Somali have their own clan differences, as do the Borana, but all these were put aside when the larger ethnic identities that colonialism shaped were threatened. There are also several sects represented by the many mosques in Isiolo especially brought about by the Sufi and extremist movements of the 1990s. The Shafi'i, Hanafi, Jaf'ari, Zaydi, Ishmaili, and Ahmadi appear to be the predominant sects in the area. Some are relatively peaceful whereas others are radical and extremist. Globalization has made it easy for them to draw inspiration from radical sources like the American Louis Farrakhan, and violent ones like the Hisbollah guerrillas in Lebanon, whom they imitate. Islam has thus become violent and Isiolo is feeling it (Ngunjiri, 2000).

This may explain why, in 2000, there were clashes between Muslims in Isiolo town, something hitherto unheard of. The Somali were pitted against the Borana. In what many casual observers thought were just isolated occurrences of urban violence, an attack was made on a Somali *manyatta* at Mulango; eight people were killed and hundreds of live-stock stolen. A few days thereafter, Somali youths took their revenge, killing hundreds of Borana in an attack at the Maisha Bora residential area in Isiolo town. A reconciliation meeting called by the then Provincial Commissioner, Mrs. Philegona Koech, was disrupted by a Borana raid. Prior to this disruption, another security meeting had been interrupted also.

In this incident, "The government appeared even more helpless at the hands of gunmen who reigned supreme at Isiolo town and had even had the temerity to open fire in bright daylight at three district commissioners, a senior military officer and lawmakers. The leaders were attending a peace meeting to reconcile the warring communities (Borana and Somali) at the windswept Isiolo town" (Adow, 2000). By April, fighting had intensified so much that Isiolo was declared a military operation zone and was placed under a curfew. Why had Muslims turned against each other? Why at this time? The first raid occurred on 31 April 2000, when the Borana attacked the Somali. The local administration and security personnel dismissed it as mere cattle rustling. But when the raids and counter raids became more intense and systematic, it became clear that it was no longer traditional pastoralist raiding that did not even target towns. This new type of attack appeared more sophisticated and modern weapons, especially the AK-47, played an increasing role.

The aftermath of the Cold War has also reached Isiolo town through the influence of globalization. Multiparty politics was introduced in

Kenya in 1991 through pressure from the international community. The one-party politics under the autocratic Kenya African National Union (KANU) did not require serious political mobilization to win an election. The party's top brass always determined who won. But in the new competitive party politics, KANU's operatives had to scheme to win. The Borana elite had invited their fellow Muslims, the Somali clans of Degodia and Murule from Wajir and Mandera respectively, into Isiolo to help them win elections against their non-Muslim rivals. After successfully using the Somali votes to win the 1992 and 1997 elections, the Borana elite wanted them to go back to Somalia, where they originally came from, once they realized that they could win with or without Somali votes. There was also increasing pressure for pasture land, and this raised the conflict between these one-time bedfellows. The Somali clans brought in their Garre, Ajuran, Aulihyan, Abduwak, Degodia, Murule, and even Mohammed Zubeir from Wajir, Mandera, and Garissa districts. The Borana wanted the Somali clans to leave Isiolo but the latter refused. This was what led to the clashes.

However, in recent times, these areas have received refugees from Somalia and elsewhere due to different factors. Many of these Somali migrants have been displaced by activities of warlords. Other refugees have arrived from Ethiopia's civil war. Still others, like the Turkana and Samburu, are looking for grazing opportunity as pasture slowly thins out for all pastoralists in Kenya. In 1999, the pasture problem was so pronounced that even the Uaso Nyiro River dried up and many pastoralists in Northern Kenya headed to Lorian swamp. This caused displacement and conflict as foreigners moved into traditional grazing areas in Kenya. Even the nomadic Shangila, who move between Kenya and Ethiopia at will, were for the first time not able to find pasture. It is significant to note that during drought, many pastoralist societies are often allowed to cross international borders with their stock in search of water and pasture. In the recent past, this has been a source of conflict over watering holes and grazing space. Because of frequent fighting between the Somali and Borana over grazing areas, the British colonial government moved the Borana to Isiolo district in 1932. In similar action, the British also moved the Samburu to their present area away from the vicinity of Lorian Swamp. From 1932, the British isolated the communities in Northern Kenya and governed them under a special district and laws; the whole of the north became known as the Northern Frontier District (NFD), governed from Isiolo town. New boundaries were imposed by the British to contain the internecine cattle raids that were hitherto a way of

life for the pastoralists (Amutabi, 1999). The Borana were even more isolated from the religious centers in southern Ethiopia and completely detached from the celebration of the *gada* system.

But it is the search for pasture by groups from outside the country that puts a lot of pressure on Isiolo, which leads to spillover effects, especially cattle rustling, that reach Isiolo town. Since Isiolo is the official holding ground for cattle from northern Kenya on their way to slaughterhouses and markets within and outside Kenya, all those who lose their cattle to raiders imagine that Isiolo will provide a clue to their whereabouts. There is a lot of pressure brought to bear on Isiolo by both livestock and human population. This creates expansion and contraction in Isiolo depending on the seasons of cattle auctions and trade. Planning has become very difficult in this kind of situation. At the peak of cattle auctions, especially in the dry season when many pastoralists are disposing of their cattle because of drought, Isiolo becomes too busy; even finding accommodation in any of the hotels can be very difficult. Come the rainy season, however, many pastoralists are dispersed to outer areas, as there is a lot of pasture for their livestock.

The recent elevation of the role of the *Kallu* (spiritual and cultural leader of the Oromo and Borana) and improved communication technology between the Oromo and Borana in Kenya has led to increased allegiance among the Borana to the *Kallu*. There is romance and nostalgia about Borana nationalism. Many Borana are today keen followers of the celebration of festivals, including those that celebrate the onset of the rainy season and the practice of initiation and life, with the rest of the Oromia-speaking peoples. Originally, lack of contact brought increased confusion and polarization in their religious pursuit. Some Borana became Christians, whereas a majority remained Muslims. But recent developments, including improved communications, mean that all Borana can retain their allegiance to traditional rituals (Aguilar, 1997). In recent times, especially after the Tigre-dominated government took power in Ethiopia, there has been a revival of the greater Oromo nation, the *gada* system, and the peace of the Borana (*Nagaa Borana*).

Since the 1990s there has been an increased societal consciousness among the Borana, the belief in the idea that they are part of a larger number of people who have at different moments shared the same system of religious and political organization under *gada*. Between June and July 1995, at a sacred site of Wayye Diida, eight kilometers from the township of Sololo Ramata in northern Kenya, *gadamojji* ceremonies took place. The new *gadamojji* (elders), empowered by the celebration of such ritual,

acquired new status in Borana society, and their role changed from public to somewhat domestic. In the domestic realm they acquired a central role in the passing on of *gada* values, as well as the Borana (Oromo) cultural values. It was the height of transnationalism in the recent past, since the new age of contacts between the Oromo in Ethiopia and the Borana of Kenya started in the 1970s.

The *Kallu*, as a recognized ritual figure and authority, is increasingly serving as a link between Borana in Kenya and the Oromo in Ethiopia. In recent interviews, many Borana have indicated that there was a conscious process of distancing themselves from Islam and from the Somali. The recent skirmishes between the Somali and the Borana, groups that are both Muslims, are indicative of these changed relations. In the recent clashes, it was reported that there were Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) rebels fighting on the side of the Borana (Adow, 2000). It is also true that there have been more military activities on the border between Kenya and Ethiopia in the recent past. Isiolo, being the largest Borana town, is at the center of this realignment and balance of power. Of course the Borana have not lost their cherished hope of one day reconstituting an Oromo nation, which is believed to have stretched at one time from Southern Ethiopia to the Tana River in southern Kenya.

While the processes of religious change took some time, there were already converts to Islam among the Borana during their contact with the Somali in Wajir and Mandera districts in the 1920s. There was intense socialization that led the Borana to adopt Somali ways of dressing and Somali customs (Aguilar, 1997; Baxter, 1966: 249; Dahl, 1979). The Somali and the Borana, although having different languages, started to share certain social and cultural aspects when they all converged at Isiolo. The mosque increasingly became their shared meeting place and represented the common denominator against the Christian society. However, going by the recent developments, where the Borana and Somali are constantly warring, the once close relationship is being redefined. At the height of the clashes, Somali leaders from neighboring districts condemned the killings of their kinsmen. At one time in 2000, Charfano Guyo Mokku, the former local Member of Parliament (MP), was dismissed by President Moi as assistant minister in what many thought was an apportioning of blame by the government. Mokku was later reappointed, but was defeated in the 2002 parliamentary elections.

The planning and development of Isiolo town is guided by religious practices. Only churches and mosques are not governed by religious suspicion in their construction. There are religious politics and compromises

on construction and expansion of such facilities as slaughterhouses. Since Muslims do not consume meat from animals slaughtered by non-Muslims, Muslims are used to slaughtering the livestock from which meat in the town comes from. Since Muslims do not consume pork and its related products, pigs are usually slaughtered in Meru or Nanyuki towns, each over forty kilometers away. This is to ensure that the pigs do not contaminate meat meant for Muslims. This has often raised protests from Christians, who see this as being discriminatory and unnecessarily expensive. Hotels are forced at times not to stock bacon and pork sausages, even if they are found on the Christian side of Isiolo, for fear of being accused of mixing pork with other foods. But the upsurge in tourism and the commercial spirit building around Isiolo are changing all that. This is particularly so with the waning Borana enthusiasm in Islam.

The Islamic part of Isiolo has some unique attributes to add to the whole question of globalization and urbanization of Isiolo. This part of town is found on the east of the Nairobi-Marsabit road. Mosques, schools, temporary kiosks and stalls, and *madrassa* (Islamic religious classes of instruction in the Holy Koran) dominate it. The side has hotels and restaurants, a sign of attempts to tap into the tourism industry. There are also open-air markets where merchandise like perfumes and clothes, especially *buibui*, are sold. Other goods include shoes, decorations, incense, beads, camel milk, carvings, and metallic things like bangles and bracelets, swords, knives, and daggers. They sell these in the busy market that is located on the Muslim side next to the public bus station. Goats, sheep, camels, and cattle are sold in the livestock auction market away from the holding and quarantine bay of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development. The businesses are by and large tailored towards the tourist circuit.

The greatest commercial engagement that seems to arouse a lot of attention is the selling of livestock and *miraa* (or *khat*). The livestock auctions are held once a week in Isiolo. Afterwards, many livestock traders move from one market to another around Isiolo district, which includes Sericho, Kinna, Garbatula, Merti, and Habaswein, among others. Many Muslims have lifestyles depicting a high level of “sedentarization” (a form of uneasy settledness) around small towns and business centers (Aguilar, 1991). The movement of Muslims back and forth from one trading center to another as they market their wares and products is one cause for the instability of the Islamic side of Isiolo town. The populations are never steady; therefore the demand for goods and services fluctuates and impedes investment. The trade in livestock has also been affected by

banditry. This banditry intensified in the 1990s with the collapse of Siad Barre's regime in Somalia and the intensification of Oromo fighting in Ethiopia. Many dangerous weapons are now in the hands of civilians. The gun is increasingly becoming a cultural weapon in northern Kenya, effectively replacing the spear. Herdsmen nowadays watch over their livestock in pastures with guns at hand. During the peak of the market period in Isiolo, traders come from as far as Ethiopia and Somalia and they ferry illegal arms into Kenya. Recently the Kenya Police uncovered an arms syndicate between traders of Somali extraction who brought guns via Isiolo. Another syndicate involved Ethiopians in Moyale and Marsabit, but they all passed through Isiolo on their way to markets in the rest of Kenya.

Khat has a long history in Islamic circles in northern Kenya and along the coast, where there are other Islamic hamlets. It is today a major industry earning the county councils a lot of income from toll levies and taxes (*cess*) paid by transporters and middlemen. There are now many pickup trucks that are bought to transport *khat* to Nairobi, from where it is airlifted to the Middle East and other external markets. There is also a thriving domestic market in far-flung areas like Mombasa, Malindi, Mandera, Wajir, Moyale, Marsabit, and Garissa, that are supplied by air from Nairobi's Wilson Airport. Isiolo is situated not far from Nyambene Hills, about thirty kilometers away and thus is also the distribution center for *khat* destined for interior markets like Sericho, Habaswein, Garbatula, Archer's Post, Malkadaka, Merti, and Kinna. Isiolo is a local distribution point.

In Isiolo town, it is the Muslims that do the retailing of *khat*, but the middlemen who get it from Nyambene Hills, where it is grown, are Meru, who are predominantly Christian. Much of the selling of *khat* is done on shop verandas on the Islamic side of Isiolo town. On this side of the town, many people, both young and old, are to be seen energetically chewing *khat* and hanging around verandas and open spaces. This careless and lazy attitude means that little money is available to invest or even purchase other goods and services. This is not to say, however, that the Islamic side is poor. On the contrary, livestock sales at times account for much of the wealth of Isiolo town. The problem is that much of it is used in wasteful ventures and is not reinvested. But recently, *khat* has been developed into an international trade; light aircraft transport it as far as the Middle East and Somalia. This connection is the most dangerous because these aircraft as said to be part of the small-arms proliferation as they are a conduit of bringing into Kenya all sorts of weapons, which are later sold to pastoralists and other criminals on the streets or in the bush.

During the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, when all healthy adult Muslims are expected to fast all day long, the usually unseen boundary in Isiolo town becomes distinctly clear and visible. Almost all the eateries like hotels and restaurants are closed during the day, as they are seldom patronized. However, they reopen for business as soon as the sun sets and the Imam or Sheikh or Malim announces over the public address systems of the mosques that *saumu* (fasting) can be stopped until the next morning. But unlike in the past, when the entire day was committed to prayer and nothing else, the exigencies of economic pressures are demanding more attention. Thus people spend much time at their businesses. There is a waning of religious fervor.

Sermon topics in the mosques are now very global in outlook, especially after 1992, when multiparty politics was introduced in Kenya. It is no longer rare to hear sheiks and imams preaching internationally conscious messages about international events, at times in dialogue with Hassan El Turabi, Louis Farrakhan, and other Islamic leaders. By the late 1980s and 1990s, religious practices in Isiolo were already experiencing some influence by the appearance of men who had been part of the Sufi⁴ brotherhoods in Mombasa, as well as those of other traditional practices who had been in touch with ways from the north. Another diversification of religious practice took place after the 1970s as practices related to Sufi brotherhoods and actual localized responses to illness in the community came to be perceived as Borana rather than Muslim phenomena. However, those perceptions are not only fragmented but also constructed in relation to the actual potency of knowledge that different healers and ritual men (*abayen*) exercise in different Borana clans living in Isiolo.

Concluding Remarks

Isiolo is a town caught and steeped in colonial dynamics and imbalances. Jamal Shoba, who has lived in Isiolo since 1954, has pointed out that things have changed significantly since independence (Jamal Shoba, 1999). Still, the postindependence government exploited the Borana and Somali rivalry. The place of agency in the history of Isiolo town is tricky to allocate. It is possible to say that the colonial government privileged the Christians and thus gave them a head start compared to Muslims in the development of the town, an imbalance that has been perpetuated by postindependence Kenya. It is also possible to argue that the pastoralist and agricultural economies have had a role to play in the urbanization process

in Isiolo town. But is also possible to break down the activities of urbanization of Isiolo town into their logical denominators, each to its individual actors. In all these cases, the Christian and Islamic dimensions emerge as key factors in understanding the complex societal milieu of Isiolo town. It is noticeable that despite the continued utilization of Isiolo as a holding ground for livestock during shipment to Mombasa for export, Isiolo remains in the shadows of Kenya's development. The divisions that were set in place during the colonial period have remained. The animosity between Islamic and Christian groups has remained, and the Kenya government has done very little to remove these tensions. Agency can be defined by examining the interplay of these two religions upon the psyche of the inhabitants and visitors in Isiolo town. The government and global forces may be the engines of development, but they cannot influence development unless the people who are the vehicles are willing to move along. The configuration of these vehicles—and this is where religion comes in—will determine the mileage, smoothness, and capacity of these vehicles of development.

Due to globalization, there are many arms that are finding their way into Kenya, and this is causing a displacement of many people and disrupting many communal activities. The AK-47 is increasingly becoming part of the pastoralist culture in the Ilemi triangle of the Horn of Africa where northern Kenya is located. This has compromised security not only in Isiolo but the rest of Kenya. It is my contention that the kind of Islamic philosophy in Isiolo has been responsible for the structures and institutions seen on the Islamic side of the town. The Islamic side of Isiolo town has lagged behind in physical development because of the Islamic socio-cultural structures and institutions that are rigid and guided by Islamic dogmas that encourage dependency on group achievements and communal solidarity. But global forces have shaken these up in the recent past and are transforming the traditional structures to their core. It is therefore my contention that religion has shaped and influenced the level and means of urbanization in Isiolo town.

Globalization is changing the role of women in the Islamic communities of Isiolo town. The NGOs and other development activists force traditional Islamic purists to debunk their notions of womanhood and force them to unlearn the traditional gender definitions. The role of the mosque as the center of power in Isiolo is declining, and the space is being taken over by the NGO leaders and employees, government functionaries, and businessmen.

The elders among the Somali and Borana communities have declined in importance, and their inability and lack of power to marshal

non-traditional resources like immovable property, such as real estate, makes their position more marginal. New ways of measuring success and wealth other than cattle are increasingly being celebrated in Isiolo town. The notion of livestock as a representation of wealth is slowly being pushed to the periphery.

In the midst of the recent conflict between the Borana and Somali, there is an obvious need to redefine the alliance that has existed between them for many years. Also, as forces of globalization intensify, the Borana and Somali would appear to be in search for their own identities apart from Islam, as each withdraws to more strategic and narrower areas of identity. This appears the only logic in countering the influencing role of globalization.

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Notes

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1 The *gada* system is a complex, elaborate all-embracing social institution that gives details about how the Borana should live. It is a socio-cultural framework of societal norms, dos and don'ts for the Borana.

2 *Khat* is a shrub that is a stimulant grown in Nyambene Hills among the Meru. It is sold in mainly Islamic areas in Kenya and outside the country. The middlemen and transporters in this trade are mainly Somali, hence their closeness with the Meru.

3 Here, the term Muslim is defined loosely to incorporate all allegiances to the Islamic religion however nominal, whether direct or indirect, by association or co-option, or through absorption. It is our argument that the kind of Islamic philosophy in Isiolo has been responsible for the structures and institutions seen on the Islamic side of the town. The Islamic side of Isiolo town has lagged behind in physical development because of the Islamic socio-cultural structures and institutions that are rigid and guided by Islamic dogmas that encourage dependency on group achievements and communal solidarity. But global forces have shaken these up in the recent past, and are transforming the traditional

structures. It is therefore our contention that religion can shape and indeed influence the level and means of urbanization of a society.

⁴ The Sufi brotherhoods have been in the vanguard of Islam in East Africa, and thus the sheiks who started arriving in Isiolo town in 1980s imaginatively adapted the teachings of the Prophet and of their own orders to incorporate local religious sensibilities. This was different from the kind of Islam spread by Somali herders, which was Somali-inclined and with less meaning to the Borana.

10

FROM *MARABOUT* REPUBLICS TO *AUTONOMOUS RURAL* *COMMUNITIES*

AUTONOMOUS MUSLIM TOWNS IN SENEGAL

Eric S. Ross

Introduction

The city of Touba, in Senegal, has attracted the attention of researchers for a variety of reasons. Touba is a Muslim holy city, and it is brand new. The city was founded in 1887 by Ahmadou Bamba Mbacké, the Sufi who established the Mouride brotherhood. Its construction was initiated in 1926, and its great mosque was inaugurated only in 1963. It is since that event that Touba has become a large city (Guèye 2002, Ross 1995). In fact, today, with approximately half a million inhabitants, it is Senegal's second largest city, after Dakar. Moreover, the Mouride brotherhood, for which Touba serves as spiritual "capital," is an increasingly global institution, with members and associations throughout West Africa, the Indian Ocean, Europe, and North America; Touba has thus become a global city. Finally, Touba is also an *autonomous* city. Ever since its inception it has remained under the absolute control of the Mouride brotherhood—to the virtual exclusion of the state and of civil administration. It is the Mouride brotherhood which has planned, promoted, and developed Touba, and which has obtained an autonomous legal status for it. Yet Touba is not completely unique; it is the largest and most recent node in a network of

more or less autonomous Muslim towns in Senegal, large and small, and it marks the leading edge of a long and dynamic process of Muslim urban practices in that country. The purpose of this article is to explain how and why a modern Sufi town such as Touba has managed to achieve and maintain a strong measure of administrative autonomy within what is otherwise a unitary nation-state, and to relate this phenomenon to the historical precedent.

This study will explore the phenomenon of autonomous Muslim towns in West African and Senegambian history. It aims to contribute to the current effort of both Anglophone (Anderson & Rathbone 2000) and Francophone (Triaud 2002) scholars to rewrite the history of urbanization in Africa by highlighting the role of Muslim institutions in establishing towns and configuring urban networks. Islam has been a factor of change in West Africa, the Western Sudan, and Senegambia for nearly one thousand years. In that time, the people of these areas have moved from being overwhelmingly rural and religiously traditional to being increasingly urban and majority Muslim. Various Islamic institutions and agents have contributed to this process. Two crucial institutions in particular have created urban networks: the clerical lineages of the early modern period (seventeenth to nineteenth centuries) and the Sufi brotherhoods which emerged in the late nineteenth century and which are among the most important institutions of civil society in Senegal today. Both these institutions have established autonomous towns and created dynamic urban-based religious networks.

Ancien Régime Marabout Republics

A network of Muslim towns first emerged in the Western Sudan in the seventeenth century. These towns were created by clerical lineages. Muslim clerics were virtually the only literate group in Senegambian society at that time. Literacy and religious scholarship distinguished them as a group and determined their social and political functions. For example, they served at royal courts as diplomats and as judges even though the structures of these states were traditional rather than Islamic. They were involved in both local and international trade, where they had privileged access to Muslim traders from many horizons—hence the Dyula/Wangara and Hausa trading diasporas (Hiskett 1984). They also rendered magical service to other segments of the population, and particularly to the warrior caste (*ceddo* in Wolof, *guelwar* in Mandinka) which, though it was often

openly hostile to Islam, none-the-less considered Muslim charms and talismans to be the most efficacious means of protection in warfare. Though Muslims constituted a minority of the population in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, clerics were an important elite group, commanding loyal followings of students and clients and having privileged access to other important social groups: rulers, warriors and traders (Sanneh 1976).

In exchange for services rendered to these groups, clerics were able to negotiate a measure of autonomy for themselves. They obtained land grants from rulers on which they established themselves, their families and their students, where they taught the Islamic sciences, and where they attempted to lead a good Muslim life somewhat separate from the wider “kâfir” societies in which they saw themselves embedded. These establishments served primarily religious functions; they were centers of Islamic education. Students would travel great distances to acquire the religious sciences at the school of a reputed cleric. After their studies, these students might return to their homes as *imâms* or *faqîhs*, or they might set up schools of their own. In either case they were likely to maintain strong links with their alma mater institution, hence the creation over a period of several centuries of integrated networks of Muslim establishments across West Africa. The creation of these autonomous entities was also a response, in part, to the insecurity and exactions brought on by the slave raiding and trading which characterized the period. The reigning insecurity, where states either victimized their neighbors or victimized their own populations, led many communities and segments of society to seek security in new forms of organization, each according to its means and resources. Muslim clerics, who commanded a certain number of key resources, including all-important manpower in the form of student labor, succeeded in setting up strong autonomous communities.

Though most of these clerical establishments were quite small in size and population, on par with neighboring villages, they are identified here as *towns* because, over and above usual subsistence agricultural activities, they served essentially religious functions, and principally an educational one. This “tertiary” or “service sector” activity, and the far-reaching exchanges it fostered, means that the intellectual, political, social and economic standing of these clerical establishments belie what would normally be connoted by the term “village.” This is an important argument. Because historically Senegambian architecture has not been “monumental”—as this term was understood by the European aesthetic—and because it has often been more or less ephemeral—through its use of vegetable and mineral construction material—European observers of the

nineteenth and twentieth centuries often failed to comprehend the urban nature of the places they visited. Accounts, even scholarly ones, from the colonial period routinely use the term *village* to designate what are functionally towns. By function here is meant the important social, political, economic and cultural activities which give rise to central places, which distinguish these places hierarchically one from the other, and which distinguish them all from agricultural or pastoral settlements.

A number of clerical towns played important roles in pre-colonial Senegalese history (see figure 1). Pire and Koki were the most famous clerical establishments of this sort. Both were founded in the seventeenth century by clerics who had close relations with the kings of Cayor and, together, they dominated Muslim intellectual life throughout the eighteenth century, as students and teachers from other clerical lineages would travel to these towns to study. Pire, in Saniakhor, attracted many students who later went on to political careers, including Malik Sy, the founder of the Islamic state of Bundu (1699), and Abdoul Kader Kane, who led the clerical revolution in Futa Toro in 1776 (Diouf 1988). Koki, in Ndiambour, was also an active center. It even opened “branch” schools (Koki-Kad, Koki-Dakhar, Koki-Gouy) in the neighboring province of Mbacol (Diop 1987: 72). Koki later became embroiled in the civil wars ignited by the clerical revolution in Futa Toro (1776–1796) and its scholarly reputation suffered as a result (Diop 1981: 229). In 1793 Masamba Diop, *serign* (or “lord”) of Koki, was obliged to seek refuge in the Cap-Vert peninsula where he and his sons established a new autonomous town, Ndakarou. Ndakarou remained an independent Muslim polity until the French occupied it in 1857 and started building their own city. . . . Dakar. Likewise, this civil war led to the founding of Mbacké in Baol. In 1796 a cleric named Mame Marame, who was Ahmadou Bamba Mbacké’s great-grandfather, received a land grant in eastern Baol from Amari Ngoné, king of both Cayor and Baol, in exchange for services rendered at court (Diop 1987: 72, Mbacké 1980: 577–78). A century later, Ahmadou Bamba would establish his new Sufi city, called Touba, only eight kilometers north-east of Mbacké, his great-grandfather’s original town.

The Muslim towns of pre-colonial Senegambia usually had some form of special autonomous status. They were exempt from taxation, governed independently of the state and were considered inviolable sanctuaries. The founding charter of Pire, for example, clearly stated that the town, with its school, could operate independently so long as it did not “interfere in other affairs” (Diouf 1988), meaning the political affairs of

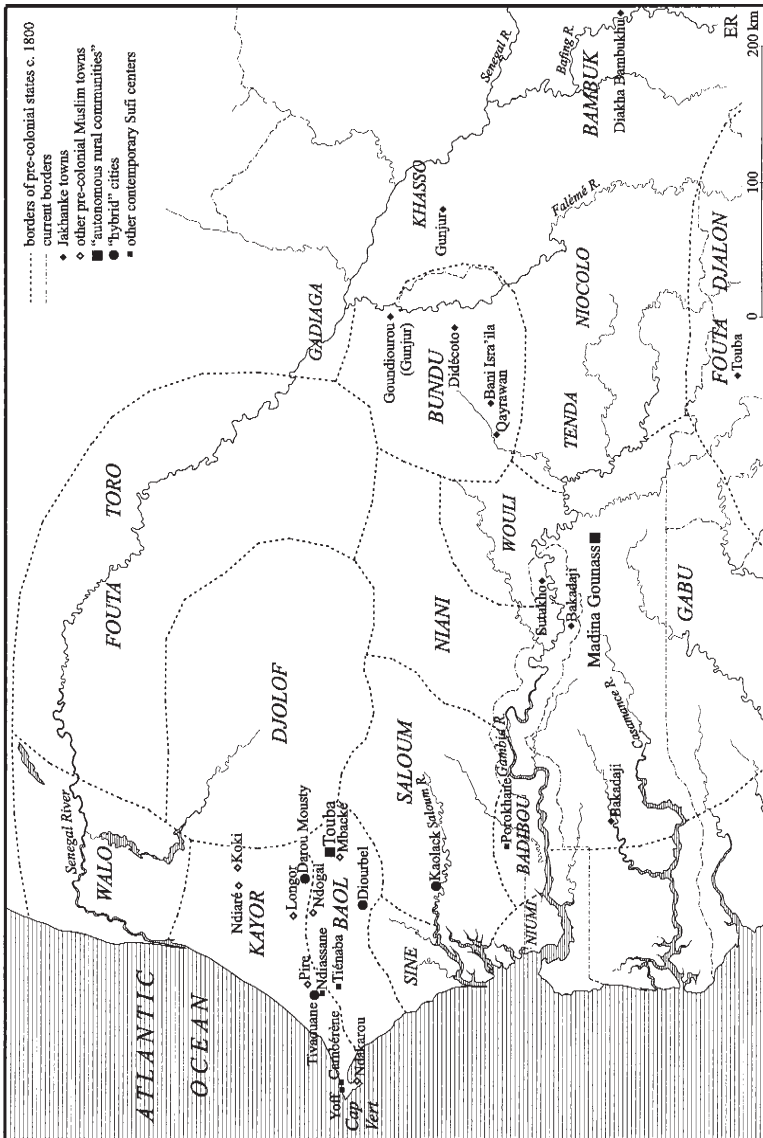


Figure 1. Muslim towns in Senegambia.

Cayor. It remained “inviolable in war” until the French captured the place and burnt it in 1869 (Colvin 1981: 243). Koki, which did interfere in Cayor’s politics, suffered as a result, yet, as of 1795, the king of Cayor recognized the independence of Ndakarou, a clerical town with strong links to Koki.

The autonomy of clerical towns was already an established feature of governance in West Africa at this time. In the fourteenth century the town of Diaba in the Empire of Mali, for instance, was off-limits to government officials, and even to the *Mansa*. It was a “city of God, an asylum for fugitives” (Diop 1987: 73). So too was this the case of Diakha, an important clerical town mentioned by Ibn Battûta in 1352. According to Al-Ka‘tî’s seventeenth century *Tārīkh al-Fattâsh* (cited in Niane 1975: 13), Diakha was under the direct political jurisdiction of its *qâdî* (or judge). It served as sanctuary for any who sought refuge in it. This is important because Diakha (Zâgha, or Dia), in Masina, on the Middle Niger, is the original home of the Jakhanke clerics, and it is the Jakhanke who institutionalize the autonomous status of their network of towns throughout a much wider region.

The term Jakhanke designates a Sarakhole professional group, an order of Muslim clerics who originally hailed from the town of Diakha and who, over the space of many centuries, dispersed in successive migrations across much of the Western Sudan. Lamin Sanneh has provided a definitive historical account of the Jakhanke clerical tradition (Sanneh, 1976, 1989), based largely on internal written and oral sources. According to Sanneh’s account, the dispersion of Jakhanke clerics followed a cyclical pattern. Typically, clerics would arrive in a new country. They would offer their services to the royal court or to other elite segments of society. In exchange for these services, the clerics would obtain permission to establish their own autonomous communities where they could teach and conduct other activities independently of the state. Eventually, through wars, civil strife or economic decline, the autonomy or viability of a given Jakhanke community would be jeopardized, and the clerics would move on to some other place where they had influential connections and could start the cycle over again. In this way, Sanneh has been able to chart the Jakhanke dispersion from one autonomous Muslim town to another over several centuries. It was following a series of crisis in the Songhay Empire in the fifteenth century that the first Jakhanke clerics emigrated from Masina to Bambukhu, where they established a new Diakha (Diakha-Bambukhu) and, later, a town called Gunjur (or Goundiourou). In the late seventeenth century, due to civil strife in Bambukhu, Jakhanke clerics

emigrated to the neighboring state of Bundu, then under a clerical regime, where they established the town of Bani Isra'ila. Later still, in 1822 Jakhanke clerics establish a town called Touba, in the clerical state of Futa Jallon (modern Guinea).¹

All these Jakhanke towns enjoyed some degree of political neutrality and autonomy. Al-Ka'ti (cited in Sanneh 1989: 32) describes the autonomous status of Gunjur in Bambukhu. The supreme authority there was the *qâdî*, assisted by an assembly of *'ulamâ'*. There was no representative of the State. Likewise in Bani Isra'ila, the principal Jakhanke town of Bundu, where "in return for recognizing the king's rule [the town's] political neutrality was accepted and it was allowed to exist without secular interference in its internal affairs" (Sanneh 1989: 57). Gunjur was an important commercial and diplomatic center when it was visited by European travelers in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. André Brüe, in 1698, was assured by the *qâdî* of Gunjur that the town's neutrality was "guaranteed" in its relations with representatives of state authority (Sanneh 1989: 59). It is Père Labat in 1728 who described Gunjur as the "capital" of a network of religious towns designated by him as "la république des marabouts" (cited in Sanneh 1989: 51). This use of the term "republic" by this French cleric demands some elucidation. In 1728, well before the French Revolution, the term "republic" was used to designate any non-monarchic polity. The most famous republic in Europe at that time was Venice, a city-state ruled by an oligarchy of nobles. This *ancien régime* usage of the term survived well into the nineteenth century, when Ndakarou, the autonomous clerical polity of the Cap-Vert peninsula, was also called a "republic" by the French.

Senegambia's "marabout republics" were ruled by clerical lineages. They were theocracies and they functioned independently of the great and powerful states that surrounded them, administering their own internal affairs and maintaining scholarly and commercial networks which transcended political borders. Though these first Islamic polities were later to be eclipsed by the more spectacular *jihâd* states of the nineteenth century, they can be seen as the precursors of a subsequent phenomenon, that of the new urban foundations of Sufi brotherhoods in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, places like Touba in contemporary Senegal.

Both the "marabout republics" of pre-colonial Senegambia and the modern Sufi towns of contemporary Senegal share important traits. Both thrived on an agrarian economic basis, exploiting cheap student labor. Until the mid-twentieth century access to labor was the chief constraint on economic expansion in West Africa. To solve this bottleneck, those

who had access to land often resorted to the acquisition of slaves or to the constitution of large extended households. The clerical elite, for its part, could also conscript its student body into agricultural labor. Such student labor was the economic foundation of the pre-colonial clerical towns mentioned above, where students paid their “tuition fees” by toiling in their masters’ fields during the agricultural season. With the progressive abolition of slavery during colonial rule, the clerical elite, and more specifically the emerging Islamic brotherhoods, capitalized on their comparative advantage in access to cheap student labor. The Mourides are often cited as the most successful example of such integration into the capitalist world economy (Sy 1969; Cruise O’Brien 1971, 1975), but these labor relations were just as characteristic of the Kounta Qâdiriyyah of Ndiassane, the Sy Tijâniyyah of Tivaouane (Marone 1970) and the Niassene Tijâniyyah of Kaolack (Gray 1988), and there is now a considerable body of literature on this question (Robinson 2000). Pre-colonial Muslim towns and Senegal’s modern Sufi cities also share a distinctive spatial configuration which articulates spiritual and social functions through the use of central public squares. This has been the object of a previous publication (Ross 2002). What remains to be determined here is how Senegal’s modern Sufi towns, like the pre-colonial marabout republics, have managed to acquire such a strong measure of administrative autonomy within Senegal, a country which in all other respects operates as any other centralized unitary nation-state.

Modern Senegalese Sufi Towns

The cycle of *jihâd*, which marked the entire Sudanic belt in the nineteenth century, did not produce significant urban processes in Senegambia. In Senegambia these *jihâds* were military and political failures. They only contributed to the general crises of pre-colonial societies and states which preceded and accompanied the imposition of colonial rule. Moreover, though the earlier clerical revolutions in Bundu (1698–99), Futa Jallon (1725–47) and Futa Toro (1776–96) had been nominally successful, they failed to produce the type of politically stable regime conducive to urban life. There was no Senegambian equivalent to great Muslim capitals like Sokoto or Hamdalay. It is during the extended process of colonial conquest, initiated in 1854 and completed only in 1890, that a new type of Islamic institution emerged in Senegal, the Sufi brotherhood (*tariqah* in Arabic). It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss the origins of this

institution in the Muslim world, or even its development in Senegal. What is important here is that the old clerical lineages, whose settlements and networks were discussed above, adopted this institution in response to the new social and political conditions. The brotherhoods which now dominate Senegalese religious practice (the Qâdiriyyah, the various branches of the Tijâniyyah, the Mourides and the Layenes) were built up in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on the foundation of the old clerical lineages and networks, and part of this process involved the creation of new towns.

These new-style Sufi towns are characterized principally by their religious and educational functions, being centers of Islamic learning. They are also *administrative* centers in the sense that they serve as seats, or “capitals” in current Senegalese vocabulary, for the brotherhoods. Sufi brotherhoods throughout the Muslim world share a similar organizational structure. At the summit of the spiritual hierarchy is a *khalîfah*, or Caliph, who is the spiritual head of the order and who represents its founder. In Senegal these Caliphs are always direct male descendents of the Brotherhood’s founder. Below the Caliph are the *shaykhs* or *muqaddams*, “elders,” who have various responsibilities and are often far more involved in the day-to-day running of affairs than the Caliph—who is usually a very old man absorbed in piety. There may be various levels of *shaykhs* in a more or less explicitly recognized hierarchy. Below these still are the rank-and-file members of the brotherhood, the adherents, or “students” (*taalibe* in Wolof). To this rather standard traditional structure, the Sufi brotherhoods of Senegal have grafted a number of modern administrative organs, mostly borrowed from the civil administrative structures of the nation-state, including sometimes its practice of territorial subdivision, or else modeled on the structures of political parties. Some of these organizations are based on lineage ties while others are associative and contractual in nature. As Senegal’s Sufi brotherhoods have developed and grown during the colonial period and since independence, acquiring ever larger interests in a variety of sectors (economic, social and cultural), and as their memberships have become internationalized through emigration, these Sufi “administrations” have developed proportionately. This in turn has greatly stimulated the growth of the cities which serve as Sufi “capitals,” cities like Touba, but also Tivaouane, Kaolack, Darou-Mousty, and others.

The creation of a modern, national urban network in Senegal is usually seen as a product of French rule. The French first created a number of coastal factories (the famous “four communes”: Saint-Louis, Gorée, Rufisque, and Dakar), and then used railroads to extend the urban

network inland, creating “escales,” or rail stations, to serve the colonial economy and then to anchor civil administration and services. However, the creation of Senegal’s modern urban network was not so one-sidedly determined by French agency. The Sufi brotherhoods contributed greatly to the process, to the extent that Senegal’s urban network cannot be understood today without taking into account the brotherhoods which helped build it. Many religious activities, including pious visits and pilgrimages, mosque construction, the running of Islamic primary and secondary schools, the marketing of produce from brotherhood-owned agricultural estates, and the provisioning of religious and charitable services, have characterized the growth of Senegal’s towns and cities since the imposition of colonial rule. Moreover, since the late 1980s, Senegal’s urban-based Sufi brotherhoods have emerged as among the most important forces of urbanization and urban development. First, the monetary remittances of disciples living and working abroad, by far the country’s principal source of foreign revenue, are often invested in urban real estate and businesses. While much of this investment is individual and private, some of it is channeled through brotherhood-run charities and agencies (Tall 1994, Guèye 2002: 251). Second, the brotherhoods are also helping channel rural-urban migration, as rural disciples often settle in towns or neighborhoods where their *shaykhs* have established a social network.

The process of erecting modern Sufi cities within the emerging colonial urban network was not linear; no single model was followed. First of all, the established system of clerical land grants seems to have continued to operate until the very end of the old regimes. For instance, in 1885 Samba Laobe Fall granted Bou Kounta the concession of Ndiassane in Saniakhor. Samba Laobe Fall was the last king of Cayor (he would be killed by the French the following year). The Kounta lineage, affiliated with the Qâdiriyyah of Timbuktu, had already rendered many services to various kings of Cayor. Ndiassane—just outside of present-day Tivaouane—was thus both the last of the old-style clerical establishment and an early example of the new-style Sufi centers. Bou Kounta (1844–1914) was more a businessman than a teacher, and Ndiassane became the center of an agricultural and commercial network of national scope. Even before settling in Ndiassane, Bou Kounta was one of the first clerics to put his students to work cultivating peanuts—the colonial cash crop—on lands under his control. The Qâdirî center of Ndiassane was built next to the new Dakar–Saint-Louis railroad (constructed 1882–1886) which greatly stimulated peanut production in contiguous areas. The railroad allowed Bou Kounta to take full advantage of other

sectors of the new colonial economy as well, namely real estate in the booming colonial port cities of Saint-Louis and Dakar. The construction of the Dakar-Niger line (1906–1923) permitted Bou Kounta and his successors to recruit numerous new students among the mainly Bambara railway workers. In its heyday, in the 1920s, Ndiassane was a thriving religious center, home to an annual pilgrimage and harboring some innovative urban architecture (Diouf 1988: 9, Monteil 1980: 165). Today, however, the place is much quieter. Ndiassane is a small place, indistinguishable in size from neighboring villages, and its Qâdiriyyah Kounta lineage does not seem to have kept pace with developments in Senegal's other brotherhoods.

There are a number of similarly small Sufi centers to be found throughout Senegal: Tiénaba (near Thiès), established by the Seck lineage in 1946, or Fass in Mbacol, where the Toure operate an Islamic school affiliated to the Tijâniyyah of Tivaouane. The Mouride brotherhood in particular, though it created Touba, also maintains a large number of small shrines: places like Darou-Marnane in Mbacol, and the neighboring village of Mbacké-Cayor, or like Porokhane, in the Rip (south of the Saloum river), where Ahmadou Bamba's mother is buried. All of these places, though they are small, are active nodes in national, or even international, religious networks.

Perhaps the best cases of small places with universal pretensions are Yoff-Layène and Cambérène, the religious centers of the Layene brotherhood. This brotherhood is the legacy of Seydina Limamou Laye (1845–1909), born in the fishing village of Yoff on the Cap-Vert peninsula (Laborde 1995). In 1884 Limamou Laye announced to the world that he was the *mahdi* (the messianic leader who many Muslims believe will come at the end of time) and a re-incarnation of the prophet Muhammad (Lo 1972). Neither local leaders in Yoff nor the French authorities in Dakar were prepared to countenance such a troublesome claim, and Limamou Laye was arrested in 1887. Upon his release from prison some months later, after having come to an accommodation with the political authorities, he returned to Yoff and established himself and his followers in a new neighborhood called Yoff-Layène. His son and successor, Seydina Issa Rohou Laye (1876–1949), who is believed by the Layenes to be the reincarnation of the prophet Jesus, was responsible for establishing the brotherhood's second sanctuary, Cambérène, in 1914. Both these establishments are quite small—less than ten hectares each—and both are now completely imbedded in Dakar's sprawling urban fabric. Yet, notwithstanding the pressures of urban growth, they have maintained a measure

of autonomy. Physically, these religious centers have managed to keep the encroaching suburban subdivisions at bay. The leadership of the brotherhood, which has a close relationship with local political and administrative authorities, has been successful in insuring this. On the religious level too, the Layene brotherhood, despite its extremely heterodox foundations, is now an accepted part of Senegalese society.² Yoff-Layène and Cambérène hold a variety of annual festivals, marking holy days in both the Muslim and Christian calendars. Life in these two Sufi centers is lived according to proper Muslim codes; neither alcohol nor tobacco may be consumed there. Yoff-Layène and Cambérène seem to benefit from a kind of *de facto* autonomy, even though they are included within the municipal boundaries of Dakar and Guediawaye respectively. The moral authority of the Layene Caliphs over members of the brotherhood is sufficient to insure this.

Hybrid Cities

Several of Senegal's most important second- and third-rank cities, the seats of its administrative regions and *départements*, effectively serve two masters. As civic administrative seats they harbor the usual state apparatus and civil services: courthouses, police commissariats, national gendarmeries, governor's residences, public high schools, hospitals, etc. Yet, as the "capitals" of Sufi brotherhoods, they also harbor the peculiar religious and administrative structures of these institutions. This is notably the case Tivaouane and Kaolack (two Tijânî centers) and of the Mouride centers of Mbacké, Diourbel and Darou-Mousty. Cheikh Guèye (2002: 117) calls these types of cities "hybrid." Though they have official status and rank within Senegal's urban network as seats of civic administration, their real relevance to the country's urban physiognomy is increasingly dependent upon their religious functions. In other words, as the state continues to "disengage" itself (through structural adjustment policies), and as the surrounding rural peanut economy continues to decline, the Sufi brotherhoods have become the most dynamic actors in these cities, and not least through their connections with international networks.

The Tijâniyyah, originally from North Africa, is probably the largest of Senegal's brotherhoods in terms of numbers of adherents,³ though this brotherhood is effectively subdivided into a number of distinct, and not necessarily cooperative, branches. While in some cases Tijânî initiatives have led to the creation *ex nihilo* of new religious centers (Fass in Mbackol

and Taïba-Niassène in the Rip for example, and, exceptionally, the city of Madina-Gounass discussed below), for the most part, during the colonial period, this brotherhood aimed at investing the country's emerging network of colonial cities.

The Tijâniyyah of Tivaouane is the largest branch of the brotherhood in terms of number of adherents and the national scale at which it operates. This branch is the legacy of El-Hadj Malick Sy (1855–1922), whose descendants continue to manage its affairs. The main *zâwiyyah* (or Sufi “lodge”) is in Tivaouane. In 1902 El-Hadj Malik Sy chose to establish himself in Tivaouane, right next door to Bou Kounta's Qâdirî town of Ndiassane, because it was one of the booming new *escales* along the rail line in the heart of Senegal's peanut basin. Malik Sy already had a number of peanut estates, the principal one being at Ndiarndé, which helped finance his urban establishments, and Tivaouane had easy rail communications with both Saint-Louis and Dakar. El-Hadj Malik Sy's Tijâniyyah was an urban (and urbane) brotherhood from the beginning, recruiting its membership from among merchants and the new class of civil-servants created by the colonial regime. By the 1920s it was a national institution, with major *zâwiyyahs* in downtown Saint-Louis and Dakar. It was El-Hadj Malik Sy's son and successor, Khalifa Ababakar Sy (reigned 1922–57), who created an organizational structure capable of administering this network. This structure consisted of local associations, called *dahiras* (Arabic *dâ'irah*, administrative “circle,” “department”), organized at the municipal or even the neighborhood level. *Dahiras* in turn were “federated” at the level of Senegal's administrative districts (or *cercles*, later *départements*). These departmental federations, in turn, delegated a representative to the central “coordination committee” in Tivaouane (Marone 1970: 172). The Tijâniyyah of Tivaouane, an urban-based brotherhood, was thus the first to adopt the civil administrative structure usually characteristic of modern territorial states and state-run agencies.

Despite the modern structure, the Sy family became deeply divided. Divisions arose during the first succession dispute in 1922, and again more acutely during a second succession in 1957. These divisions are reflected in the spatial configuration of Tivaouane itself. El-Hadj Malik Sy's *zâwiyyah* (built in 1907) is overshadowed by the mosque-mausoleum complex of Khalifa Ababakar Sy, built in 1957, which is in turn being overshadowed by the city's great mosque (still under construction today). All three religious edifices stand within 200 meters of each other in a single neighborhood, where most of the senior members of the Sy lineage have built palatial town-houses. During the annual pilgrimage to

Tivaouane, on the occasion of the prophet Muhammad's birthday, pilgrims will congregate around whichever of the edifices they are directly affiliated to. Divisions within the brotherhood are thus quite public. Yet, despite these deep divisions, this brotherhood is still a powerful force in urban Senegal, where most of its members are active, and Tivaouane thrives because of it. Tivaouane (pop. 27,100 in 1988, est. 38,000 in 2003) is the seat of an administrative *département*, but the local peanut economy no longer supports the town. Increasingly, its religious function, as seat of a national brotherhood, is its most dynamic sector.

Similarly urban is the Niassene Tijâniyyah of Kaolack. Set up by El-Hadj Abdoulaye Niass (1845–1922), this branch of the Tijâniyyah was originally established in rural concessions, Niassène in Saloum and Taïba-Niassène in the Rip, where peanut cultivation was introduced. After a period of exile in British-administered Gambia (1901–10), Abdoulaye Niass was persuaded to move back to Senegal, establishing his *zâwiyyah* in Kaolack's Leona neighborhood. Like Tivaouane, Kaolack at the time was an especially dynamic peanut-trading city, with a port on the Saloum river. At first, the Niassene *zâwiyyah* in Kaolack operated in close conjunction with the Tivaouane-based brotherhood. However, in the 1930s Abdoulaye Niass's son El-Hadj Ibrahima Niass (1902–75) began transforming the movement into an international institution (Gray 1988). Ibrahima Niass traveled widely and opened *zâwiyyahs* in many West African countries, and principally in Kano, Nigeria. By the 1950s and 60s El Hadj Ibrahima Niass was a global figure; a great exponent of non-alignment, he met with such world leaders as Gamal Abdel Nasser and Marshall Tito. He had also set up an administrative structure for his international network. It consisted of a "council" of four "chief deputies" overseeing a number of national representatives from West African affiliates as well as those from North Africa (Paden 1973: 116, 123). In addition, there were Arabic, French, and English language secretaries.

Like the Sy of Tivaouane, the Niassene of Kaolack are a divided family. While the senior branch of the family continues to operate Abdoulaye Niass's original *zâwiyyah* in Leona neighborhood, the junior "Ibrahima" lineage has built an entirely new religious neighborhood called Madina-Baye, dominated by a very large great mosque (constructed in 1958). Kaolack (pop. 151,000 in 1988, est. 233,300 in 2003) is a large diverse city. Apart from the two Niassene *zâwiyyahs* just mentioned, many of the city's Tijânîs are affiliated to the Sy branch of Tivaouane, through the local Seck lineage, rather than to either of the Niassene ones. There is also a sizable Mouride presence in the city, based in Ndong neighborhood. Yet

these latter institutions operate at the neighborhood level. It is the Ibrahima Niassene Tijâniyyah of Madina-Baye, now under the authority of Caliph El-Hadj Abdoulaye Ibrahima Niass and his “lieutenant,” Cheikh Assane Cissé, which heads an international and global religious network. The religious schools in Madina-Baye receive students from across Africa and from the United States, and one is just as likely to hear Hausa or English being spoken in its streets as Wolof and Arabic.

The Mouride brotherhood is also at the origin of a number of “hybrid” cities. Mbacké (founded ca. 1796, pop. 38,800 in 1988, est. 62,800 in 2003), eight kilometers southwest of Touba, is the ancestral home of the founding lineage. It has a majority Mouride population. Mbacké used to be a “bigger” place than Touba but now functions very much as its annex. Many of its commercial establishments, including banks, have relocated to Touba. Significantly, Mbacké is considered by all to be “outside” Touba’s sacred precincts.⁴ It is the seat of an administrative *département* and has government-run schools, as well as bars, clubs and other forms of entertainment proscribed in Touba. Diourbel (pop. 76,500 in 1988, est. 120,500 in 2003) is the administrative capital of Diourbel region, the heartland of the Mouride brotherhood. Ahmadou Bamba spent the last fifteen years of his life under house arrest in Diourbel, and the Mouride presence has marked the city ever since. In 1912, when Ahmadou Bamba was brought there, Diourbel was a thriving railroad *escale* whose agricultural hinterland was being organized around peanut-producing estates created by Mouride *shaykhs*. Today, Diourbel is characterized by a decrepit “West End,” consisting of the old colonial *escale* with its dilapidated administrative and commercial buildings, and a thriving “East End,” called Keur-Goumak, around the great mosque where many Mouride *shaykhs* reside, operate schools, etc.

Darou-Mousty in some ways represents a reverse trend. Whereas the “hybrid” cities described above started out as colonial creations which Sufi brotherhoods adapted to their needs, Darou-Mousty is a Sufi foundation which has been integrated into the official urban network. This town, 25 kilometers northwest of Touba, was founded in 1912 by Mame Tierno Brahim Mbacké (1863–1943), Ahmadou Bamba’s younger brother and one of his closest confidants. Mame Tierno’s lineage constitutes an important sub-group within the brotherhood and Darou-Mousty is often called the “second city” of the Mourides. The city (pop. 13,000 in 1988) is incorporated as a municipality, or “urban commune,” and is the seat of an administrative *arrondissement*, but it is overwhelmingly Mouride in terms of its morphology. Contrary to the “hybrid” cities of Tivaouane, Kaolack,

Mbacké, or Diourbel, Darou-Mousty is not on a rail line and has no colonial *escale* neighborhood. Rather, the city is organized in typical Mouride fashion around a large central square dominated by a great mosque. The state's civil administrative functions have been grafted onto this Sufi core.

Two Autonomous Sufi Cities

There are currently two Muslim entities in Senegal which benefit from a legally recognized autonomous status: Touba and Madina-Gounass. In Touba's case the special status is based on conditions established during the colonial period, when the French authorities came to an accommodation with the Mouride brotherhood, while the indications are that in the case of Madina-Gounass, special status is more recent.

Touba might be Senegal's second largest agglomeration, but the *capital* of the Mouride brotherhood hardly figures at all on maps of the country. In an apparent paradox, Touba is usually marked as a tiny place, whereas many demographically smaller towns are given greater cartographic representation as seats of regions and *départements*.⁵ The reason for this discrepancy is that Touba is not legally constituted as a city. Rather, since 1976 it has had the status of *communauté rurale autonome*, or "autonomous rural community."

Though Touba's *de jure* autonomous status dates from 1976, in practice, from its creation, it has always been administered by the Mouride brotherhood independently of state structures. The basis of Touba's autonomy, according to the internal sources of Mouride historiography, lies in the city's spiritual distinction. Touba is a holy city because God chose the site. He singled out the spot in the wilderness and then guided Ahmadou Bamba Mbacké there so that the Sufi *shaykh* could establish his community in a sanctified place. Ever since that event, Touba's purity has been energetically maintained by the Mouride brotherhood. Proscribed in the holy city are the consumption of alcohol, tobacco and other "narcotics," the playing of musical instruments, dancing, card-playing and the playing of games of chance, including the sale of national lottery tickets (Coulon 1981: 107). According to Abdoul Ahad Mbacké, third Caliph of the Mourides (reigned 1968–89): "We Mourides live in a compound. Our lives are ruled by the teachings of Ahmadou Bamba, by work and by prayer. Beyond this enclosure we see Satan and all his works" (cited in Coulon 1981: 104). For Mourides, Touba's sanctity is divinely ordained

and divinely sustained. The brotherhood, for its part, vigilantly protects the sanctuary from the corruption of the profane world around it. Injunctions against transgressing the holy city's code of conduct are regularly iterated by various Mouride authority figures, and principally by the Caliph. Moreover, national *gendarmes* reinforce this as they question and search travelers at the major points of entry into the city.

While Mouride authorities may argue that Touba's autonomous status derives from its spiritual status, the origin of this autonomy in modern constitutional law is less easily discernable. In terms of "white man's laws,"⁶ Touba's founding legal document is a lease dated 1928, the year following the death of Ahmadou Bamba. It was a fifty-year lease for 400 hectares around the site of Touba (Sy 1969: 276). The lease was in the name of Mamadou Moustafa Mbacké, Ahmadou Bamba's eldest son and first Caliph of the Mourides (reigned 1927–45), and was issued by the colonial authorities who were then theoretically in legal "possession" of all unsettled land. Two years later, in 1930, the colonial authorities issued a second document certifying Mamadou Moustafa's ownership of the 400 hectares (Guèye 2002: 286). Originally then, Touba had the legal status of a private rural estate leased and then ceded to an individual. By ceding the site directly to the young Caliph, the French authorities had sought to strengthen his hand vis-à-vis his wealthier and more powerful uncle Cheikh Anta Mbacké, who was seeking to take command of the brotherhood. Whatever the case, the arrangement permitted construction of Touba's great mosque to begin. When Mamadou Moustafa died in 1945, the Mouride brotherhood was plunged into a second succession crisis, this time opposing Falilou Mbacké (reigned 1945–68), the founder's second son and choice of the council of family elders, to Cheikh Mbacké, the first Caliph's eldest son. The French were once again instrumental in securing the victory of the new Caliph. The status of Touba was revised from that of personal ownership, which the son of the original landholder would have inherited, to that of collective ownership (Sy 1969: 219). Touba's 400 hectares henceforth would belong collectively and indivisibly to all the descendants of the founder, and would remain under the ultimate authority of the Caliph.

This situation pertained until 1976, at which time the Senegalese government implemented its reform of local territorial administration, which consisted of grouping villages into *rural communities*. A rural community is the smallest unit of territorial administration and, typically, will consist of about a dozen villages. It is managed by an elected Council, which is responsible for local development initiatives, and which

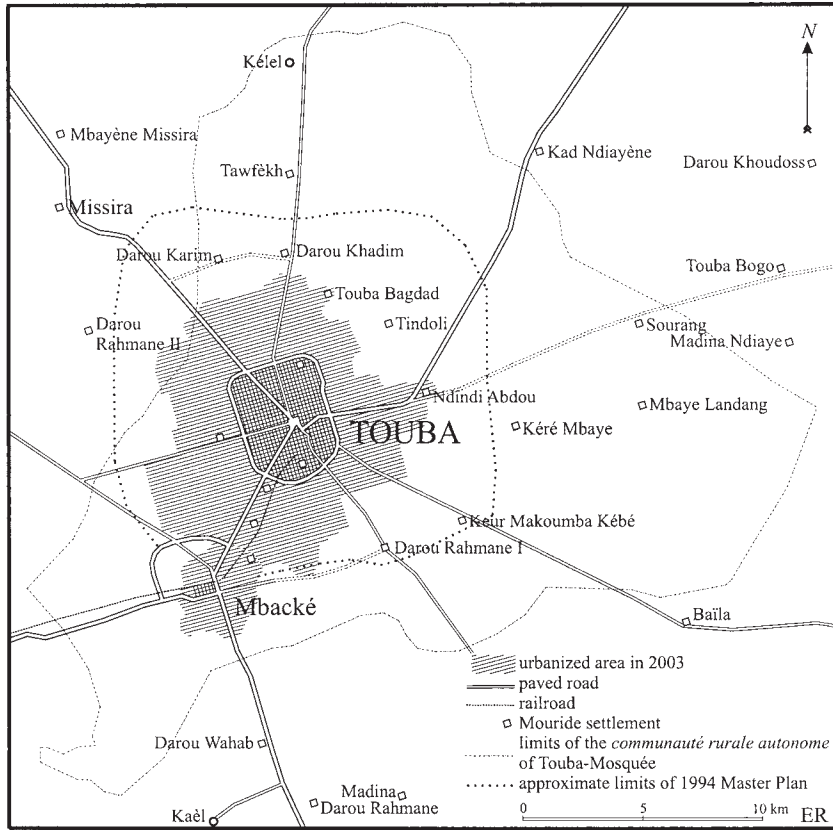


Figure 2. Touba's autonomous zone.

must apply for national and international funding. Touba, with 30,000 inhabitants at the time, and not having the status of a municipality, was integrated into this lowest level of civil administration as an “autonomous” rural community, officially designated as Touba-Mosquée. The state’s recognition of this autonomous religious enclave can be understood in terms of the long-established political accommodation between it and the Mouride brotherhood. This “social contract,” inherited from the colonial period, has been beneficial to both parties and has been described by some as an element of Senegal’s remarkable political stability since independence (Cruise O’Brien 1992).

As shown in figure 2, the autonomous rural community of Touba-Mosquée has an area of 553 square kilometers and a population of many

hundreds of thousands (Guèye 2002: 342). Clearly this is a city in all but name. Its “autonomy” resides in the fact that its elected Council is headed by a President appointed by, and responsible to, the Caliph. Since the late 1970s it has been very successful at obtaining governmental and international funding for major infrastructure, including new roads and streets, water works, telecommunications networks and, most recently, a commercial heliport. The most recent Master Plan for urban development, drawn up by the caliphal administration in 1994, plans for a city of 1,300,000 inhabitants and, significantly, it takes no account of the limits of the “autonomous” zone. For the Mouride brotherhood, the holy city is not subject to such limitations.

Touba is not the only autonomous rural community in Senegal. Madina-Gounass in Fuladu (Upper Casamance) also has this status. This Sufi town is home to a branch of the Tijâniyyah brotherhood. It was founded in 1935 by a *shaykh* named El-Hadj Tierno Mamadou Seydou Baa (1898–1980) (Wane 1974; Magassouba 1985: 50). Like Ahmadou Bamba half a century earlier, this Sufi too was seeking to establish a “pure” community in an isolated place, far from the corrupting influence of French colonial administration. Tierno Seydou Baa was a Toucouleur cleric from Futa Toro (the Senegal river valley), where his branch of the Tijâniyyah still has many affiliates. He and a number of compatriots went to the Fuladu in order to bring its “wayward” Peul inhabitants back to the “Straight Path” of Islam. The term “Sufi” in the case of Madina-Gounass needs to be tempered considerably. Though Tierno Seydou Baa was a Tijânî *shaykh*, his social project had far more in common with Wahhabism than with Sufi spiritual fulfillment. Tierno Seydou Baa set out to establish “pure” Islam through strict application of the *shari’ah*, the Islamic legal code. For example, all forms of secular entertainment are forbidden in Madina-Gounass, even for children. Corporal punishment, though not capital punishment, is implemented by the city’s religious leaders; presence at mosque for all canonical prayers is obligatory for all able-bodied adults, and Madina-Gounass is the only place in Senegal where women are veiled and restricted in their movements in public. Alcohol and tobacco are forbidden in Madina-Gounass, and the brotherhood holds an annual eight-day pilgrimage, or *khalwah*, at a place called Daaka, 9 kilometers outside the city, which women and government officials are barred from attending.⁷

In order to enforce its religious prescriptions, the brotherhood maintained strict independence from colonial institutions, and later from those of independent Senegal. In the early 1970s Madina-Gounass was

administered by the brotherhood through a council of “ministers,” called *jaarga* in Pular. There was a Jaarga of Work and Housing, a Jaarga of Agriculture, of Religious Affairs, of Finance and External Affairs, etc. (Wane 1974: 673). The analogy with state structures is explicit. This system began to unravel in 1978, when Madina-Gounass became an “autonomous” rural community with an elected council. Unlike in Touba, the arrival of partisan politics in Madina-Gounass produced violent political conflicts which espoused the underlying ethnic cleavages of the city—that between the Toucouleur religious elite and the majority Peul population. Though they share the same language, i.e., Pular, the Peul and the Toucouleur constitute two different ethnic groups. Madina-Gounass is now a city divided, with a “Toucouleur” mosque and a “Peul” mosque less than 200 m from each other (Guèye 2002: 123).

Yet, like Touba, Madina-Gounass is still a fast-growing city. According to Wane (1974: 672), in the early 1970s already it consisted of 11 neighborhoods spread over 600 hectares (for about 5,000 inhabitants at the time). By 1988, with 17,000 inhabitants, it had doubled in surface area (occupying approximately 1,200 hectares),⁸ not including a number of suburbs and outlying rural establishments.

Contrary to the case of Touba, there is no clear rationale for why Madina-Gounass was accorded autonomous legal status within Senegal. Madina-Gounass is not the “capital” of a national or international network of interests powerful enough to warrant such favor from the state. It remains even today rather isolated from mainstream Senegalese society and politics. Its autonomous status, which has been more problematic for the state (in terms of electoral violence, for example) than that of Touba, may have been conceded as a gesture towards Senegal’s large Tijânî population generally. The state would thus not be accused of “caving in” to the special demands of the Mouride lobby; Tijânîs too could have their own autonomous rural community, even though, unlike Touba for Mourides, Madina-Gounass is of little relevance to the majority of the country’s Tijânîs.

Conclusion

Whereas Senegambia was not historically one of the most urbanized areas of West Africa, it does have an urban history which transcends the colonial experience. The emergence of states in the Medieval period produced

the first capitals, while the opening of the Atlantic trade routes and the creation of European factories on the coast stimulated trade networks across the entire breadth of the country. Muslim clerics were attracted to these nodes, but tended to set up their own autonomous towns independently of them. This urban network was severely undermined during the period of civil strife, *jihād* and colonial conquest. With the colonial "peace," however, a new urban network was created. This colonial network was one suited to the imperatives of the extraction economy, exemplified by the peanut cash-crop and the railroad network, yet it also served as a basis for civil administration. New Muslim institutions, the Sufi brotherhoods, actively contributed to this urbanization, either by investing the colonial nodes or by creating alternative nodes of their own. Two of these Sufi towns, Touba and Madina-Gounass, were able to negotiate a great measure of autonomy for themselves within the colonial structure, an autonomy which was institutionalized after independence. Many others (Ndiassane, Yoff-Layène, Cambérène, Darou-Mousty) benefit from a kind of de facto autonomy in that state agencies and administrative organs do not intervene in their management, or else do so only in close cooperation with the brotherhood authorities.

While the accommodation of autonomous Muslim entities within Senegambia's pre-colonial states may be seen as somehow compatible with the forms of authority which prevailed at that time, the same cannot be said of post-colonial states. A modern secular territorial state such as Senegal is not ordinarily inclined to respect peculiar or particular local conceptions of authority and territoriality, whether these derive from pre-colonial precedents or from self-proclaimed religious imperatives. Yet, it is clear in the case of Touba at least that autonomous status has helped to consolidate new urban processes. It is not that the state is absent from these processes. It is just that it is no longer central to them. If, in the name of globalization and the free market, the state is expected to continue to disengage itself from society and the economy, and if the expectation is that non-state actors (or "civil society") will fill the vacuum, then we have in Touba a paradigmatic example of alternative urbanization. In the globalized world, where the sovereign territorial state is increasingly marginalized as an actor, a new territoriality has emerged, that of an autonomous hub, home to a world-wide network of contractual and lineage affiliations, channeling national and international "information flows" (Castels 1989). To some extent, in a different context, certain "marabout republics" were already operating in this manner in the seventeenth century.

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Notes

1 This is the first occurrence of the toponym "Touba." Other towns called Touba can be found in Mali and Côte d'Ivoire. For the most part, these were all established by Jakhanke clerics in the nineteenth century and they predate Ahmadou Bamba's Senegalese foundation.

2 Senegal is a secular state with a majority Muslim population. Senegalese society is profoundly tolerant, pluralistic, and democratic.

3 Data on Sufi brotherhood affiliation is not gathered officially. Various authors and officials, however, agree that Tijānis outnumber Mourides.

4 Though the villages on the outskirts of Mbacké are included in the "autonomous rural community" of Touba-Mosquée, Mbacké itself is legally constituted as a municipality, or "urban commune," and functions like any other Senegalese municipality, with an elected mayor, etc.

5 Nor does Touba figure in demographic data on cities in Senegal.

6 During field work I was told more than once by Mouride informants that Touba's status as "autonomous rural community" was *une histoire de toubab*.

7 In Senegal, government officials are invited to attend all public events organized by the Sufi brotherhoods, a practice initiated during French rule. Only in Madina-Gounass is this not the case.

8 Interview with El-Hadj Ahmadou Abdoulaye Diagne, member of the brotherhood and civil engineer in charge of the city's urban plan, Dakar, November 1988.

11

AFRICANITÉ AND URBANITÉ

THE PLACE OF THE URBAN IN IMAGININGS OF AFRICAN IDENTITY DURING THE LATE COLONIAL PERIOD IN FRENCH WEST AFRICA

James E. Genova

In the 1950s, as France's authority in the federation of French West Africa waned, there was a veritable explosion in literary cultural production from the region. In particular, the last decade of French rule in West Africa witnessed the arrival in force of the African Francophone novel. As Laila Ibnlfassi and Nicki Hitchcott observe, this was no mere coincidence. They write, "The novel as a genre was . . . the perfect medium to portray life in the French colonies in a more realistic way. The novel," Ibnlfassi and Hitchcott continue, "became the carrier of a message of protest to the Western world, and a means of communication and solidarity between Africans living under colonial rule."¹ Authors such as Camara Laye, Ousmane Sembène, and Mongo Beti emerged as important new voices in the world of prose as well as furnishing powerful and enduring images of life in colonial Africa. At the same time those writers offered assessments of imperialism's legacy for the continent as its people moved toward political independence. Consequently, the emergence of the African novel and colonialism were inextricably linked in West Africa, and each left its mark on the other. This made the act of writing—and cultural production in general—political by definition in that period. It also meant that the selection or development of a genre of cultural expression in that context was not a neutral act nor uncontested even among anti-colonialists from the region.

Not all West African anti-colonialists and cultural activists welcomed the advent of prose writing or thought it was “appropriate” for Africans. In fact, the question of *africanité*, or African identity, became imbricated with the debates over forms of cultural production in West Africa during the last decade of French rule. For one, Léopold Sédar Senghor, at the time a deputy in the French National Assembly and soon-to-be President of Senegal, asserted that the natural mode of expression for Africans was verse; a genre through which Senghor had himself achieved international renown. For Senghor, modern poetry continued the tradition of West African *griots*, praise-singers who also functioned as archivists for oral cultures and were a crucial element in pre-colonial African societies, as the poets would be in building post-colonial African societies on authentic autochthonous foundations.²

The eruption of the African Francophone novel also coincided with dramatic social changes in West Africa. Most striking, perhaps, of those changes was the development of what Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch describes as “the urban hypertrophy characteristic of the contemporary Third World.”³ In the eight countries that formerly comprised the federation of French West Africa (Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Benin, and Niger) urban populations nearly doubled between 1950 and 1960 from an estimated 1,168,000 to 2,224,000 and jumped almost another 75% in the first post-independence decade to 3,979,000.⁴ Some capital cities, among them Dakar, Bamako, Abidjan, and Conakry, saw their populations jump to three times their 1945 figures by independence in 1960.⁵ However, this urbanization was not consonant with industrialization. Rather, the growth in urban populations in French West Africa resulted from a revival and intensification of the exploitation of agricultural and mineral surplus by the French following the Second World War, and during a period of economic reconstruction in Europe that depended partly upon ready access to abundant and relatively cheap raw materials produced in West Africa’s rural areas. As Frederick Cooper notes, “The point of metropolitan investment in colonial infrastructure [after 1945], then, was not to extract Africans from their rural, communitarian ways, but to allow economic growth to take place with less disturbance of African society.”⁶ That meant the persistence of already established patterns of colonial production on a larger scale to meet the new demands of a reordered global economy. Africans migrating to the port cities and administrative centers of the federation, then, found work in traditional colonial sectors as dockworkers, clerks, translators, foremen, teachers, rail workers, transport drivers, police, and low-level administrators.

Consequently, the advent of the African Francophone novel occurred within an increasingly urbanized social context coincidental with the decline in French imperial power in West Africa. The debates over appropriate expressive genres in the 1950s, then, also reflected the tensions arising from the dramatic societal disruptions evident through the mass urbanization of largely unindustrialized and highly rural-based societies.

Intellectuals, and writers in particular, played a central role in the end game of French rule in West Africa, a position not only claimed by the novelists themselves,⁷ but also admitted to by the colonizers through their persistent efforts to block the dissemination of literary works from the federation and gatherings of writers and artists from throughout the French African empire.⁸ Not only were they prominent within the organized anti-colonial movements, like Senghor, they also figured significantly in the articulation of a vision of post-colonial Africa through their work and the debates that swirled around it. A new industry of literary journals emerged, the most important of which was *Présence Africaine*, which provided a space where emergent writers gained exposure and visions of the future Africa were adumbrated and hotly contested. Some lauded the “traditions” of rural, peasant Africa seeing in that aspect of African life a continuation of a pre-colonial past that could, and must, be recovered in the post-colonial future. Others, however, embraced an ethos of modernization and development, with distinctive “African” traits, and viewed the advent of the novel as an appropriate genre for the expression of such a vision as well as a marker of the transition from an agrarian past to an urban and industrialized future. Thus, the “tradition” vs. “modern” debate became embedded within the literary production of West Africans and was a dominant motif.

This paper explores some of those imaginings of post-colonial Africa and the controversies they generated through a study of exemplary novels produced by Camara Laye, Mongo Beti, and Ousmane Sembène in the last decade of French rule in West Africa. Specifically, this investigation seeks to understand the intersection of notions of *urbanité* and *africanité* in the literary cultural production and disputes over it in French West Africa during the late colonial period. Consequently, I take seriously the context of rapid urbanization in the last decade of colonial rule and its effects not only on the objective social structures of West Africa, but also on the cultural production of the region. In the process, I hope to demonstrate that attitudes toward the city and urbanism were key components in the sorting-out process of decolonization in French West Africa. Urban spaces, I argue, served metonymically for predilections toward a range of

policies and approaches to governance in the post-colonial period, including development, relations with the former colonial power, questions of class and its place in African society, and appropriate economic systems for the continent's varied indigenous communities. Therefore, this study seeks to furnish some critical insights into the bases for choices made by anti-colonialists as the transition to the post-colony unfolded. It situates the place of urban spaces as a central and revealing feature of African literary production during the late colonial period.

The theme of this study intersects with two generally distinct bodies of scholarship. One focuses on the social history of urbanism in Africa, specifically the relationship between colonialism and the development of the modern African city. The other area of research centers on the history of the African Francophone novel and its connections to the colonial moment as well as its place in the pantheon of genres of African cultural production reaching from pre- to post-colonial. This paper unites these hitherto distinct areas of inquiry in ways that suggest the importance of literary expression to enhancing our understanding of the place of the city in Africa as well as demonstrating the significance of social and historical context to literary studies, offering a new perspective on the symbolism and meaning embedded in the textual expression of West Africans as formal colonial rule withered in the region.

There is a rich and growing scholarship of the social history of the African city that is largely centered on the question posed by Coquery-Vidrovitch in her pioneering essay, "Villes coloniales et histoire des Africains," which is whether we should speak in terms of "African cities or cities in Africa."⁹ In other words, is there a unique form of "African" city or is there a general typology of cities that applies equally to the African, European, American, and Asian cases? For Coquery-Vidrovitch, and many others investigating urbanism in Africa, the colonial experience is decisive in the development of the African city, although the degree to which it is determinative of its form and to which the African city owes its genesis to pre-colonial adumbrations is a matter of dispute.¹⁰ For example, Pierre Kipré's richly detailed study of urbanism in Côte d'Ivoire concludes that the French colonial presence was decisive for the development of urban spaces in that area. While he contrasts the history of Côte d'Ivoire to that of the more urbanized areas of Yorubaland and the Sudan-Niger region, Kipré suggests that Côte d'Ivoire's experience was more typical in the French-controlled territories of West Africa in that one could speak in terms of "villages" before the advent of colonial rule, but not fully constituted urban zones.¹¹ Kipré, then, shares Coquery-Vidrovitch's assertion that cities were the

centers of colonization and constituted the primary meeting points of different cultures.¹² Out of the interactions of those drawn to the colonial cities (from metropole and colony alike) emerged the predominant features of colonial society. As Robert Ross and Gerard Telkamp note, "It is not just that the cities are part of colonial society. . . . Rather they did much to determine the very nature of society. Unwanted as they were, they were the very essence of colonial life. . . . [M]any of the major tensions of the relations imposed by colonialism came to a head there."¹³

In fact, Kipré in one way and Gwendolyn Wright in a different context each conclude that urbanism was a key part of the civilizing mission carried by the French to Africa and the development of cities was presented as an essential signpost of "civilization." While Kipré focuses on the important place of cities in the achievement of the economic aims of the French colonizers, arguing that urban centers were constructed first as a means of social control (extending from an original military encampment) and subsequently as an organizing force in the extractive and exploitative colonial economy,¹⁴ Wright suggests that urbanism in the colonies served the additional purpose of "revitaliz[ing] metropolitan France, regenerating politics and culture with new leaders, fresh ideas, and proven methods."¹⁵ What Kipré, Wright, and Coquery-Vidrovitch, among others, point to is a claim for a specific "colonial" form of urbanism; one defined by its essential functions of control and exploitation, and identified by its unique spatial layout. In other words, instead of speaking in terms of African cities or cities in Africa, one should look at the distinction between "colonial cities" and non-colonial urban spaces. African cities gain their distinctiveness through the colonial experience and the role of cities in the designs of imperial conquerors. Josef Gugler and William Flanagan, then, conclude, "The present pattern and conditions of urbanization in West Africa owe much to the colonial past."¹⁶

Often absent from the analyses of the social historians of urbanism in Africa is an interrogation of the African role in mediating the development of the colonial city and interpreting its function and design in ways that suggest post-colonial possibilities. One way to redress this "lack" is greater attentiveness to the cultural production associated with urbanization in Africa, specifically with regard to the place of the urban in African imaginings of the city. Nowhere was the city as conspicuous a presence as in the African Francophone novel of the 1950s. As discussed above, the African Francophone novel grew up with rapid urbanization in the last decade of French rule in West Africa. They were siblings born of the simultaneous processes of rapid social change and the decline of imperial

domination in the federation and shared many of the tensions generated by those transformations.

The African Francophone novel has garnered much well deserved attention among scholars in recent years. However, most research on the genre has been confined to literary analyses that either highlight the autobiographical nature of the texts¹⁷—examining the writing to uncover glimpses of the author’s psychological make up—or seek to identify a common “African” essence or style to the literature, thereby subsuming the individuality of the author in a broader “*africanité*” that drives the work.¹⁸ Either way, as Eleni Coundouriotis observes, “Context is divorced from narrative and then recast as a catalog of scenes of African life without historical specificity.”¹⁹ What emerges is a directory of “motifs” said to be consonant with the African Francophone novel and determinant of the genre itself. Most prominent among them are “the journey,” excellently explicated by Mildred Mortimer;²⁰ alienation/exile, attentively rendered by Coundouriotis and Kesteloot;²¹ and childhood, as elaborated by Adele King.²² Significantly, one theme not generally studied by scholars of the African Francophone novel is the city. This is particularly striking given the historical context in which the genre emerged. Consequently, joining the social history of the city in West Africa with an analysis of the work of prose by writers from the federation provides a means whereby our understanding of that particular means of expressive cultural production can be enhanced.

For the purposes of this paper, we will first look at the reception of the African Francophone novel among the anti-colonial intelligentsia from French West Africa and the debates over the appropriateness of various expressive genres in order to glean some insight into the links between African identity or *africanité* and the novel. Primarily, our focus will be on the debates conducted in the pages of *Présence Africaine*, a literary journal founded in 1947 to provide a voice for the West African intelligentsia in the metropole and coordinate discussion on the colonial condition and Africa’s relationship with France in an imagined post-colonial future. Then we will turn our attention to an interrogation of three representative novels produced in the last decade of French rule in West Africa—Camara Laye’s *L’Enfant noir*, Mongo Beti’s *Mission Terminée*, and Ousmane Sembène’s *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu*—in order to understand the place of the urban or *urbanité* in renderings of *africanité* and how the two intersect in ways that are suggestive of a wider range of discourses about the colonial condition, Franco-African relations, and post-coloniality in West Africa.

Prose or Poetry: Africanité and the Debate over Appropriate Expressive Genres

The advent of the African Francophone novel in West Africa during the 1950s was not an uncontested process by colonial authorities or without controversy within the growing community of the anti-colonial intelligentsia. The records of colonial administrators from the 1950s show them remonstrating against the “Marxist” and “anti-colonialist” proclivities of writers from French West Africa. A common theme of those complaints, in the convoluted logic of imperial rulers, was that the African writers were attempting to foment a culture war against the West by charging “Western culture was being substituted for African culture by force.”²³ Others charged that the West African writers were “francophobes” and “nationalists” interested only in confrontation with France and disrupting the work of development in the overseas territories (called colonies before 1945).²⁴ France, however, did not confine itself to complaints embedded in private correspondence between government agencies. It took proactive measures to influence the activities of West African writers. Those measures included efforts to “control” the messages propagated by writers through monetary inducements,²⁵ or disruptive administrative tactics like denying travel visas to writers intending to attend conferences or present their work in public.²⁶

In spite of the efforts of imperial administrators to interdict the activities of West African writers or to control the message of their writing, the African Francophone novel, with all its anti-colonial content and portraiture of colonized Africa, did emerge during the 1950s and became an instantly popular genre among the West African intelligentsia as well as metropolitan audiences. Some intellectuals from the federation, though, did not welcome the advent of prose writing. Senghor and even, initially, the editorial board of *Présence Africaine* asserted that either prose writing was not an appropriate vehicle of expression for African cultures, preferring instead verse, or that “the time was not right for an authentic African literature.”²⁷ This despite calls in the immediate post-World War II era for the development of a distinctive African literature.²⁸

However, a common theme emerges in an analysis of the early calls for an African cultural renaissance that would include, as a fundamental component, the elaboration of an African literary form. That is, most of those calls argued for writing to be rooted in pre-colonial African culture and to be done in indigenous languages. Jean Rouch, one of the most prominent figures in post-1945 French ethnography and a close associate

of members of the *Présence Africaine* editorial board, argued that “authentic” African literature would be a direct outgrowth of oral forms already integral to African culture and expressed in local languages. He dismissed the early writings of West Africans as basically “French” since the writers had “lost almost all [their] African character.” Rouch claimed that the African writer in the metropole “had lost all contact with the village in the bush, with the griots and singers, common people and [those of the] lower class, [and] also with the men who search in the realm of the spirit, dreams, and joy for [the inspiration for] their splendid recitations.”²⁹ Rouch’s assertions concerning “authentic” forms of expression for African cultures echoed Senghor and the *négritude* circle’s call for a “journey to ancestral sources” as essential to the recovery and “re-birth” of African society and culture.³⁰ However, Senghor did not believe it was necessary to produce literature in indigenous African languages, since what mattered was the form of the writing, not the language of expression. For Senghor it was entirely plausible that an “authentic” African literature could be expressed in French since the structure of the language could be manipulated to enable the African essence to come through. What was essential, for Senghor and the editors of *Présence Africaine*, was that an African literature be developed. As Senghor puts it, “The intellectuals have a mission to restore *black values* in their truth and their excellence . . . [b]y *Letters [sic]* above all. There is no civilization without a literature within which is expressed and illustrated its values, like the jeweler’s joy at making a crown. And without written literature, the civilization is nothing but a simple ethnographic curiosity.”³¹ Consequently, literature and the debate over appropriate expressive genres were key components of discussions over the nature of African identity and its (re)construction in a post-colonial context.

What touched off the dispute over Africans writing in prose was the appearance of Camara Laye’s first novel, *L’Enfant noir: Roman*, in 1953. To that point few African novels had appeared and those that did had limited audiences and were not followed up by other writings either from the same author or by others inspired by the examples set.³² Rather, verse dominated the literary production of Africans in the years prior to the publication of Camara Laye’s initial work in prose. Perhaps the most significant event in the history of African literature prior to Camara Laye’s novel was the publication in 1948 of the *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française* by Senghor, with the famous introductory essay, *Orphée noir*, by Jean-Paul Sartre. In both the Anthology and Sartre’s essay poetry is lauded as the most appropriate expressive means for Africans and the colonial condition in which Africans live.³³

The appearance of *L'Enfant noir*, which was an instant publishing success and widely reviewed,³⁴ posed the question, then, of the place of prose writing in post-colonial African culture.³⁵ The immediate reaction of reviewers in the pages of *Présence Africaine*, “probably the most important” African journal of the era,³⁶ was decidedly negative. One reviewer charged, “Laye obstinately closes his eyes to the most crucial realities, just those which one is always prevented from revealing to the public here [in France].” The critic asked rhetorically, “[D]oes he, therefore, see nothing else but an Africa untroubled, beautiful, [and] maternal? Is it possible that, not for the first time, Laye has not been the witness of [even] a single small exaction of the colonial administration?”³⁷ With the publication of Camara Laye’s second book the next year, *Le Regard du roi*, criticisms of the author mounted. Camara Laye was particularly chastised for his “idyllic” presentation of Africa and whites. The two works together caused *Présence Africaine* to proclaim, “The time is not propitious for an authentic African literature.”³⁸

Camara Laye, though, had his defenders, albeit from a unique perspective. Senghor, for one, came to the defense of the young writer. The *négritude* poet argued that art conveyed its message differently than the overt politics of parties. In fact, Senghor asserted, Laye’s “portrayal of the Negro-African world with the colors of childhood was the most suggestive means [by which] to condemn the capitalist world and the European West.”³⁹ Senghor said Camara Laye’s work was “authentically” African precisely because of its style and theme.⁴⁰ In fact, Senghor wrote, “The greatest merit of Laye Camara [*sic*] is to have produced, in his novel, a long poem, in the form of [those of] Negro-Africans.”⁴¹ For Senghor the defense of Camara Laye was based on a claim that he had not written a novel after all, but rather a poem that carried with it all the rhythm and style passed from the oral tradition of the griots. Therefore, *Présence Africaine*’s criticisms of the novels were founded upon a failure to recognize the work for what it truly was—regardless of its initial appearance to the eye. This enabled Senghor to maintain his position that verse was the most authentic expressive genre for African culture. It was not the last time that he attempted to appropriate a work of prose for the world of verse. In 1956, during a heated dispute at the First International Congress of Black Writers and Artists, Senghor even asserted that the novels of the famed African American writer Richard Wright were in fact poetry because they were written in “the Negro-African rhythm and imagery.” Needless to say, Wright disagreed vociferously and defended his prose as both an authentic expression of his own reality and as legitimate prose.⁴²

At stake in the debate over appropriate expressive genres was the articulation of a post-colonial African identity as the political power of France in West Africa diminished in the 1950s. Despite the protestations of both *Présence Africaine* and Senghor, the African Francophone novel developed in the 1950s and emerged as a dominant expressive genre of African culture during the late colonial period. Also unavoidable in that era was the explosive urbanization that transfigured the West African social and demographic landscape. Our discussion now turns to an analysis of the place of the city in the African Francophone novel of the 1950s for what it can tell us about the ways in which *africanité* and *urbanité* intersected to adumbrate the post-colonial in West Africa.

The City in West African Fiction: African Identity and the Urban in the Works of Camara Laye, Mongo Beti, and Ousmane Sembène

While the novels of Camara Laye touched off, intentionally or not, the debate over appropriate expressive genres for African culture and became the site for the linking of discussions of African identity to prose writing, Mongo Beti and Ousmane Sembène built off his initial commercial success and confirmed the emergence of the African Francophone novel as a force in African culture. In this section we will look at the place of the urban in the overall portrayal of Africa in Camara Laye's *L'Enfant noir*, Mongo Beti's *Mission Terminée*, and Ousmane Sembène's *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu*. All were written in the 1950s and have been the subject of numerous literary analyses.⁴³ However, absent from those discussions has been the prominent place of the city in the narratives and what that can tell us about colonial African society and imaginings of post-colonial African identities.

L'Enfant noir is an autobiographical novel that tells the story of a young boy reaching adolescence in French-ruled Guinea, with all the struggles typical to youth coming of age—familial relations, school, friends and rivals, and learning about one's society and one's place in that society. However, central to the narrative is an exposition on the relationship between rural and urban life, and the place of the city in African society. For Camara Laye, there is little doubt that rural life is more authentic and worthy of praise than the urban. For the novelist the city is a place of foreboding causing "the past" itself to disappear and creeping in on what was to be valued of African society like the wheels of a machine on an

inexorable and unwanted march into the future. One scene in particular conveys this attitude. As our protagonist reflects on his parting with his mother for Paris via Conakry he laments, “And how could they be stopped? We could only watch them turning and turning, the wheels of destiny turning and turning.” For Camara Laye the city’s emergence in Africa is inevitable because of the French presence, yet it is by no means to be hailed as an improvement. Rather, Camara Laye expresses the desire to shed the effects of the city on him, if only it were possible to do so. “How I would have liked to have rid myself of those school clothes fit only for city wear; and I most certainly would have, had I anything else to wear,” he writes.⁴⁴

For Camara Laye the city is a site of regret for all that has been and is being lost of African culture and it is the place of the other—it does not belong to him or to Africa, it is the space of the foreigner and of Africans who have become foreign to themselves and their traditional ways.⁴⁵ His regular journey from Kouroussa, which the author makes a point of noting “is actually a city” that “hasn’t any of those country sights which a city child always finds marvelous,” to Tindican, for which the protagonist waits “impatiently,” becomes the *mise-en-scène* for reflecting on the relationship between *africanité* and *urbanité*.⁴⁶ The trip, at once delightful and filled with wonder, is also disconcerting and consciousness-raising. Camara Laye poignantly notes:

Civil formalities are more respected on the farm than in the city. Farm ceremony and manners are not understood in the city, which has no time for these things. . . . I used to notice a dignity everywhere, which I have rarely found in cities. . . . The rights of others were highly respected. And if intelligence seemed slower it was because reflection preceded speech and because speech itself was a most serious matter.⁴⁷

Rural, peasant Africa is the land of tradition, secrets, and meaning. For Camara Laye, those will always be somewhat inaccessible for he “had left his father’s house too soon” and the encroachment of the city was causing that world to vanish. Africans were ceasing to be themselves and were, instead, beginning “to acquire a European look. I say ‘began to,’ for the resemblance was never exact.”⁴⁸ The future, consequently, was filled with uncertainty, ambivalence, exile, and wondering. As Laye writes, “But where was my life?”⁴⁹

Although technically not a part of French West Africa, Cameroon was generally administered as such and Mongo Beti’s writing fits the

pattern of and played a significant role in the development of the African Francophone novel outlined above. *Mission Terminée*, published in 1957, offers many similarities in its presentation of the city to that of Camara Laye. However, unlike the rendering of Camara Laye, for whom the city is imbued with profoundly negative and alien characteristics, Mongo Beti's rendering of *urbanité* is more nuanced and based on perspective. *Mission Terminée* relates the tale of a youth, Medza, recently returned from the city after having failed his *baccalauréat* exams, who is sent on a journey to Kala to recover the wife of his cousin Niam, who has deserted the matrimonial home after suffering abuse from her husband and engaging in an affair of her own. In Kala, Medza is treated with great respect because of his dual attributes as "[e]ducated and a city-dweller."⁵⁰ In fact, that is why he was sent on such a delicate mission.

Throughout the novel the city is presented as a source of prestige, conferring instant status on any associated with it. To Medza this indicates the "primitiveness" and "savagery" of the rural-folk, because they cannot possibly know the banality of urban life and are unaware—and unconcerned—that he has failed his exams.⁵¹ However, the city also evokes resentment among some in the countryside. Upon his arrival in Kala, Medza is interrogated about his life in the city and the tone of his hosts becomes more sarcastic and even hostile as the conversation proceeds. One man at the table is surprised to learn from Medza that white children's minds do not work any faster than those of black children. When rebuked by others in the crowd, the man persists, "It's perfectly reasonable to suppose that White children should learn faster than Black. What are they being taught? *Their* ancestral wisdom, not ours, isn't that so? . . . Now if it was *our* ancestral wisdom that was taught in this school, it would be normal to expect Coloured children to learn faster than Whites, wouldn't it?"⁵² A few pages later, still recovering from the argument discussed above, Medza is informed by an older man in the group, "For us *you* are the white man—you are the only person who can explain these mysteries to us. If you refuse, we've probably lost our only chance of ever being able to learn the white man's wisdom."⁵³

Unlike Camara Laye, Mongo Beti finds little worthy of salvaging in rural, peasant Africa. The author repeatedly berates the persistence of chieftaincy and tribalism, as well as customs lacking in explanation of their purpose or relevance to Africa's present and future. In one scene the narrator steps back to explain to his audience that even the "revolutionary changes brought about by the new Constitution of October 1946" have failed to curb the abusive powers of the chief over his people. "His

subjects,” Mongo Beti writes, “had little idea (if any) of the terms of the October 1946 Constitution. . . . With the help of their administrative superiors—the colonial officers, that is—they had perfected a new system of oppression.”⁵⁴

However, the city hardly portends a better future. Medza is conflicted in his positioning of *urbanité* within *africanité*. The partnership of colonial administrators and tribal chiefs has effectively destroyed any prospect of a “return to ancestral sources.”⁵⁵ Even if there remained something to recover, it is irrevocably lost to those “who choose the city.” Medza laments toward the end of his saga: “This unshakeable stoicism in the face of all life’s accidents and vicissitudes is probably the townsman’s greatest loss, when we abandon the village, tribe and local culture. We who choose the city have lost this ancient wisdom: irritable, ambitious, hot-headed, fed on illusion, we have become the world’s eternal dupes.”⁵⁶ And yet, there is no turning back—as Camara Laye regrets in *L’Enfant noir*. The tragedy of the country-folk is that they do not comprehend the role of the city in their lives. They are overcome with illusions and are predisposed to confer authority on any urban voice in their midst, however illegitimate it may be by the standards of the city. As Beti writes, it is “the tragedy . . . of a man left to his own devices in a world which does not belong to him, which he has not made and does not understand. . . . Who will tell him that he can only cross Fifth Avenue by the pedestrian crossings, or teach him how to interpret the traffic signs.”⁵⁷ However, there is an equally great tragedy that afflicts the city-dweller. That is the daily companionship of alienation and anonymity. “I should never truly be myself,” Mongo Beti writes, “or have any real individuality. I should never be anything but a point of view, a myth, a zero-like abstraction with which my fellow human beings could play at will, indifferent to my own desires or pleasures.”⁵⁸

Consequently, Mongo Beti positions the city alongside the corrupted rural, peasant society as equally tragic. They are both products of colonialism and, in the end, it is perhaps only marginally better to be a city-dweller, for at least there the prospect exists to control, however slightly, one’s destiny by learning how to manipulate the rules of an anonymous system. In fact, the city presents the only hope—however ambivalent—for post-colonial Africa. When Medza leaves Kala to return to the more familiar surroundings of the city he proclaims, “I went off in a solemn and dignified fashion, without a single backward glance at my native village. I was leaving; it was all over. I have never returned from that day to this. *A nous la liberté*, I murmured to myself.”⁵⁹ The post-colonial

future for Africa looked to be a difficult one at best from the perspective of Mongo Beti.

The publication in 1960 of Ousmane Sembène's *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu*, on the other hand, brings us full circle to a complete and unequivocal embrace of the city, fully integrating a positive as well as inevitable vision of *urbanité* into *africanité*. *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* is a fictionalized account of the 1947–48 Dakar-Niger rail strike in Senegal and Mali, one of the most pivotal events in the movement toward greater rights for Africans in French West Africa and in galvanizing the anti-colonialist forces to a more forceful challenge of France's authority in the region.⁶⁰ As Frederick Cooper notes, "The 1947–1948 railway strike was above all a contest over power within a system of industrial relations that had only just come to French Africa. . . . The railway workers proved that their voices would be heard."⁶¹ While scholars of the strike generally agree that in reality it was not an unmitigated victory since the union did not win all of its demands,⁶² this is not how Ousmane Sembène portrays it or how it was read by many people in the region then and since.⁶³ In fact, one could argue that Ousmane Sembène's novel has played a major role in the popular construction of the historical memory of the strike and that his version of events has become the basis for the "truth" of the event.

What is significant for our purposes is the place of the city and urbanism in Ousmane Sembène's account. As in Mongo Beti's *Mission terminée*, *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* finds little worthy of emulation or salvaging in rural, peasant Africa. Throughout the novel the author emphasizes through his characters that, "[T]he ways of the old time [are] gone forever," or the elders lament that "our world is falling apart."⁶⁴ In fact, when representatives of "old" Africa do act in the narrative they generally are obstructionists or collaborators with the colonizers, as in the case of the Marabout who repeatedly urges the strikers and their families to give up the struggle and accept the ways of the *toubabs* as "the will of God."⁶⁵ However, unlike in Mongo Beti's tale, where the disdain directed at the country-folk results from a recognition of their general ignorance of "the real world" and Medza permits them to continue in their illusions so as not to give them more "complexes,"⁶⁶ Ousmane Sembène has his characters repeatedly challenge any counsel against the strike or assertions of the superiority of the old ways over the new. For example, when Old Niakoro despairs that her world is falling apart, Fa Keïta rejoinders, "Our world is opening up,"⁶⁷ and even some among the older generation recognize that the way of the future resides in change not recovery as when

Mamadou Keïta (the Old One) informs Niakoro, “[E]ven we old people must learn, and recognize that the things people know today were not born with us. No, knowledge is not a hereditary thing.”⁶⁸

Ousmane Sembène’s vision of post-colonial *africanité* is inextricably bound up with a fervent acceptance of *urbanité*. There is no future for Africa and its peoples without the city, without full-scale modernization à la Europe. When the author acknowledges sincere feelings of regret among the community it is not for the traditions and ways of life that have been lost due to the encroachment of the city, it is for the absence of modern machinery and the hustle of urbanism silenced because of the strike and results in a longing for a time when the sounds of engines and plumes of smoke will again return to Thiès, Dakar, and Bamako. Ousmane Sembène writes in one reflective passage, “An intangible sense of loss weighed on everyone: the loss of the machine. In the beginning the men had announced pridefully that they had ‘put an end to the smoke of the savanna,’ but now they remembered the time when not a day had passed without the sight of that smoke, rising above the fields, the houses, and the trees of the brush.”⁶⁹ For the Senegalese author, the city holds the promise of equality, an end to racism, imperialism, and the gateway to new horizons; a better life for all. He writes in a refrain often repeated in the novel:

Something was being born inside them, as if the past and the future were coupling to breed a new kind of man, and it seemed to them that the wind was whispering a phrase they had often heard from Bakayoko: ‘The kind of man we were is dead, and our only hope for a new life lies in the machine, which knows neither a language nor a race.’⁷⁰

For Ousmane Sembène these benefits and changes were equally applicable to the women who “became conscious that a change was coming for them as well.”⁷¹ In fact, the climactic event of the novel is the women’s march to Dakar.⁷² The imagery and symbolism are significant here. The movement is decidedly toward the city, the place of deliverance, the realm of future promises and hopes. Moreover, the entire community is mobilized in this endeavor, gathering supporters all along the march route, with the women in the vanguard, the social element most constricted in its movements and least likely, especially in the colonial order of things, to be engaged in the public life of the community. This suggests, as did the earlier cited passages urging acceptance of the changes coming to Africa, that all African society is or must move in the direction of the

city and make it their own. Unlike Camara Laye's portrayal of the urban as intrinsically foreign and worthy of only passive acceptance as a tragic fate that has befallen Africa, and Mongo Beti's imagining of the city as worthy of acceptance only because there is no "there" to which Africans can return, Ousmane Sembène presents the city and urbanism as integral parts of post-colonial African identity. The city belongs to those who seize it and make of it what they desire. The old ways are gone—and good riddance, in *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu*.

Conclusions and Reflections

Our survey of the emergence of the African Francophone novel and its connections to urbanism in the last decade of French colonial rule in West Africa enable some final observations about articulations of competing notions of post-colonial African identity. All three of the writers examined above were participants in the struggles to liberate their homelands from foreign domination. All also envisioned themselves as contributors to shaping a post-colonial future Africa where Africans would be in charge of their own destiny. Yet, each had decidedly different perspectives on the legacies of colonial rule and the degree to which those legacies could be useful in Africa's future.

Camara Laye's portrait is perhaps the most bleak of the three. The city is not a comforting presence in Africa. It is an alien construct designed to serve the purposes of an exploitative and oppressive external power with no connection to the "real" Africa, read as fundamentally rural and peasant. For French-educated Africans such as Camara Laye, there is no going back. Too much has been lost for them. They are too "Europeanized" to meaningfully lead the cultural and social renaissance deemed necessary by virtually all anti-colonialists and intellectuals in West Africa during the 1950s. Africa's hope resides among the rural people themselves who have preserved their traditions, despite the daunting odds against them. This is evidenced in the discussion of the rites of Kondén Diara and circumcision, where it is intimated that, indeed, some secrets survive, although he has limited and imperfect access to them.⁷³ In other words, Camara Laye shared the political standpoint of the *négritude* circle as exemplified by Senghor. Africa's future resided in "the return to ancestral sources" and that meant a return to rural, peasant Africa where lineages mattered, the machine was not dominant, and chiefs had real function. In his speech to

the First International Conference of Writers and Artists in Paris in September 1956, Senghor said:

We have often said that the Negro is a man of nature. He lives traditionally off the land and with the land, in and by the *cosmos*. It is another mode of consciousness. . . . White reason is analytical by utilization, Negro reason intuitive by participation. That is to say, the sensibility of the Black Man, his power [resides in] *emotion*.⁷⁴

This had significant implications for post-colonial politics. Senghor's decisions in the post-colonial era flowed from this perspective of a clear division between the "European" and the "African," where the city, industrial development, and an appropriation of "European" technologies were not apposite for Africans.

Mongo Beti and Ousmane Sembène present us with very different understandings of the relationship of *africanité* and *urbanité*. Each sees no hope left in the ways of the past, although for different reasons. Instead, the city must become part of African identity. The division between the two resides in their degree of enthusiasm for this prospect. Mongo Beti embraces the city only out of a complete revulsion for what he sees as left in the countryside, although the city will always have the feel of foreignness. It is a place of alienation and is not African, but then what is African in the 1950s? Ousmane Sembène is far more enthusiastic about the intersection of *Africanité* and *urbanité*. The city is deliverance. It is foreign only if one permits it to remain so. Objectively, the city belongs to no race or language—it is there for appropriation by Africans in order to make a new people, a people that are equals on the international stage. Mongo Beti and Ousmane Sembène are each, in their own ways, revolutionaries in the context of the 1950s. They acknowledge the social context in which they themselves have become possible as novelists—rapid urbanization and a weakening of French colonial rule—and they are prepared to swim with the tide, taking hold of the future and maximizing the possibilities for Africa's future development. They are closer to Sékou Touré's radical politics in Guinea and the socialist anti-colonialists in Mali and Niger during the same period. It is significant that of the eight countries that emerged from the federation of French West Africa in the 1950s, only Guinea voted "no" in the 1958 referendum to remain part of the French Community and only Guinea took measures to abolish the institution of chieftaincy and tribal organization as a means to ending the long period of abusive power exercised by "traditional" leaders allied to the French.⁷⁵

In this paper I have argued for the importance of the intersection of articulations of African identity and the city, or urbanism, in the late colonial period. The city was deeply implicated in constructions of African identity in the 1950s and was a palpable presence in the cultural production of the last decade of French rule in West Africa. Moreover, the emergence of the African Francophone novel and urbanization (without industrialization) were imbricated events, shaping each other as colonial domination receded. I suggest, therefore, that we take seriously the cultural production of the period, in particular the emergence of the African Francophone novel, as markers of profound social changes at the time as well as windows into the conflicted sorting out process of decolonization among the anti-colonial forces themselves. Analyses of urbanization in West Africa, I propose, could be well served by an inclusion of the cultural changes connected with the growth of cities. In addition, I urge that literary studies of the French African novel would benefit from a deeper contextualization of their production.

Notes

1 Laïla Ibnlfassi and Nicki Hitchcott, "Introduction," in *African Francophone Writing: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Laïla Ibnlfassi and Nicki Hitchcott (Oxford: Berg, 1996), 3.

2 Léopold Sédar Senghor, "L'Apport de la poésie nègre au demi-siècle," in Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Liberté I: Négritude et Humanisme* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1964), 144; first published in 1952 in *Témoignages sur la poésie du demi-siècle*.

3 Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Villes coloniales et histoire des Africains," *XXe Siècle* 20 (October–December 1988): 55.

4 Josef Gugler and William G. Flanagan, *Urbanization and Social Change in West Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 39. The authors acquired most of their information from the World Bank and the United Nations.

5 *Ibid.*, 41.

6 Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 195. The major investment programs launched by the French after 1945 were known as FIDES (concentrating on development of infrastructure such as roads, rail lines, and communications) and FERDES (which provided funds for agricultural cooperatives that necessitated a collaborative investment from the indigenous community as part of the program).

7 Le Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer (CAOM), 1/Affaires Politiques (AP)/2186, "Appel aux écrivains et artistes noirs," in *Présence Africaine: Revue Culturelle du monde noir*, 19–22 September 1956.

8 CAOM, 1/AP/2186, note by M. de la Fournière, "A/S Congrès de la Société Africaine de Culture, à Rome," 31 July 1958; and CAOM, 1/AP/2188, note signed "Pignon," "Note pour le directeur du Cabinet," 12 June 1956.

9 Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Villes coloniales et histoire des Africains," 49.

10 Ibid., 53. See also Pierre Kipré, *Villes de Côte d'Ivoire, 1893–1940*, 2 vols. (Abidjan: Les Nouvelles Éditions Africaines, 1985); Margaret Peil, *Cities and Suburbs: Urban Life in West Africa* (New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1981); Horace Miner, ed., *The City in Modern Africa* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967); R. A. Obudho and Salah El-Shakhs, eds., *Development of Urban Systems in Africa* (New York: Praeger, 1979); Robert J. Ross and Gerard J. Telkamp, eds., *Colonial Cities: Essays on Urbanism in a Colonial Context* (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985); and Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

11 Kipré, *Villes de Côte d'Ivoire*, 1:5.

12 Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Villes Coloniales et Histoire des Africains," 53, 62.

13 Robert Ross and Gerard J. Telkamp, "Introduction," in Ross and Telkamp, eds., *Colonial Cities*, 2.

14 Kipré, *Villes de Côte d'Ivoire*, 1:92–93.

15 Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*, 3.

16 Gugler and Flanagan, *Urbanization and Social Change in West Africa*, 26.

17 Adele King, *The Writings of Camara Laye* (London: Heinemann, 1983).

18 Mildred Mortimer, *Journeys through the French African Novel* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1990); Lilyan Kesteloot, *Black Writers in French: A Literary History of Negritude* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1991); and Eleni Coundouriotis, *Claiming History: Colonialism, Ethnography, and the Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

19 Coundouriotis, *Claiming History*, 4.

20 Mortimer, *Journeys through the French African Novel*.

21 Kesteloot, *Black Writers in French*; and Coundouriotis, *Claiming History*.

22 King, *The Writings of Camara Laye*.

23 CAOM, 1/AP/2186, Gilbert Saron, Director of the Liaison Center and of the Delegation of the High Commission of the French Republic to Madagascar and Its Dependencies, to the Ministry for Overseas France, "Le Congrès des écrivains et artistes," 26 September 1956. See also, in the same carton, "Note" filed in the records of the Ministry for Overseas France, "A/S du Congrès Mondial des Ecrivains et Artistes Noirs," 23 September 1956; and CAOM, 1/AP/2188, "Pignon" to the French Prime Minister, "Note pour monsieur le directeur du Cabinet," 12 June 1957.

24 CAOM, 1/AP/2186, "Note" in the records of the Ministry for Overseas France, "A/S du Congrès Mondial des Ecrivains et Artistes Noirs," 23 September 1956.

25 CAOM, 1/AP/2188, "Pignon" to the French Prime Minister, "Note pour monsieur le directeur du Cabinet," 12 June 1957.

26 CAOM, 1/AP/2186, letter from Alioune Diop, editor in chief of *Présence Africaine*, to "Spénal" at the Ministry for Overseas France, 22 August 1956.

27 Léopold Sédar Senghor, *Prose and Poetry* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 87–96; and A. B., "Afrique noir, littérature rose," *Présence Africaine*, nos. 1–2 (April–July 1955): 139.

28 Jean Rouch, "Vers une littérature africaine," *Présence Africaine*, no. 6 (1949): 144–46.

29 Ibid., 145–46.

30 Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Chante de l'Initié," *Présence Africaine*, no. 1 (November–December 1947): 56–59.

31 Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Le Problème culturel en A.O.F.," in Senghor, *Liberté I*, 19. (Emphasis in the original.)

32 Gerald More, *Twelve African Writers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980); Ibnlfassi and Hitchcott, eds., *African Francophone Writing*; Coundouriotis, *Claiming History*; Mortimer, *Journeys through the French African Novel*; King, *The Writings of Camara Laye*; and Janheinz Jahn, *Muntu: The New African Culture* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1961).

33 Léopold Sédar Senghor, ed., *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française: Précédée de Orphée noir par Jean-Paul Sartre* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948).

34 Special Issue "Trois écrivains noirs" of *Présence Africaine*, no. 16 (1954): 5.

35 Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Laye Camara et Lamine Niang ou l'art doit être incarné," in Senghor, *Liberté I*, 173. First published in *Condition humaine*, 22 April 1955.

36 CAOM, 1/AP/2186, René Maran, "Congrès mondial des écrivains et artistes noirs," 6 October 1956; and in the same carton, "1er congrès mondial des écrivains et artistes noirs demain à la Sorbonne," in *Combat*, 18 September 1956.

37 A. B., "Revue: *L'Enfant noir*," *Présence Africaine*, no. 16 (1954): 420.

38 A. B., "Afrique noire, littérature rose," *Présence Africaine*, nos. 1–2 (April–July 1955): 139, 144.

39 Léopold Sédar Senghor, "Laye Camara et Lamine Diakhaté ou l'art n'est pas d'un parti," in Sédar Senghor, *Liberté I*, 157. First published in *Condition humaine*, 29 July 1954.

40 Senghor, "Laye Camara et Lamine Niang," 174.

41 Senghor, "Laye Camara et Lamine Diakhaté," 157.

42 Discussion Session of the First International Congress of Black Writers and Artists, 19 September, published in *Présence Africaine*, nos. 8–10 (June–November 1956): 67–75.

43 More, *Twelve African Writers*; Kesteloot, *Black Writers in French*; Mortimer, *Journeys through the French African Novel*; King, *The Writings of Camara Laye*; Ibnlfassi and Hitchcott, eds., *African Francophone Writing*; and Coundouriotis, *Claiming History*.

44 Camara Laye, *The Dark Child* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969), 53, 140, 186.

45 *Ibid.*, 140.

46 *Ibid.*, 44, 55.

47 *Ibid.*, 62–63.

48 *Ibid.*, 19, 109, 169.

49 *Ibid.*, 60.

50 Mongo Beti, *Mission to Kala* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1964), 47. (Emphasis in the original.)

51 *Ibid.*, 15–16, 21, 27, 126, 137.

52 *Ibid.*, 61. (Emphasis in the original.)

53 *Ibid.*, 65. (Emphasis in the original.)

54 *Ibid.*, 18, 126.

55 *Ibid.*, 18–19.

56 *Ibid.*, 145.

57 *Ibid.*, 181.

58 *Ibid.*, 63.

59 *Ibid.*, 179.

60 Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, 241–48.

61 *Ibid.*, 248.

62 *Ibid.*, 241. See also: Joseph Roger de Benoist, *L'Afrique Occidentale Française de la Conférence de Brazzaville (1944) à l'indépendance (1960)* (Dakar: Les Nouvelles Éditions Africaines, 1982); and Ruth Schachter Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French-Speaking West Africa* (London: Clarendon Oxford University Press, 1967).

63 Ousmane Sembène, *God's Bits of Wood* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995),

Author's Note.

64 *Ibid.*, 2, 87.

65 *Ibid.*, 124.

66 Mongo Beti, *Mission to Kala*, 62.

67 Ousmane Sembène, *God's Bits of Wood*, 87.

68 *Ibid.*, 11–12.

69 *Ibid.*, 76.

70 *Ibid.*, 32–33, 76, 87, 94.

71 *Ibid.*, 34.

72 *Ibid.*, 186–204.

73 Camara Laye, *The Dark Child*, 108–9.

74 Léopold Sédar Senghor, “L'Esprit de la civilisation ou les lois de la culture négro-africaine,” *Présence Africaine*, nos. 8–10 (June–November 1956): 52, speech delivered at the First International Conference of Black Writers and Artists in Paris, September 1956. (Emphasis in the original.)

75 CAOM, 1/AP/2198, note forwarded to the Ministry for Overseas France, “M. Sékou Touré se prononce pour l'indépendance nationale de la Guinée,” 29 September 1958. See also, in the same carton, the voluminous press accounts of the result of the vote in Guinea, which was overwhelmingly in favor of independence and against membership in the proposed French Community.

PART IV

Colonial Legacies and Devitalized Space

A quick glance at any major western media source will reveal the extent of Africa's problems today. Although they exist everywhere, poverty, crime, unemployment, and disease are rampant in parts of many of Africa's overcrowded and underdeveloped cities. The rapid urbanization that followed the Second World War highlighted severe problems that extended into the independence era. Many of these problems, however, find historical roots in an earlier time. The chapters in this section look at the problems of urban development today and reveal that the causes of contemporary urban impoverishment are many.

The Nigerian cities, Lagos and Ibadan, are vibrant and cosmopolitan, but they certainly have their share of what are often designated as urban problems. These cities demand that residents and visitors conscientiously emphasize personal security on a daily basis. Rising levels of poverty and crime in the independence era have been the focus of many social scientists. Laurent Fourchard, however, traces the roots of the problem to the period bounded by the economic crisis of 1929 and the end of the Second World War. The Great Depression, he argues, marked the development of new forms of urban poverty characterized by rapid growth in unemployment, prostitution, and delinquency. Growing poverty, as it does so frequently, led to a rise in criminal activities. Using administrative, police, and court records, Fourchard brings to light new information about the level of crime during the 1930s. The rapid growth in population from the start of the Second World War led to rising urban blight, but Fourchard uses the evidence to move the origins of these urban problems into the prewar period and attributes their legacy to colonial policies and practices.

Thomas Ngomba Ekali looks at the nature of urban problems today in Victoria, Cameroon, but traces their existence from the precolonial era

to the present. Cameroon was unique because at various times it was under German, British, and French colonial rule, leaving a legacy of non-African ownership of urban economic social and economic systems that fostered urban underdevelopment. Economic stratification and residential segregation have long been features of Victoria. Africans were removed from particular areas and resettled elsewhere, away from European administrators and business people. Under early European rule, the Germans gave new names to streets and constructed new buildings that changed the architectural landscape, further alienating Africans from the urban space. During the interwar period, the British colonial administration claimed greater chunks of African soil, ostensibly to protect the African residents of Victoria from plantation owners but also to protect and manage the dwindling amount of urban land for their own purposes. After a brief period of prosperity that led to even greater segregation and declining living conditions for Africans, the urban environment is characterized by overcrowding and unsanitary conditions that contribute to poverty and disease.

In areas where there were a large number of white settlers, the problems of urban planning posed a different challenge but the legacies of colonial rule remain very much the same. White settlers in Zimbabwe, for example, used the military to subjugate the indigenous population and take control of the best land. The land reform plan implemented by the government recently has had devastating effects on agricultural productivity and increased the rate of rural-urban immigration. Doug Feremenga illustrates, however, that these problems are not new; they have endured within government institutions and show a remarkable continuity with those of the colonial era. While the demand for urban space drives housing prices upward and causes an escalation in the cost of living, the real income of the lower classes sees little change. Overcrowding in Harare contributes to environmental degradation and overall urban decay. Government has failed to do its part, Feremenga argues, to provide adequate resources for urban residents yet continues to offer little incentive for Africans to remain in the rural areas.

Modern Somalia, like Cameroon, was once under the influence of three European powers as well as Ethiopia. The violent reality of Somalian life over the last decade is well known to Africanists and non-Africanists alike. The lengthy civil war has had devastating consequences on the capital city of Mogadishu, the site of thousands of raging battles between heavily armed men and boys with divided loyalties. Omar Eno's chapter reveals the extent of urban degeneration in a city that is divided into more

than eight wards controlled by different warlords. For all intents and purposes, there is no government structure capable of providing the means to rehabilitate the city, much less determine the nature of urban development. The urban warfare of Mogadishu has also had a profound effect on the surrounding communities. The presence of thousands of squatters, severe malnutrition and disease outbreaks, and the absence of schools, hospitals, banks, water, electricity, or even currency make the situation of urban residents in Mogadishu dire.

The problems of African cities are many, but to make changes in planning and development that will improve the lives of millions of Africans, we must first understand the historical legacies of the problems and their permutations in the present. That colonial policies and practices have contributed to urban degeneration cannot be gainsaid, but there is little doubt that the present economic climate and continuing mismanagement of resources in the independence era has also played an instrumental role.

12

URBAN POVERTY, URBAN CRIME, AND CRIME CONTROL

THE LAGOS AND IBADAN CASES, 1929–45

Laurent Fourchard

Agege Station probably contains more criminals, past, present and potential than any town of its size in the world.

—National Archives Ibadan (NAI), Survey Department, C. 69, Ikeja District from Intelligence Report of the Ikeja District 1935

Such a dramatic note from a British officer in 1934 could not have been written a few decades earlier, not only because Agege Station was a new, small town of 6,000 inhabitants on the outskirts of Lagos, but because the town and all of its districts became in the 1930s a particularly depressed area, a place of residence for thieves and burglars and a place where one of the first gangs of violent armed robbers operated in Nigeria. This particular example reflects the rise of crime and urban poverty during the Great Depression in Africa.

Many social scientists have emphasized the issue of crime in Nigeria, especially the rise of violent crime after the Civil War (1967–70), the culture of the Area Boys of Lagos, and the use of vigilante groups as a measure of crime control in the 1980s, but the historical dimension of such phenomena is often missing.¹ John Iliffe was one of the first to stress the historical roots of crime, delinquency, and poverty in Africa. According to him, juvenile delinquency was not unique to the

colonial era, even though child poverty appeared to increase during the late colonial period: “The chief reason was probably that the social welfare officers appointed in many colonies during the 1940s actively looked for poor children and—as so often with poverty in Africa—found what they were looking for.”² Iliffe argues that juvenile delinquency became an obsession only in the late colonial period; vagrant youth were not new to Africa but the Second World War made juvenile delinquency a “problem.”³ More recently, historians have shown that specific forms of juvenile delinquency, namely those organized in gang activities, developed during the colonial period in African cities such as Ibadan, Dar es Salaam, Johannesburg, Durban, and Cape Coast.⁴ These studies indicate that the upsurge of juvenile delinquency in urban Africa was due to a set of factors such as urban/rural discontinuity, social dislocation in city life, the breaking down of “tribal life,” a lack of schooling and of recreation facilities, weakness of parental control, diminishing respect for elders, and unemployment and poverty. In some specific cases, such as in Johannesburg, pass laws designed to control the movements of blacks fueled the development of youth gangs in the 1940s.⁵ Interestingly, these studies placed the birth of such phenomena during the decade of the 1930s.

In this paper I argue that the fifteen-year period between the beginning of the World Crisis in 1929 and the end of the Second World War in 1945 marks the extension of new forms of poverty, crime, and urban delinquency in the two largest Nigerian cities, Lagos and Ibadan. In many southern Nigerian cities, “gangs” of juvenile delinquents, and more serious offenders such as armed robbers and armed burglars, appeared or became more prevalent during the 1930s and early 1940s. These types of crime were likely to appear earlier in bigger cities such as Lagos (230,000 inhabitants in 1952) and Ibadan (450,000 inhabitants in 1952), two of the most important African cities south of the Sahara at that time, than in smaller, more peripheral cities. This paper is based on administrative and police records and on newspapers, including *The Nigerian Daily Times* and the *West African Pilot* published between 1931 and 1938 in Lagos. The use of neglected criminal records from the Supreme Court of Ikeja district and the Magistrate Court of Ibadan during the 1930s also provides new and important insights into the crime landscape of the two cities. We will first look at the emergence of new forms of poverty and then turn to the development of new forms of crime and the way crime control operated in Ibadan and Lagos.

New Forms of Poverty

According to Iliffe, nineteenth century Lagos was a pioneer in the changing nature of poverty in Africa with the birth of new categories such as delinquents, unemployed, and prostitutes.⁶ These supplemented the older states of being incapacitated and hungry or living in a position of servitude. Although a slum clearance scheme adopted in Lagos Island during the 1920s showed that many Lagosians were already living in very poor housing conditions,⁷ the 1930s crisis and the depressed war economy extended these new forms of poverty.

The Great Depression and the Rise of Unemployment

Very few studies have examined the plight of labor in Lagos and Ibadan during the Great Depression.⁸ As elsewhere, businesses retracted and many companies, especially the small ones, went bankrupt, while others reduced their activities. All categories of employees were affected by the economic crisis. It started even before October 1929 within the African trader group. As elsewhere in West Africa, African network traders were affected by the competition of European and Levantine companies, especially since the colonial conquest of the late nineteenth century. Olukoju mentioned that the construction of roads enabled European and Levantine merchants to buy produce in areas which had hitherto been accessible only to African middlemen.⁹ The National Democratic Party evaluated the dramatic consequences of the competing European firms in Lagos just before the crisis:

[The] population of Lagos has been roughly estimated at 150 000 and at least one fifth of this total or 30 000 people were at one time deriving their daily bread from or earning their livelihood by patronising these districts markets. Today that number has unfortunately reduced considerably below 2 000 or one fifteenth of its original.¹⁰

If this figure is too low, the decrease of trade caused many merchants to become unemployed or led them to turn to street trading. Actually, the economic crisis reinforced the position of the larger Western companies as well as the Lebanese ones in the economic landscape of West African colonies. Small traders were the first victims of the trade compression. At Ibadan, only the wealthiest African traders in the city were able to compete with the growing numbers of Lebanese: 12 in 1924, 50 in 1930.¹¹ Their increasing concentration in the main commercial area of the town

(i.e., Gbagi) excluded indigenes from the commercial benefits of the place. Employers of public and private European companies were similarly affected by the economic crisis. By the end of 1932, a total of 20,104 railway workers had lost their jobs.¹² The stopping of public work also provoked great loss for the artisan class and for the floating population who formerly sought employment during the dry season. Among the semi-skilled artisans, there was a large number of carpenters, tailors, blacksmiths, and bricklayers for whom there was little demand by October 1929.

Because of the lack of job opportunities throughout Nigeria, cities still continued to attract migrants. Actually, pressures in the hinterland, including colonial taxation and agricultural control policies, obliged farmers to migrate to cities, especially in coastal regions.¹³ According to Mabogunje, the total population in Ibadan was 387,133 in 1931, whereas the 1952 census gives the figure of 459,196 people. The annual rate of growth was slow, around 0.8 percent, even if the increase within the township was a more significant 8 percent per annum.¹⁴ The growth was more noteworthy in Lagos. In 1950, the population was almost twice the size of the 1931 population (230,256 inhabitants in 1950, 126,108 in 1931). During that period around 60 percent of the population came from outside Lagos. The most important regional sources of immigrants were Abeokuta, Ijebu, and Oyo Provinces in Yorubaland. There was also a phenomenal rise in the number of Ibo from the province of Owerri.¹⁵

The economic crisis and the growing population provoked an unparalleled development of unemployment in contrast to previous decades of relative scarcity of labor.¹⁶ According to the commissioner of police in charge of a report on unemployment in Lagos in 1927, "There are probably 1000 or more unemployed persons in Lagos even if it was difficult to know the exact figure on account of the movement into and out of the town."¹⁷ Consequently, the secretary of the southern provinces deemed "no additional measures for dealing with destitute and paupers to be necessary in Lagos because the number of such persons . . . is negligible."¹⁸ The situation deteriorated quickly between 1929 and 1931 as high unemployment defied the proffered solutions of government during the 1930s.¹⁹ The situation worsened again during the war. The influx into Lagos of unemployed persons was so high that the registration of workers was closed to people from the provinces by a series of orders in 1944 and 1945.²⁰ No comprehensive statistics are available, however. The 1931 report of the colony stated that Lagos was "full of unemployed, almost unemployable"²¹ people; during a three-day period, 2,570 persons registered at a labor bureau in 1935.²² A 1938 report in Oyo Province states: "The number of

unemployed persons among the non-farming section of the population is considerable. All are anxious for something to do and often suffer deterioration if they remain idle.”²³

The Development of Precarious Forms of Work

Precarious forms of work also developed during this decade. The increasing monopoly of trade by European and Lebanese companies, the will to escape taxation on market goods, and limited job opportunities led to the rapid expansion of street trading and hawking. These forms of work, which had existed in African cities before the 1930s, were developing in port cities such as Mombasa, Dakar, and Lagos. These cities were also more affected by the economic crisis than the outlying cities that were less integrated into the colonial economy.²⁴ By 1932, these activities became a central issue for the Lagos town council. “There is no street in Lagos or Ebute Metta where hawking or selling outside the houses does not take place,” complained the administrator of the colony.²⁵ According to the secretary of the town council, 4,000 petty traders were coming every day around the main markets in Lagos, whereas the administrator stated that the correct figure was nearer 10,000, a number representing around 10 percent of the population of Lagos.²⁶

Among hawkers, a significant part was constituted by juveniles. Street trading and hawking were the most common jobs done by youth in Lagos. Of 838 cases of girls under seventeen dealt with by social welfare services in 1945, 369 were hawkers.²⁷ Donald Faulkner, the first social welfare officer appointed in Nigeria (in 1942), found hundreds of them homeless in Lagos.²⁸ Certainly, child poverty existed before the economic crisis, but the general development of poverty worsened their condition. Children were often the first victims of economic deterioration in Africa.

The Second World War also had an impact on the development of poverty. War conditions gave some local opportunities to jobless children, especially in Lagos, but the opportunities had only limited rewards. For instance, hundreds of boys used to wash soldiers’ uniforms: “They are fed with the remaining rations of the soldiers. . . . They are no better than the destitute or pickpocket.”²⁹ Boys were also employed to work on vessels in Lagos Harbour until a decision forbade it in May 1942. Hundreds of boys between ten and fourteen, commonly known as *Alaru*, worked as carriers at the train station and in the large markets of the township. They came in bands from Oyo and Ilorin and lived together, twenty, or thirty in a room.³⁰ “They live in the slum districts of Lagos Township, keep on their person

the same dirty clothes for several days, sleeping in them and go without a bath for days in succession. . . . Their death rate is said to be very high.”³¹ They generally sent their money to their indigent families in the country.

Besides juvenile destitution, traditional forms of poverty, such as begging, persisted. It is difficult, however, to appreciate whether begging really increased during this period. According to Iliffe, the Yoruba were few compared to the number of Hausa beggars who flooded Yorubaland during the twentieth century.³² The numerous beggars who “invaded” the streets worried the administration from time to time, but quantitative information is missing. On Lagos streets, the police found 153 beggars in 1944, but the real number was probably much greater.³³ Moreover, these beggars looked like the nineteenth-century beggars found in Hausa cities. They were generally Muslim and Hausa (90 percent), they were often married (65 percent) with children (56 percent), and they were very often blind (77 percent).³⁴ By 1921 Lagos had even an elected Head of the Blind.³⁵ Like the nineteenth-century beggars, they were often disabled, and the unemployment rate did not necessarily affect their numbers. A major change, however, occurred during this period when administrative bodies and elites expressed a wish to remove the nuisance of beggars from the townships beginning in the 1930s and increasing in the 1940s.

Finally, poverty was nothing new in the 1930s, but the level of impoverishment grew and the nature of African urban poverty began to change. The traditional poor were still there but new categories of poor, including children and teenagers, joined hawkers and the expanding mass of unemployed. This dramatically altered the crime landscape of the cities.

New Forms of Crime

Analyzing the changing form of crime is not an easy task because the primary sources available—newspapers, administrative reports, police and justice records, and oral sources—present crime from a specific angle. Newspapers reported mainly exceptional events, such as robberies, burglaries, and kidnappings. They emphasized serious offences whereas minor offences against property, such as stealing, actually remained the more common offence in Nigeria during the colonial period. Police and judicial statistics do not represent accurately the state of delinquency but more often the changing activities of the police and the justice system. In interviews, elderly people tended to diminish the level of crime in the past because more serious crimes such as armed robbery became a major

problem in the country mainly after the 1970s. Consequently, reliable crime rate figures for the period are difficult to obtain.

According to Tamuno's work based on the annual report of the Nigeria Police, the yearly total of "true cases" of crime during the period 1939–49 exceeded that recorded for the preceding decade.³⁶ This chapter does not intend to review all of the crimes perpetrated in Ibadan and Lagos during the 1930s and the 1940s, but only crimes that have had some obvious links with the rise of urban poverty. In southern Nigerian cities, the period saw a growing number of petty offenders who were convicted several times; it also saw the development of a class of more serious offenders who expanded their criminal activities. Collective actions were now organized around gangs that employed violence; their offences became more sophisticated: children were exploited by adults to steal for them, and prostitution became prevalent in Lagos. Extensive criminal networks were also developing. The period is characterized by the birth and rise of three new phenomena: increased petty offences against property, the birth of juvenile delinquency, and the growth of an organized crime milieu. This trend, however, was not specific to Nigerian cities. Minor offences committed by juvenile delinquents who organized in groups also grew more prevalent in many coastal cities in the Gold Coast, Ivory Coast, and Tanzania, whereas youth gangs called *bo tsotsi* emerged in Johannesburg.³⁷ In Nigeria, these phenomena were still limited in the 1930s and 1940s to specific areas of the cities where crime probably occurred more frequently.

The Development of Juvenile Delinquency

According to a 1948 report on juvenile delinquency in the British Empire, continually increasing numbers of juvenile delinquents were evident in Nigeria, Kenya, and northern Rhodesia. The report saw it as a specifically urban phenomenon.³⁸ The 1930s and the 1940s saw an increase in the number of juvenile offenders and the appearance of new organized juvenile groups. There were 50 to 100 cases a year of juvenile offenders brought before courts in southern Nigeria between 1923 and 1929 and around 1,000 cases a year for all Nigeria between 1945 and 1947.³⁹ Even if this figure is a result of criminalizing practices such as street trading for girls under sixteen, it also corresponds to a real increase in the number of juvenile offenders, especially during the war. The majority of cases were then minor cases (stealing less than £5).

The appearance of Jaguda and Boma boys in many Nigerian cities constitutes one of the main changes that occurred during the decade.

“Jaguda” means pickpocket in Yoruba, and the term “Boma” was brought down to the West Coast of Africa from America, where “bum” means a vagrant good-for-nothing.⁴⁰ These Jaguda and Boma boys are the historical parents of the present area boys of which more studies have been done.⁴¹ Their history in Ibadan has been traced by Simon Heap, who, interestingly, began his study in 1930. These “pickpockets” or “hooligans” were operating in gangs or groups of three to six people. They employed methods that oscillated between stealthy, skilled, split-second operations to intimidating and brutal public attacks.⁴² They voluntarily provoked quarrels and fighting in the streets to relieve the victims of their money during the confusion before escaping on bicycles. They also acted as tribute or “tax” collectors, health vaccinators, and touts for public transport to extract illegal fees from people coming from the countryside. Most of them were teenagers. The term “gang” used both by the administration and the public has to be understood. They were rarely organized gangs with leaders who tried to control a territory against another gang as we saw in Soweto in the 1930s. They were more practical associations of destitute street boys that operated in groups in order to frighten their victims; they developed collective strategies with shared responsibilities and minimized the risk of being arrested by the police.

According to the few available primary sources on Lagos, the boys from the city did not act differently. In 1940, the governor of the colony was complaining that “the activities of the Boma boys were becoming something very much worse than a mere nuisance.”⁴³ In this city, because of the presence of Europeans, they were also acting as illegal tourist guides. Consequently, in 1940, the government published the Unlicensed Guides Ordinance to avoid harassment of Europeans within the city.⁴⁴ Such ordinances were impossible to implement, however, and Faulkner observed in 1943 that “sailors are being pestered by Boma boys all around the town.”⁴⁵ Actually, tens of thousands of European and American sailors came to Lagos during the war. Boma boys in the city acted as touts to guide them from the port to various places such as canteens, recreation rooms, bars, night clubs, and brothels.⁴⁶

But their main targets remained women traders and peasants from the country because both groups, for different reasons, rarely took them to court. Actually, the main problem was to obtain convictions against them. The *Nigerian Daily Times* complained in 1942:

These young rascals have constituted themselves a terror to the women petty traders. . . . Many of them have witnessed the actual commission of

petty thefts by them, would not dare to denounce them or make direct reports to the police of what they know about them, for fear of being victimized.⁴⁷

The press was particularly virulent against these activities, but the reaction of colonial justice was entirely inadequate because juvenile delinquency was not yet considered a major problem in the 1930s. The delinquents caught by police and brought before the court were sentenced either to a few strokes with a cane before sending them back to their former environments or to a short period of imprisonment where they could have the opportunity to meet more experienced criminals. The lack of colonial policy toward juvenile delinquency led to the birth of an organized crime milieu which forced the youth to grow up.

The Birth of an Organized Crime Milieu

The issue remains whether these practices were organized by professional criminals or if they were perpetrated by less formal “gangs.” According to Alexander Patterson, Commissioner of Prisons for England and Wales, who visited the Nigerian prisons in 1943:

Apart from the small but growing class of persistent thief, there is rather a tangled mass of petty offences, occasioned by hunger, war conditions and an increase of war ordinances. For him the number of persistent and professional criminals is not great and . . . crime as a career has so far made little appeal to the young Nigerians.⁴⁸

Even if the professional criminals were not numerous in 1943, serious offences organized by professional criminals became more frequent between 1930 and 1945. Still, Patterson indicated that persistent criminals in jail in 1944 were twenty or thirty years old rather than forty. Three areas of crime that appeared during this era are particularly relevant in understanding the rise of an organized crime milieu: the adult exploitation of juvenile delinquents, armed robbery, and armed burglary. These crimes appeared to be organized in criminal networks.

Actually, some of the Boma and Jaguda boys were asked to work for adults. According to Faulkner, Boma boys were used by adults as beggars and petty thieves. The under-twelve groups found in Lagos streets in 1942 “were brought to Lagos by older people for the express purpose of being trained as thieves.”⁴⁹ A 1942 police report on criminals working with young children indicates that some street children were used to commit

burglary at night under the supervision of an adult; a list of fifteen of them using boys under fourteen regularly was even attached to the report.⁵⁰ Some adults used ten children simultaneously in order to have some of them available at all times if others were captured by the police.⁵¹ The adult avoided the risk in being charged before the court whereas the child, because of his (her) age, had more chance to be cautioned or just caned.⁵²

Juvenile prostitution was another subject of concern, especially during the Second World War. Beginning in the 1930s, a regional network of prostitution had been organized between Olubra district in the Cross River Basin and the West African ports of Calabar, Lagos, Port Harcourt, Accra, Sekondi-Takoradi in Gold Coast, and even Fernando Po.⁵³ But the number of seamen and soldiers stationed in Lagos during the war increased and diversified forms of prostitution as it did in many other African cities where troops were stationed (Addis-Ababa, Nairobi, Ouagadougou).⁵⁴ The development of prostitution led to the development of juvenile prostitution. According to Faulkner, girls around the age of twelve came mainly from Calabar and Owerri provinces (Ibos, Efiks, Sobos, and Urhobo).⁵⁵ By 1940, the Calabar Council considered that prostitution among the Efik girls was “appalling and that something must be done to save the Efik tribe from extinction.”⁵⁶ According to welfare officers, the girls were frequently lured to Lagos by adults with an offer to find them jobs or husbands. Child prostitution could then be organized in the house of the guardian in charge of the girl or by a seasoned prostitute who gathered several girls in the same brothel. In 1945, several brothels were patronized by European seamen and managed by elderly women in charge of several young girls between twelve and fifteen years old.⁵⁷ Taxi drivers and Boma boys were known to act as touts and looked out for drunken seamen whom they conveyed to these places.⁵⁸ In Ibadan, information is missing on the historical development of prostitution, but Sabo—the Hausa quarter—hosted 250 prostitutes in 1963, all of them born in Northern Nigeria.⁵⁹

Beside this use of children for illegal activities, there were some other serious offences, such as armed robbery and armed burglary, that became common in southwestern cities in the 1930s and the 1940s. Police statistics, though incomplete for the period under consideration, give the following figures: around ten armed robbery cases reported every year to the police in the 1920s, from fifty to hundred cases between 1936 and 1939, and more than two hundred cases between 1945 and 1947.⁶⁰ This evolution has to be considered carefully. First, it is probably underestimated because many victims did not report the aggression to the police. Hence,

some periods, such as the transition period from a war economy to a colonial economy in Ibadan in the 1890s, witnessed a general rise in the prevalence of robbery that was probably not considered by a nonexistent police service.⁶¹ Second, the increase in the number of armed robbery cases reported to the police was also due to the development of the Crime Investigation Department (CID) in Nigeria in the 1930s. Third, armed robbery was concentrated mainly in the southern cities of Nigeria. Finally, and despite the limits of police statistics, armed robbery, which was stressed neither by the police nor the press in the 1920s, became an important issue in certain periods of the 1930s and the 1940s.

One wave of armed burglary reported by the press and the administration took place in Lagos and Ibadan beginning in the 1930s and lasted from the second half of the decade until the end of the war in most southwestern cities (Lagos, Ibadan, Abeokuta, and Ijebu Ode). The press generally covered the events, sometimes on the front page, especially if there were burglaries with injuries.⁶² Some of these burglars organized in gangs of three to twenty-five people armed with knives and ready to injure and kill residents if necessary. They can be considered professional burglars, as they were involved in series of burglaries. For instance, a gang of fifteen burglars armed with machetes organized a series of bloody burglaries in Lagos in November 1930.⁶³ Several cases of robberies reported by armed gangs were reported in 1931 and 1934 in Lagos.⁶⁴ One gang of twenty-five Ijebu robbers armed with knives and divided into two groups simultaneously attacked the houses of two rich traders in Ijebu Ode in September 1937, while another group of burglars armed with daggers hacked a man to death in February 1941 in Ibadan.⁶⁵ This kind of violent burglary was widely reported by the press, but it still remained exceptional during that period. We should not exaggerate the level of organization of common burglars in the 1930s; there were many isolated amateurs (see below). An important difference between amateurs and professional burglars was the way the distribution of stolen property was organized. Many amateurs were caught at the market of the town where they organized their burglaries. Professionals knew that stolen property had to be sold in other cities and distributed among a network of receivers. One of these networks had been cracked by the police in 1934: sixteen people based in Lagos, Ebutte Meta, and Ibadan were found guilty of thefts and receiving properties along the train stations on the Lagos-Ibadan railway.

One of the most significant criminal networks was the smuggler network between southern Nigeria and French Dahomey. Trading activities all along the lagoon between Lagos and Porto Novo increased, especially

after the eighteenth century.⁶⁶ The establishment of the boundary between Nigeria and Dahomey in 1889, the creation of custom posts to control movement of people and goods across the frontier, and the different tariff policies between the two colonies led to smuggling activities.⁶⁷ With low tariffs in the French colony, Nigerian and British merchants found it more profitable to import their goods, such as alcoholic drinks, tobacco, and printed materials, through Porto Novo, while guns and British bicycles were smuggled from Lagos.⁶⁸ This existing network was then exploited by burglars and thieves from southern Nigeria. One of the main focal points of the traffic concerned bicycles stolen in Lagos. Police reports and newspapers complained that thefts of bicycles were increasing in the 1930s and especially during the war (between 120 and 200 a year).⁶⁹ Effectively, the import controls of goods resulting in the shortage of spare parts increased the price of bicycles.⁷⁰ Most of them could not be recovered because they were smuggled to Dahomey. It was often asserted that bicycle thieves came from Porto Novo, perhaps because immigrants from Dahomey constituted the first West African community in Lagos in the 1930s as well as in the 1950s.⁷¹ However, most of the thieves were more likely from a variety of origins and were working for a regional criminal network composed of receivers in Lagos, smugglers of the lagoon, and receivers in Porto Novo. In that city, the bicycles stolen were then transformed and resold to Nigeria or to any of the French colonies. During the first half of the century, Porto Novo became the main destination of the property stolen in Badagry District,⁷² and probably in all of the colony of Lagos.

On the one hand, criminals such as burglars, armed robbers, and armed smugglers were able to multiply and reinforce themselves because of the increase in the number of petty offenders such as street boys, occasional thieves, and smugglers with whom it was necessary to work. On the other hand, we should not exaggerate the importance of insecurity during the first part of the century because serious crime occurred largely in specific areas.

From Migrants' Settlements to Criminal Areas: Crime and Urban Space

As we consider how crime in colonial Nigeria affected property, we find that the main place of theft was, logically, the commercial center of the city. In Lagos, it was then Lagos Island, the commercial center, and the port of Apapa. In Ibadan, it was Gbagi, the new commercial area set up by the British at the beginning of the twentieth century. The activities of

the Jaguda and Boma boys generally concentrated on public spaces in the city center such as markets, train stations, motor parks, and market streets. In Ibadan, the main places of action were in Ogumpa Motor Park, in the central train station, and in the main commercial areas in the center of Gabgi: Amurigun and Lebanon Streets.⁷³ In Lagos, the activities reported by the press indicated similar problems in the commercial areas of Lagos Island. Problem areas include motor parks and bus stops such as Ebute Ero Motor Park and Tom Jones Memorial bus stop, main markets such as old Ereko market and Ita Faji market, and some trading streets like Agarawu Street, Ereko Street, Luther Street, and Vincent Street.⁷⁴ Of course, the demolition of one place did not significantly affect the affairs of the delinquents.

The meat stalls at the old Ereko Market have been for a long time the rendez-vous of a gang of pickpockets and hooligans who make it their special business to molest and victimize innocent passers-by particularly women and children. Even now that the stalls have been demolished, the menace continues.⁷⁵

The following year, the Boma boys of the same market spilt into the neighborhood streets of the former market. These boys generally converged in the area for their daily work but we know little of their origin and residence. Simon Heap states that most of them in Ibadan came from Ekoado, a new settlement set up at the beginning of the century by migrants coming from Lagos, whereas the headquarters of hooligans in Lagos was, according to the *Nigerian Daily Times* in 1947, at Mushim on the mainland and Ajegunle at Apapa.⁷⁶ More information should be collected on this issue.

Actually a historical approach to determine the locations of crime and places of residence of thieves is not easy to undertake, because administrative reports as well as newspapers are generally elusive or silent on the story of thieves. Judicial sources are probably more reliable because of the details of trial procedure. However, a comprehensive examination of judicial records is another problem of concern because of the large number of cases brought before courts, but an exhaustive approach can be done on one specific area. Basing our search on judicial sources from the Supreme Court of Ikeja district in the colony of Lagos, we can look at the profile of the main crimes committed on the northern outskirts of Lagos. Cases brought before this court constitute a small but important part of criminal cases brought before all the courts in Lagos.⁷⁷

Ikeja district was formed in 1932 after separating from the former Lagos division of the Colony. It was a peri-urban area, composed mainly of rural migrants, that was growing quickly. In 1932–33 the estimated area was about four or five hundred square miles and the population of the district around 60,000 to 80,000 people.⁷⁸ The first landlords of the district appear to be the Aworris. During the second half of the nineteenth century many Yoruba, Ijehas, Ekiti, Egba, Ilorin, and Ebado arrived mainly as fugitives and escaped slaves during the “Yoruba wars”; they obtained land first by gift, but as the demand rose, later by rent or purchase from the Aworri landowners. The defeat of the former chiefs in 1842 by the Egba and the successive litigation and change of chiefs simultaneously deprived the heads of villages of all forms of authority. The system of engaging men on a monthly rate of pay within a yearly contract started at the beginning of the century and attracted into the district large numbers of laborers from all parts of Nigeria and Dahomey. Most of the people were then involved in farming (kola, cassava, cocoa, and corn), and almost all farmers in the north of the district were members of the Agege Planters’ Union, the main association for land and other civil disputes. Simultaneously, some settlements grew up around the main train stations of Iddo, Mushin, and Yaba in the Lagos municipal area, and Oshodi, Ikeja, Agege, and Iju in Ikeja district.

Agege was the main market and the main town within the district, with about 6,000 to 10,000 inhabitants by 1935. The town owed its size to the railway station and to its situation in the center of a large kola and cocoa producing area. Imports of kola nuts from the Yoruba coast became important in the 1880s, and progressively the Lagos-Kano railway replaced the old route between the Ashanti kingdoms and the Sokoto Caliphate. This shift was completed in the 1920s after the railway reached Kano in 1911.⁷⁹ Agege, which was initially a collection of farm huts, grew into a town after World War I when Hausa traders bought some building plots from their hosts. A majority of the Hausa of the district were concentrated in this new settlement.⁸⁰ The 1935 intelligence report of the Ikeja district acknowledged their rising importance:

During 1933 more than 50% of the kola consumed in Nigeria passed through the Agege Railway goods sheds. The population is approximately 60% Hausas engaged in kola and cattle trading, 35% Yorubas trading and farming and 5% miscellaneous from all parts of Nigeria.⁸¹

The economic crisis of the 1930s changed the precarious economic landscape of the district. Farmers of the northern half of the district who

planted the whole of their land with kola when the price was high now found it difficult to make ends meet.⁸² Between 1927 and 1934, salaries of the laborers were reduced to a third of what they had been, and the former yearly allowance was no longer given by the farmers to the laborers. Most of them who could not go back home returned to the former system of piecework and to occasional work. The Agege Planters' Union lost almost all its influence because of the inability of its members to pay the monthly dues. No legitimate institutions were able to handle the disputes over land, and coherent political organization was lacking, "Yorubas and Hausas being unable to agree on any point."⁸³ Still, because of the market, Agege remained the commercial center of Ikeja district and the main place for money transaction.

Petty and serious offences increased in this environment. In the early 1930s, Ikeja district acquired a negative image in the press and with the police. According to Tamuno, the most troublesome areas during the 1930s were Warri and Owerri provinces in eastern Nigeria and the Ikeja district near Lagos.⁸⁴ Armed gangs, carefully disguised and belonging to the secret organization known as the *Egbe Enumenu*, raided homes and committed murder or rape. Serious armed robberies occurred every year between 1930 and 1934.⁸⁵ According to the *Nigerian Daily Times*, this wave of violent crime was coming from villages and farmsteads around Ikeja, which were the rendezvous points of a certain class of criminals chased out of the Colony after repeated convictions.⁸⁶ The detective unit of the Nigeria Police Force succeeded in infiltrating armed robber gangs and arrested, tried, and punished its leaders in 1934.⁸⁷ A similar wave of burglaries was reported in a larger area comprising Yaba and Ikeja district during the Second World War on a yearly basis both by the press and the district officer.⁸⁸

The press generally reported the most exceptional burglaries, but the main type of burglary in the district in the 1930s was not intricately planned and generally involved one or two people with a very simple strategy.⁸⁹ People forced the door to enter the house during the night and tried to escape, generally with clothes, before being caught by the residents. Most of the time burglars were in possession of criminal charms (*juju*) reputed to possess the power to protect them. Two such charms were generally used: the most common one to prevent people from waking up during the night; the other to prevent burglars from being arrested. Both of them were declared illegal. In the 1930s in Ikeja district, no fewer than forty offenders were brought to court because of illegal possession of criminal charms, a fact that reveals the power attributed to these criminal

charms among colonial officers and judges. Eventually, the perception of the efficiency of criminal charms by burglars led the authorities to neglect more elaborate organizations.

Even such simple burglaries brought before the Ikeja court were not common; they amounted to between one and five a year. If we set aside traffic offences, the main offence was theft, and most of the time the thieves were not professional. They were laborers, petty traders, artisans, and even clerks who turned first to petty pilfering, then to recurrent thefts, and sometimes to burglaries. Most of them became occasional thieves because of poverty and "no visible means of support." Agege was not the only place in the district where theft occurred. Other settlements such as Ohodi, Ikeja, and Iju Junction were in a similar position. The most common cases were thefts of kola nuts or fowl. Most of the cases represented a way to survive more than a way to accumulate wealth: very often they were directed toward all the products available at the market, either food items (cassava, cocoa, potatoes, palm wine, lettuce, yams) or imported items (corrugated iron sheets, padlock, hoe, machetes, beer, cigarettes, petrol, plates, wrappers), most of them in very small quantities.

After stealing, the other main offences in the district were civil disturbances and assault and injury. Marketplaces and streets were common places of fighting. Most of the fights revolved around a problem of money: tax collectors injured by traders, passengers by drivers, market women by rogues, and Hausa by Yoruba for petty offences. The 1930s were marked by everyday violence because petty conflicts led to public fighting instead of being resolved by local institutions. The everyday violence seems to be largely due to the economic and political environment of Ikeja district. The judicial sources in Ibadan do not show similar occurrences of assault in public streets. A fierce competition to survive in an economically depressed environment and the lack of indigenous institutions to resolve conflicts were the main causes of these conflicts.

Eventually, the district concentrated on a high proportion of crimes against property, such as theft and burglary, as well as a few cases of serious offences against persons, such as murder, armed burglary, armed robbery, and rape. The district can be considered both a place of serious crime and a place of residence of petty offenders. In Ibadan, Ekotado shows some similarities with Ikeja district. The ward was formed at the beginning of the century by traders and migrants from Lagos who rented their houses from local landlords. According to Simon Heap, the neighborhood became the main place of residence of burglars and pickpockets in Ibadan.⁹⁰

Interestingly, these two specific areas combined similar socio-economic features: they were recent settlements inhabited by migrants from various origins with low land control and a higher level of tenants. As the value of urban land was increasing in colonial Africa, the pre-colonial land pattern based, most of the time, on lineage and family, changed slowly to a new land pattern based on renting.⁹¹ This process occurred more rapidly in new urban settlements. In Ekotedo, petitions written by citizens of the area complained that most of the houses had “no owners living in them, but only rent out to all sort and kind of thieves and pickpockets.”⁹² In Agege, a large proportion of the land had been sold to immigrants beginning in the nineteenth century. With renting, control over tenants and social control over the ward tended to diminish. Moreover, both places were closed to the main places of exchange (the train stations, motor parks, and markets) and consequently welcomed a large population of unknown travelers, migrants, and vagabonds who were passing through the area.

However, the determining factor that changed such areas into criminal zones was poverty. Recent migrants could not rely on familial solidarity and could not return home because of a lack of funds. Neighborhood assistance was very low because of the heterogeneous composition of the area and the increasing level of individualism, especially in the case of Ikeja district. For most of the petty offenders, there was little choice but to commit petty offences between occasional jobs. The lack of institutions of native authority, the lack of any other form of social organization, and the lack of indigenous and colonial police forces were, along with poverty, the main reasons why crime expanded in these areas.

Crime Control in Ibadan and Lagos

The police, justice, and prison departments were the colonial agencies responsible for maintaining law and order in Africa. Their main task, however, was not to focus on crime prevention, and their deficiency in this area led to the first forms of privatization of crime control.

The State Agencies: Police, Justice, and Prisons

It is well known that the British administration kept, whenever possible, a Native Authority (NA) to act as a police force over the people: this was the case in southwestern and northern Nigeria. Pre-colonial police were

very useful to the British administration, as they did not otherwise have the means to control the natives. In 1916 and 1924, the British reinforced the power of the police of Yoruba chiefs (*Olopa*) in Ibadan and in most of the former Yoruba city-states.⁹³ They were responsible for the maintenance of order, the prevention and detection of crimes, and for general police control throughout the town except in the European trading center, an area that was under the watch of the Nigeria Police. In Lagos, the Nigeria Police started as a small detachment of civil policemen in 1895, distinct from the Constabulary; it finally gave birth to the Southern Nigeria Police in 1906.⁹⁴ This force was amalgamated with the Northern Police Force in 1930 to form the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). This force was paid, trained, and managed by the British, whereas the NA Police was funded by the NA budget and managed by a local chief (the *Olopa Oba* in Ibadan) who received orders from the district officer. This double policing system was a way for the British to save money. Whereas only 95 policemen were on duty in the Oyo and Ondo divisions in 1930, 687 policemen and constables were necessary for the Colony.⁹⁵ Urban dwellers from Lagos relied almost exclusively on the NPF while the Ibadan people usually dealt with the *Olopa*.

One of the first tasks of the NPF was to protect European interests. Consequently, an important police barrack was first built within the European Reservation of Ikoyi in Lagos and another one in Apapa to protect property at the port. Police stations were created in new and growing urban settlements urbanization: the barracks of Ebutte Meta were completed in 1929 following the recent layout of the town, and a temporary station was set up in Ikeja between 1936 and 1938. Hence, the police were not paying attention to metropolitan Lagos as a whole: there were three hundred rank and file police used for Lagos division but only fifteen constables used for Ikeja district at the end of the 1930s.

Colonial police were involved in many other tasks beside crime investigation and crime prevention, including maintaining law and order, enforcing compulsory labor, developing an intelligence service, fighting political nationalism, assuming railway and border surveillance as well as fire services, controlling the movements of transport and strangers, and reporting any unhygienic behavior.⁹⁶ A small detective department within the Lagos Police was set up in 1896; it then became the Crime Investigation Department (CID), which centralized all criminal records after 1937.⁹⁷ This branch was in charge of immigration duties in the port of Lagos and criminal investigation in all Nigeria after the 1930s. A new branch of the NPF, the Lagos Harbour Police, was also established in

1942, with the special duty of port security, an area menaced during the 1940s “by the bad characters who pester and annoy sailors, merchant seamen and visitors.”⁹⁸ However, because of the increasing number of criminal cases in all the Southern Provinces during the 1930s and the 1940s, the CID could not treat all the serious cases brought before them. The relative efficiency of the unit reported by Tamuno was actually limited by the strength of the staff.

Moreover, the function of the colonial prison system was not to reform delinquents but to control and punish people opposed to colonial rule and provide a labour force for extra-mural works.⁹⁹ Alexander Patterson, Commissioner of Prisons for England and Wales, who visited the Nigerian prisons in 1943, wrote a critical report on the useless effects of the sentences and on the lack of reform provided by the prisons in Nigeria. He stated that most of the offenders who stayed in prison received short sentences, “which have no deterrent effect and by their brevity afford no opportunity for training.”¹⁰⁰ He gave some examples of young adults convicted ten or twenty times before receiving their first long sentence. Moreover, first offenders were not separated from old ones and youth were not adequately separated from adults while in custody. For juvenile offenders, in 1929 the government established the Industrial Home for boys in Yaba, Lagos, and in 1934 the Reformatory School in Enugu, but the number of places was limited to fifty. It was only in 1943 that a reformatory¹⁰¹ for juvenile offenders was built in Lagos.¹⁰² Hence, most of the time, young offenders were discharged: “A certain number are admonished and sent away, a very large number are beaten and returned to their very environment that caused their offence, a very few indeed are sent to a training school.”¹⁰³ Nigerian prisons looked like many other colonial prisons whose main aim was not to reform people. As in many other colonies, the lack of strict segregation between first offenders and old offenders and between youth and adults has probably trained more criminals than resolved the crime issue.¹⁰⁴

Is it important to understand that a combination of inadequate colonial policies led to the development of a crime milieu. The absence of policy toward the poor, the destitute, and the youth, the limited role of the police in fighting crime and delinquency, the inadequate sentences of the justice system, and the inadequate use of the prisons are important factors that contributed to the rise of delinquency and banditry in Nigeria. The only policy proposed to fight crime by the various administrations was limited to repatriation of undesirables. It was invariably suggested by various administrations beginning in the 1920s. In 1933, an ordinance

gave the power to the Native Authority to expel from their provinces any person with no visible means of support.”¹⁰⁵ Such policy, however, was not easy to implement. Many unemployed migrants in Lagos wanted to return to their homes, but instances of repatriation were actually limited to a few cases in the 1930s. No budget allocation was actually scheduled to implement any policy for the destitute and unemployed. Moreover, it was necessary to identify relatives and then convince them to pay the journey back to the homes of the destitute. The main problem of the British administration was to fight crime without increasing expenditures, especially in a period of budget restriction. Because the colonial agencies were not able to provide adequate security, they finally allowed citizens to seek their own protection.

The Privatization of Crime Control

Hunters from the country were often used as night guards in many Yoruba cities at the end of the nineteenth century before being forbidden by the British Administration. By 1903, the District Officer suppressed them in Ibadan, where they were considered too dangerous, and replaced them with a civil police force.¹⁰⁶ But the use of private security was necessary once local and Nigerian police could not assume their duties. They were first introduced in the area where the Nigeria Police and the Native Authority Police were absent, for instance on the border area between Dahomey and Nigeria, to fight armed smugglers as early as the 1920s, and in Ikeja district in the early 1930s.¹⁰⁷ In 1940, the *Nigerian Daily Times* asserted that “an organisation of armed night guards composed of native hunters has been adopted in most of the Yoruba towns for many years . . . but the system . . . is haphazard and totally unorganised.”¹⁰⁸ Obviously, it is during the Second World War that the institution of the night guard system was reintroduced in most southwestern cities. The NPF and NA Police members were then enrolled in military service and had additional work such as supervision of permits and security matters (supervision of internment camps, ships, and aerodromes).¹⁰⁹ At the end of the 1930s and during the war many petitions reached the police asking for night patrols. After violent burglaries in Ibadan in 1940–41, residents of several areas constituted themselves as “anti-thieves units.”¹¹⁰ After some hesitation, the District Officer eventually authorized the Olubadan in January 1942 to set up a hunter guard system.¹¹¹ Hunters were recruited from the countryside, formed into groups by areas under the supervision of local chiefs, trained by constables, and used for night patrol duties.

However, as night guards were paid by neighborhood residents, some of them were abandoned as soon as a level of security returned to the neighborhood. Moreover, each ward reacted differently to security problems. Mokola, a peri-urban quarter composed of migrants from various origins, adopted a 10:30 P.M. curfew in April 1941, and imposed guidelines for the admittance of strangers and on building new houses in the quarter.¹¹² In the inner city, the Council suggested that a recommendation be given to all chiefs and compound heads by a bell-ringer to bring back the night guard system in July 1942. Inadequacies of these systems, including the lack of training for the hunters and the lack of communication between the police and the institutions, have been pointed out by colonial officers and journalists. Moreover, cases of jungle justice and victimization of innocent passers-by occurred most commonly during the war.

The Social Welfare Service: A New Agency to Fight Crime?

In the 1930s, the Colonial Office started to worry about the possible consequences of poverty in the colonies. Riots in the West Indies, where destitution was widespread, led to the creation of a Social Services Department within the Colonial Office in 1939.¹¹³ The appointment of a Committee on Young Offenders in 1940 coincided with the arrival of European troops in West African coastal cities and the “discovery” of juvenile delinquency. After a few months of investigations of the vagrant boys in Lagos at the end of 1941, Donald Faulkner became the first Social Welfare Officer appointed in the British Empire in 1942.¹¹⁴ All his work took place in Lagos during the war. He quickly set up a hostel for young vagrants and delinquents known as the Green Triangle Hostel and a hostel to welcome destitute girls and juvenile prostitutes. He then introduced in 1943 a juvenile court, a remand home, and a probation service to rehabilitate delinquents and develop social activities through youth clubs. The social welfare service organized in Lagos was devoted almost entirely to juvenile delinquency. According to Alexander Patterson, who summarized the main tasks: “Social welfare in Lagos will take the field against poverty, overcrowding and cruelty. It will help to operate the new Ordinance dealing with Juvenile and Young persons. It will plead for the abolition of child hawkers.”¹¹⁵

Beyond the philanthropic considerations, it must be remembered that the main objective of the Social Welfare Service was actually to reduce crime in Lagos. Most of the reports emanating from the service mentioned the need to shield juvenile delinquents from becoming true criminals. The

service must “go forward to combat juvenile crime and waywardness in all its manifestations” for “prevention of crime means attacking it at its source,” Faulkner wrote in 1943.¹¹⁶ Some financial considerations were also underlined by Patterson. On the one hand, he noticed that the Green Triangle Hostel without any grant from the government “renders valuable social services in the prevention of crime”; on the other hand, he noticed in a report on crime in Nigeria in 1944 that “it is better for the boy and far economical for the Government, to rescue the youngster from a condition and environment that is dragging him over to the wrong side of the law, than to wait till a series of petty thefts involves the considerable expense of keeping him in a training school for three years.”¹¹⁷ He concluded that the new social welfare service in Lagos was the appropriate structure to prevent juvenile delinquency in Nigeria.

The main ordinance that concentrated on the fight against juvenile delinquency was the 1943 Child and Youth Person’s Ordinance adapted from the United Kingdom’s legislation proposed by Faulkner to the Legislative Council and implemented only in 1946 in the Lagos colony. On the one hand, the ordinance wanted to bring a more adequate justice for youth (juvenile courts and probation officers) and to protect youth from hardened criminals (custody for youth, remand home, and segregation in prisons). On the other hand, the ordinance forbade street trading and hawking under the age of sixteen for girls because it was considered by most European reformers as a path towards juvenile prostitution and delinquency. The ordinance missed the main target, i.e., the struggle against organized crime and prostitution. It actually criminalized a trade practice that had a long tradition in Nigerian history. In 1946, of 923 juveniles convicted by the Juvenile Court of Lagos, 668 were found guilty of street hawking.¹¹⁸ This provoked a hostile reaction in Lagos because it deprived many poor families from acquiring additional revenue.

If the 1940s constitutes the main decade for the growing awareness of juvenile delinquency in Nigeria, it remains that the solutions provided by the social welfare service could not really solve the problem. Of course, delinquent youth were now considered as a specific group within the crime landscape. A better separation from criminal adults, a juvenile court, and the appointment of probation officers probably reduced the risk for some juveniles of becoming criminals. However, the efforts were limited to Lagos for almost ten years, and within the social welfare services the solution remained the same: repatriation of the youth to their family and generally to the countryside. Little effort was made to keep them in the countryside, and there was little chance for the youth unless they migrated

to the cities; this was particularly true after the Second World War. The proposal to form a specific department within the CID to maintain vigilance and prosecution of delinquent youth was implemented in 1946, but this criminalized youth street trading practices, whereas the main energies of the colonial police were focused on intelligence collection against the enemies of colonialism.¹¹⁹ This does not mean that juvenile delinquency was not an obsession for the welfare service during the late colonial period but intelligence service became, in the meantime, a much more powerful service, indicating that the priority of the police was either to maintain colonial power as long as possible or to organize an orderly retreat.¹²⁰

Conclusion

Crime like poverty has been a cumulative phenomenon in African cities. If thieves, burglars, and delinquents existed before the 1930s, the expansion of poverty between 1929 and 1945 led to the development of more serious criminal activities. The multiplication of offenses against property was not the only consequence of the changing crime landscape. The rise of organized criminal networks was probably more significant, even if these networks were only beginning to grow. On the one hand, the number of professional burglars, smugglers, and robbers grew with the expansion in the number of petty offenders, especially the young ones. On the other hand, they organized new activities such as child exploitation for criminal activities, offenses against the person, and the distribution of stolen property at a regional level. The colonial police could not deal with such networks because their first task was not to prevent or investigate crime and because police cooperation between Nigeria and the French colonies, or between the NPF and the NA police, was either nonexistent or limited to a few areas.

The postwar period did not really change the problem. With the development of intense political activities, the priority of the police was to fight nationalism and reinforce intelligence services rather than pursue criminal investigation.¹²¹ Criminal networks began to grow in connection with political parties which started to use Boma and Jaguda boys as political touts during the 1950 and the 1960 electoral campaigns.¹²² It is worthy of note that armed robbers, whose number increased dramatically after the Civil War, used the same former networks to sell the stolen property. The bicycles of the 1930s have been replaced by cars and simple stealing by armed robberies after the 1970s.¹²³

The inefficiencies of the state agencies led to the development of various forms of privatized crime control. The night guard system was condemned in 1950s but was still alive in the 1960s. It reappeared vigorously in the form of vigilante groups during the 1980s, when security became an everyday preoccupation of life for urban dwellers. It is important to note, however, that crime was not widespread throughout the city but was concentrated in the commercial areas, in the areas which were lacking political and administrative control, and social institutions and organizations.

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13

THE FLUCTUATING FORTUNES OF ANGLOPHONE CAMEROON TOWNS

THE CASE OF VICTORIA, 1858–1982

Thomas Ngomba Ekali

Introduction

European contact with Africa led to the development and evolution of African urban spaces. Even before the establishment of formal European control, the heterogeneous and cosmopolitan complexes that characterized port cities and other urban centers in Europe and the Americas were already evident in Africa. The institution of colonial administrative, political, economic, and social policies and structures hastened the pace of urbanization and, in the process, profoundly altered the lifestyles of those inhabiting the urban milieu and its environs.

The recent establishment of a Ministry of Urban Affairs in Cameroon represents official recognition of the growing influence of the urban formation on Cameroonian life. Yet, there remains a void in the historical research on the constantly changing urban environment in the country. This paper seeks to begin the process of filling this lacuna by focusing on the growth of the urban center of Victoria (now Limbe), one of Cameroon's oldest continually inhabited cities.

Indeed, Victoria's position is unique in several ways. Unlike other major towns, Victoria was founded as a religious rather than a trading or commercial center. Consequently, Victoria came to play a significant role in the spread of Christianity in Anglophone Cameroon.¹ Its religious

underpinnings notwithstanding, Victoria rapidly became the commercial hub and economic nerve center of Anglophone Cameroon, whether it was under German, English, or French rule.²

The aim of this paper, therefore, is to examine the major aspects that characterized Victoria's urban spaces during the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods. Consequently, the objectives are twofold: to trace the origin and evolution of Victoria during the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras, and to analyze the social and economic mutations in Victoria during the different periods.

The Pre-Colonial Era: The Origin and Evolution of Victoria

The emergence of the settlement at Victoria confirms Chiabi's assertion that European influence was behind the creation of towns and cities in Cameroon.³ In this connection, Victoria originated as a religious haven for protestant missionaries driven from the island of Fernando Po following the suppression of Protestantism on that island by the Spaniards in the 1840s. Hard pressed to find a place of refuge for his companions, Alfred Saker, a missionary with the London Baptist Missionary Society, bought from King William of Bimbia on August 23, 1858, a territory which later came to be known as Victoria.⁴ The first party of settlers were all missionaries and included Joseph Wilson and son Joseph Wilson Junior, Stephen Burnley, Henry Scott, Daniel Moore, and Hannah Michael.⁵ Thus, Victoria emerged principally because of religious necessity rather than commercial imperatives. In other words, missionary work rather than trade was the impetus for the founding of Victoria.⁶

This helps to explain why, immediately after its foundation, Victoria became a beehive of evangelistic activities involving several religious groups. The first and predominant of these religious groups was the London Baptist Missionary Society, which, through Saker's initiative, became the first religious congregation in Victoria. Apart from its evangelistic work it was engaged in trading activities. The Basel Mission, the Roman Catholic Mission, and the North American Baptist Mission later replaced it.⁷

In addition to evangelization, commerce and trade also became important activities in Victoria. In fact, as far back as the days of Alfred Saker, the German firm of Woermann had established a branch in Victoria with Samuel Brew as its local representative. In 1869 John Holt, a British

trading firm, together with the Amba Bay Trading Company also set up headquarters in Victoria.⁸ The presence of these firms could partly be explained from the entrepreneurial spirit of the non-African, particularly Jamaican, immigrants who belonged to the first group of settlers in Victoria. These people adopted and implemented their Caribbean attitude of land ownership in Victoria by owning land on a large scale, on which cocoa plantations were set up.⁹ Consequently, much of the trade between these European firms and non-Cameroonian Africans was done by these people, which explains why they were able to raise enough money to educate their children.

By 1862, when Saker opened a school in Victoria, the settlement's status as a religious, commercial, and educational center had been established. This school, which was run first by an Englishman, Reverend Diboll, and then by a Jamaican, Francis Pinnock, had a strong religious bias. For instance, knowledge of the Bible was a prerequisite to obtaining baptism. Thus, evangelization went hand in hand with the spread of literacy among the indigenous African population. The aims of the missionaries could be discerned from the words of the Rev. Quintin Thomson, who, as head of the Bonjongo school, hoped to convert the natives to Christianity, teach them to read the Bible, and so increase their level of literacy.¹⁰ School attendance was made compulsory. In view of the above it was no surprise that by 1862, the Victoria school had an enrollment of sixty pupils. This number had reached the 210 mark by 1881, among who were some indigenous Africans, notably Peter Mokoko, David Nanjia Carr, and Samuel Eyum Sama.¹¹

We can therefore conclude that religious, economic, and educational factors were important components in the foundation and evolution of Victoria. Furthermore, the establishment of a settlement necessitated the maintenance of law and order. Consequently, once the settlement took roots, a constitution was drawn up establishing a formal government for it. The constitution created two instruments of power, a town council and a court, while the resident missionary acted as governor. Both Europeans and coloreds (people of mixed blood) took turns in running the court.¹² In addition to its social status; Victoria had now been saddled with the additional responsibilities of an administrative and political center.

By the mid-nineteenth century therefore, the presence of these religious, trading, political, and educational concerns acted as pull factors for immigrants from neighboring villages. It also accounted for the arrival of European missionaries and traders in company of non-Cameroonian Africans to Victoria such that by 1900, African immigrants in Victoria

included Sierra Leoneans, Liberians, Dahomeyans, Togolese, and Nigerians.¹³ The presence of Europeans, black Jamaicans, and non-Cameroonian Africans, reinforced the heterogeneous and cosmopolitan character of Victoria. These factors, combined with commerce and trade, politics, and religion, produced a Creole-type and an aristocratic class in Victoria.¹⁴

This class of people were drawn from those who had accumulated wealth from trade with the Germans, those who worked at the court of justice¹⁵ and those who sat in the council that governed Victoria. Many in these privileged classes not only refused to engage in services which were considered menial, but looked down on the indigenous inhabitants. For instance, Shirley Ardener cites the case of a Bakwerian who was appointed to perform the duties of a constable because these aristocrats, who were essentially from the non-Cameroonian immigrant class, “could not condescend to be . . . common servant[s].”¹⁶

Thus, from its early years, Victoria developed elements of class stratification based on occupation. The result was friction between the various social classes, for Nanyoa, the Bakweri constable, considered his job an ideal opportunity for him to vent his wrath on the children of the proud aristocrats who stayed away from school. Ardener states that Nanyoa chose only “the most public way to reach the school, [leading] his prisoner by the ear, and the more the boy squealed, . . . the greater was [Nanyoa’s] delight.” Indeed, Nanyoa’s happiest moments were when “he had to fetch a child of one of the ‘Gentlemen of the town.’”¹⁷

Hence, Victoria’s multiple status had produced an elite class, a development that came largely as a result of contact with Europeans. The population also gradually became heterogeneous as an increasing number of people migrated into town to avail themselves of the opportunities and facilities present there. The heterogeneous character of Victoria by the second half of the nineteenth century, and the extent of its exposure to westernization is captured in the following observation by Thomas Lewis, a Baptist missionary, who visited Cameroon on the eve of German colonization:

I really had had the impression that on my arrival in Africa wild savages with bows and arrows might meet me. Instead . . . there was a civilized company of men and women in all their Sunday best waiting for us on the beach. Many of the women wore silk dresses, and displayed well-starched petticoats over dark bare feet. Some had European hats, but the majority covered their heads with the dexterously folded silk handkerchiefs well known among the aristocracy of the West Coast.¹⁸

Lewis's surprise at the attitude and dress patterns of the people of Victoria leaves no doubt as to the cultural sophistication and transformation which is characteristic of urban centers and which had come to mark Victoria's urban space even before colonization. It also confirms the influence of two cultures on Victoria's cultural landscape, the one Western European, and the other Caribbean, both of which were evident in the dress patterns of the inhabitants of the settlement.

Religion, education, administration, and politics, together with the emergence of an elite class, inevitably affected the architectural character of the settlement. The presence of the aristocrats is reflected in their construction of well-built and spacious homes in the settlement, while the dominant structures, which included the Baptist Church (opened in 1877), Brookmount (residence of the missionary who acted as governor for the colony), and the Ambas Bay House, reflected the religious bias of the settlement. The new architectural character of Victoria implied that the settlement benefited from the introduction of the artisan skills of carpenters, goldsmiths, and blacksmiths. Such skills were employed in constructing private and public buildings, thereby introducing inherited models in architecture into Victoria. Agbor notes, for instance, that these Creole aristocrats copied the architectural styles of the buildings in Jamaica, thereby influencing Victoria's architecture.¹⁹ These structures, together with the John Holt firm and the Woermann factory, also reflected the increasing commercial role Victoria was about to undertake. But the cultural sophistication of Victoria was hastened by the opening of the German plantations and the subsequent role played by the settlement as an educational, administrative, political, and commercial centre.

The German Colonial Era

After Cameroon was acquired by the Germans in July 1884, Victoria became an embarrassment to the German authorities. Since it was a missionary settlement of the Baptist missionaries, the German authorities considered it a focus of unrest against the new government. One of the first steps they took, therefore, was to establish a foothold in Victoria by taking possession of it. Subsequent negotiations between the German government and the Baptist Missionary Society led to the German Basel Mission purchasing mission land and buildings at a cost of 2750 pounds.²⁰ Victoria was officially transferred from England to Germany on 31 January 1887.²¹

The acquisition of Victoria by the Germans introduced the problem of land in that settlement. This was essentially because the need to overcome the difficulties encountered in obtaining goods from the interior through trade led to the opening of the first plantations in the Victoria area. Some of these plantations included the Westafrikanische Pflanzungsgesellschaft Victoria (WAPV), which was created in 1897, with its main products being cocoa and rubber; the Berlin West Africa Plantation Company, Bibundi, founded in 1897, with cocoa, rubber, and oil palms as its main products; the Moliwe Plantation Company, founded in 1899, with cocoa and rubber as its principal products; and the Bimbia Plantation Company, founded in 1906, with cocoa as its main crop.²²

The proliferation of German plantations in and around Victoria was made possible by the existence of indigenous small holders' schemes set up with the assistance of West Indians from Fernando Po. By 1900 the economic activity of the Victoria settlement was partly dominated by the growth and sale of cocoa.²³ The arrival of German merchants and the establishment of plantation companies encouraged cocoa growing, with the result that better prices, credit, and advice led to a boom in the cocoa business. Thus, by the beginning of the twentieth century, much of the land around Victoria had been subjected to plantation use. In this connection, land ownership became very profitable, and in addition the German colonial government purchased much of the land which was, hitherto, under mission use.²⁴ But the boom in the cocoa business rendered land ownership very profitable.

The establishment of plantations saw a flurry of activity in the Victoria port. This was because the plantations led to an increase in agricultural produce for export, and the growing demand for imported goods turned the Victoria waterfront into a beehive of economic activity. The economic importance of Victoria and the intensity of economic activities there could be judged from the economic opportunities offered by the plantations in that settlement. Plantations attracted many people to Victoria, thanks to the availability of jobs and the emergence of related services such as trading, fishing, farming, and tailoring to cater for the needs of plantation workers. Immigrant labor came from the Cameroonian hinterland as well as from Togo land. Plantation agriculture also contributed to the significant economic advancement of Victoria because it led to an increase in the settlement's economic activities, which was reflected in the decision to construct a pier on the waterfront and the building of the Bota port for handling the import and export trade of Victoria.²⁵ The importance of the economic factor in the evolution of Victoria's fortunes could

be determined from the introduction of the first form of direct tax in that town in 1900.²⁶ This tax was imposed as rent on Africans using government land. Thus, land and labor became important not only for the planters but for the colonial government and, more specifically, for the settlement's administration, as a source of raising capital.

The Status of Victoria under the Germans

While Victoria's status as a religious settlement was being gradually dwarfed by commerce and trade, its status as an administrative and political center was reinforced as it moved from an English to a German settlement. It housed not only the resident German administrator but also acted as the legal headquarters with an advisory council to assist the officer in charge of the district. In 1888 a post office was opened in Victoria, and ten years later, telephone communication was established between Victoria and Buea. From every indication, Victoria's function had moved from a purely religious settlement to an administrative-political settlement.

Its housing and communication infrastructure equally reflected the increasing German character of the city; the Basel Mission church was erected, depicting a change from the English Baptist Missionary Society to the German Missionary Society. Streets were given German names; for instance, the Soden Strasse and Soden-Brüche, and the Puttkamer Strasse,²⁷ all of them named after successive German governors. By the end of German rule in Cameroon, Victoria's communication infrastructure had been reinforced by the building of railway tracks by the Victoria plantation company in the economic and administratively busy part of the town. Although the main purpose of the railway system was to convey goods to the port, it also served as a means of public transportation. This area was the economic and administrative nerve center of the town and included the district office, the customs sheds, and the pier.²⁸

Evolution in Urban Space and Architectural Structure

The increasing economic importance of Victoria had an uneven effect on the evolution of the town's architectural landscape. Victoria's adoption of an administrative-political status required erecting new buildings, which inevitably meant introducing new structures and building materials in the city's architectural landscape. Hence, the new administrative structures were constructed mainly of stones, concrete, and steel bars, with asphalt or corrugated sheets. These buildings were found in the economic and administrative nerve center of the town, referred to as the Government Station.²⁹

This area included not only administrative buildings but also German and British commercial houses. To the west of Government Station was located the Basel Mission, the John Holt Trading Company, and two hospitals, one African and one European. This area together with that around the Botanic Gardens acted as residential quarters for Europeans, while descendants of the first inhabitants of Victoria and the indigenes were located between the coast and the cemetery.³⁰

The second aspect that marked Victoria's urban space was the situation of the indigenous African population. While European residences were built mainly of concrete, those of the indigenous Africans were made of thatch, and were located outside the European residential areas.³¹ This created a phenomenon which was typical of colonial towns, that of separate European and African residential areas. It also reflected the economic status of the town's inhabitants, for while Europeans working for the colonial administration and some descendants of the first settlers lodged in the villas and residences built of concrete in the Botanic Gardens and Government Station, indigenous Africans, many of whom worked in nearby plantations and as jobbers in the port, lived in the thatch houses. However, the evolution of the town's architectural landscape reflected in the introduction of new structures and building materials in both the Government Station and Botanic Gardens was evidence of the increasing sophistication of the town.

But the existence of these traditional African dwellings alongside European-style structures was disliked by the colonial administration for two reasons: first because traditional African dwellings "spoil the aesthetic beauty" of the town; and second, because they constituted a health and fire hazard.³² Consequently, in 1911, the German colonial authorities introduced new building rules with a number of objectives in mind. The first objective was to preserve the administrative character of Victoria, which by implication meant preventing further encroachment on "European" land by Africans. This carried with it the desire, conscious or unconscious, to keep Victoria European. The second objective was to provide the indigenous population with adequate cultivable land, especially those who had lost land to the colonial administration.³³ A third and probable objective was to improve the aesthetic beauty of the town. Consequently, new building regulations introduced in 1911 prohibited the construction of thatch houses. The regulations further provided for the creation of a neighborhood for Africans, north of Government Station called "New Town."³⁴ These regulations resulted in the removal of indigenous Africans from areas supposedly reserved for Europeans and their

African, and non-Cameroonian collaborators, and their resettlement in new cites.

The existence of “New Town” as an African residential area enabled all those who were unable to construct houses of a permanent or semi-permanent nature in and around the Government station to take up residence there. Hence, Government Station became a predominantly European settled area. In fact, “New Town” not only increased the spatial area of Victoria Township, but also reinforced class distinction in the town’s settlement pattern. A British colonial administrator expressed this view when he pointed out that “New Town” came into being because the German colonial government needed the “best sites for public buildings or for the houses of [European officials].”³⁵

The result was that while Victoria proper came to consist predominantly of Europeans, descendants of the few old families, clerks, and other employees of government and commercial firms, “New Town” remained essentially a settlement for indigenous Africans. Furthermore, in an attempt to provide more land for indigenous farming in order to maintain a constant supply of food, three farms were created on the outskirts of Victoria’s built-up area: namely, Middle Farm, Limbe Farm, and Victoria Farm. By 1915, therefore, the pattern of spatial expansion had been established. However, the attempt by the colonial administration to split Victoria into residential quarters by race and by social and economic parameters, remained incomplete, for the British colonial administration found itself grappling with virtually the same problems.

The British Colonial Era

Victoria’s Status Redefined

When the British colonial authorities took formal control of the Cameroons in 1922, they had to grapple with a number of problems plaguing Victoria. Some of these problems included redefining the status of the town and the land, and the relationship between the authorities and the inhabitants of the settlement. Concerning the settlement’s new status, British colonial officials raised the question of whether or not Victoria was a township. This question was raised because in the view of E. J. Arnett, the British Senior Resident in the Cameroons Province, Victoria’s population was so small³⁶ that it could not host the seat of the Province’s Supreme Court. With such a small population it was evident, in the

Divisional Officer's view, that there would be few, if any, serious cases to be dealt with in the Supreme Court in Victoria. Hence, the creation of such a court in Victoria would serve no practical purpose and would be a waste of resources. It was also argued that Victoria was a very small town, and was likely to remain so because the sole industry it served was the plantation industry. What is more, each of the European plantation companies strove to be "self sufficient in trade and everything else."³⁷ The economic and social prospects for any expansion of the Victoria Township were consequently very slim.

Victoria could not be classified as a township. However, British colonial officials were using only population and occupational parameters to determine Victoria's status. The above criteria were not sufficient in determining Victoria's status for the settlement had developed all the characteristics of urban centers, as far back as the second half of the nineteenth century. It was probably on this note that the colonial government declared Victoria a second-class township in 1924, with its western boundary being the Botanical Gardens.³⁸ Four years later Victoria was declared a Supreme Court Area with an urban area which included "the port and lands occupied for business or residential purposes."³⁹ The above provisions included in the Victoria Township the neighborhoods of Bota and New Town, the indigenous farmlands behind Victoria town, and the cultivated portion of the Botanical Gardens (see map 1).

The decision to declare Victoria a township could be explained from two perspectives: first, the need to create a Supreme Court Area for the handling of cases involving non-indigenes; and second, to be able to obtain sufficient control of health and sanitation conditions in Victoria township.⁴⁰ The controversy surrounding the status of Victoria and the decision to expand the geographical boundaries of the town also raised the question of land, which was crucial to the fortunes of the town's inhabitants.

The Question of Land

The boom in economic activities that was reflected in the growth and sale of cocoa and the opening of German plantations before World War One in Victoria declined with the departure of the Germans. The boom had raised the value of land and so made land ownership profitable. However, the First World War and the economic depression of the 1930s changed this situation: the cost of labor increased, prices plummeted, profits fell drastically,⁴¹ and the scarcity of money increased economic hardship. One result was that land ownership became less profitable. Consequently,

cocoa farmers and landowners in Victoria began looking for alternative ways of improving their financial situation.

In April 1940, cocoa farmers in Victoria petitioned the colonial government, requesting that they be allowed to mortgage their farms and lands to European firms for a fixed amount of money and time. This, they thought, would ensure “better management of their [cocoa] industry.”⁴² But a close examination of the petition reveals that the intention of the indigenous farmers was to evade new regulations instituted a year earlier, which required them to reap and ferment cocoa beans before sale. They believed that these regulations would increase their cost of handling cocoa,⁴³ hence the need to evade them. In addition, the proviso that the transfer of land by indigenous Victorians was subject to permission from the colonial government showed the extent to which Victorians had been alienated from sovereignty over ancestral lands.

Indeed the question of land ownership and transfer had become a thorny issue in Victoria Township following the institution of British colonial rule. Although the indigenous land tenure system required that natural rights⁴⁴ were the only parameters to determine land ownership, both the Lands and Native Rights Ordinance, Cap 85 of 1915, and the Mandate Agreement had shoved this aside. While the Lands and Native Rights Ordinance provided that the ownership and transfer of land remained the prerogative of the colonial government, Article 5 of the Mandate Agreement stated that no transfer of land title could be effected without permission of the public authority.⁴⁵ Colonial legislation had thus replaced indigenous laws, and so was the concept of land ownership. This explains why the colonial administration rejected the petition from the farmers. This rejection also emanated from the administration’s worries that if the petition were granted, it might lead to a further alienation of native lands.⁴⁶

Ownership of land was now vested in the colonial administration and this allowed the latter to draw a distinction between lands on Freehold and Leasehold, Crown lands, and Plantation holdings.⁴⁷ This introduced a new element in Victoria’s urban space, that of the possession of a “certificate of occupancy” as guarantee for ownership of land. In the interwar years therefore, the colonial government was flooded with claims of land ownership from the residents of Victoria. But this also marked the beginning of a process of regulating the acquisition and ownership of land in Victoria, for not only were the applications of non-indigenes turned down, but the colonial government decided not to confer on any indigenous claimant a title that would enable him to transfer agricultural land to

any non-indigene.⁴⁸ In addition, the certificates of occupancy required that no agricultural lands be transferred to non-indigenes of the Cameroons. Such lands could be transferred only to an indigene of a different district of the Cameroons and only in accordance with Regulations 3, 4, and 5 of the Land and Native Rights Ordinance.⁴⁹

The colonial administration explained that its aim was to regulate land acquisition in Victoria township in order to protect both the indigenous population of Victoria and the descendants of the original inhabitants, both of whom had been deprived of sufficient land due to excessive seizure of land by plantation owners.⁵⁰ Another probable reason was that Victoria's urban land space was seriously limited by the presence of nearby plantations. Consequently, there was a need to manage the limited land area available in town. But the scarcity of land in Victoria Township was equally an indication of the economic and demographic expansion that Victoria was experiencing after the depression of the 1930s and early 1940s.

Demographic and Economic Expansion

The presence of the plantations and other economic ventures attracted many migrants to Victoria with the consequent rapid increase in the town's population.⁵¹ Chiabi has attributed this demographic and economic change to three factors: the presence of job opportunities in the plantations; improved communication facilities in terms of telephones, roads, and railways; and the presence of an expanding exchange economy.⁵² The presence of an expanding exchange economy was evident in the increasing number of banks in town. In addition to the existence of the Barclays Bank DCO in Victoria, the Bank of West Africa was opened in the early 1950s.

The increase in the number of financial houses confirmed Victoria's status as Anglophone Cameroons commercial hub. It reflected the revival of the economic fortunes of Victoria, for the settlement was home to major trading firms and commercial houses like the United Africa Company, R & W King, Printania, and John Holt and Company.⁵³ Perhaps this is why Dan N. Lantum referred to Victoria as the "shopping center" of Anglophone Cameroon. Actually this period saw the emergence of small business districts with large groceries, fashionable shops, and supermarkets. These were interspersed with working-class men's homes, single-family dwellings, and residential flats.⁵⁴

Finally, Victoria had also established a reputation as a shipping center, since it was one of only three ports in Anglophone Cameroon in the 1950s. Port facilities were needed to support expansion in trade while

the establishment of warehouses to handle trading interests of the various trading firms created job opportunities, which attracted migrants from the hinterland. Ngwafor rightly asserts that “Victoria’s economic strength flowed from owning a seaport” for not only did the port accommodate as many as eight ships in a single operation, but it provided job opportunities for young men.⁵⁵ The presence of the port facilities made Victoria the center of the territory’s international trade, for “almost all the cargo for the Southern Cameroons” was handled at the Victoria port.⁵⁶

Victoria was indeed a thriving settlement in the 1950s. Chiabi has noted that to the inhabitants of Victoria in the 1950s, they were living in a bubbling city; they saw themselves as distinct from those who lived in the nearby rural settlements, especially as “the character of their settlement was changing from rural to urban, traditional to modern, communal to specialized responsibilities and from particular tendencies to cosmopolitanism.”⁵⁷ The cosmopolitan character of Victoria could be attributed to the presence of a large number of foreign citizens who were engaged in services like catering, hotel businesses, and cinema theaters.⁵⁸ Ngwafor paints a vivid picture of Victoria’s fortunes at this time when he states that Victoria meant “a rewarding sea-port, employment, women, shopping centers, big banks [and] recreation.”⁵⁹ That was why inhabitants of the township considered themselves, and indeed were considered, as belonging to the highest rung of society’s social strata.⁶⁰

Social Effects of Economic Affluence

Amidst the economic affluence was the attendant problem of the deteriorating social conditions of the township. The increasing commercial character of the Government Station necessitated the creation of a new residential area in Bota, while Africans living on the fringes of Government Station and the European residential area were moved north of the German cemetery. But the deteriorating social conditions of Victoria Township were first evident in New Town, whose population was well over 3,000 inhabitants by the early 1950s. Other areas in Victoria also experienced considerable demographic growth, such as Mokeba farms whose population passed from 980 inhabitants in 1953 to a little above 3000 by the beginning of the 1960s.⁶¹

This juxtaposition of commercial buildings and residential homes in the European and African residential areas, created problems of high population density and sanitation. Victoria township developed into a slum, for not only was it “a collection of insanitary hovels, a breeding place for

pests, and a potential source of epidemics,” but most of the locally owned homes, many of the African staff quarters, and several of the European quarters were “unfit for human habitation.”⁶²

In an attempt to arrest the deplorable social conditions of the township, a meeting of the Cameroons Provincial Development Committee agreed to replan the town along the following lines: provide an open space with social amenities, regulate residential and shopping sites, provide adequate staff quarters for Europeans and Africans, provide adequate drainage and water supply, and rename streets.⁶³ The renaming of streets reflected in large measure the British character of the town. In addition, the decision to regulate residential and shopping sites meant that such sites could be acquired only through formal application to the colonial authorities that reserved the right to approve or reject any such applications. It also meant that the administering authorities could control the architectural evolution of Victoria Township. The desire to clear the town of slums and temporary buildings, and so improve its aesthetic beauty, was to an extent achieved. Finally the colonial administration reserved the prerogative to allocate building plots and hence could control the indiscriminate building of houses. But these problems were only the beginnings of a social and economic malaise that gripped Victoria in the wake of Anglophone Cameroon’s reunification with the Republic of Cameroon in October 1961.⁶⁴

The Post-Colonial Era

The Downward Trend Accentuated

From a broader perspective, the reunification and independence of the Southern Cameroons with the Republic of Cameroon in 1961 ushered in a period of general decline in the economic, social, and political fortunes of Anglophone towns. The reasons for this could be found in the abandonment of the Southern Cameroons Five-Year Development Plan at reunification, and the decision by the British colonial government to withdraw Commonwealth preference for Southern Cameroons bananas, a major sector of the Southern Cameroons economy, and the change of currency from the pound sterling to the franc CFA (Communauté Financière Africaine) in 1962. Victoria, being the economic and commercial center of Anglophone Cameroon, was one of the first urban centers to be affected by these changes.

One of the sectors hard hit by the effects of reunification was the port. By the late 1960s there was considerable decline of activity at the Victoria port. It is estimated that between 1969 and 1973, not only did the level of imports and exports at the Victoria ports drop considerably,⁶⁵ but during the same period, the level of imports and exports actually increased at the Douala port. One reason for the fall in business at the Victoria port could be found in the construction of the Tiko-Douala road, which led to a greater use of road transport. This, combined with the introduction and increased use of containers for lifting produce from Victoria to Douala, further lowered the cost of transporting produce between these towns. In addition, the extension of the railway line from Mbanga to Kumba reduced the price of transporting produce from Kumba to Douala. Producers therefore preferred the cheaper route and as such deprived Victoria of cargo intended for export.

The decline in economic activity had a ripple effect on the economy of that port-city because, for one thing, it led to a corresponding decline in the number of workers employed as job-boys at the port from 40,253 in 1971 to 18,757 in 1973. This created surplus labor which meant a reduction in wages from a total earning of 11,429,719 frs CFA to 6,516,470 frs CFA.⁶⁶ The recession had a negative effect on businesses in the town, and many of them pulled out.

In a social and economic report for the South West Province for the 1973/74 financial year, it was noted that Victoria alone lost ten business enterprises of the fifty-eight operating in West Cameroon to Douala because of "poor business."⁶⁷ The loss of businesses in Victoria can be accounted for not only by the opening of land and rail transport to Douala, but also by the domination of Victoria's economic life by non-Cameroonians, especially Nigerians. When Victoria's main shopping center was destroyed in November 1972, with the loss of 300 million francs CFA worth of property, about forty-five stalls belonging to Nigerian traders were destroyed.⁶⁸ This, together with the dwindling activity at the Victoria port, led to a mass exodus of Nigerians from Victoria. This raised the issue of unemployment and initiated a high crime wave in Victoria, with a corresponding decline in morals and ethics. The high crime wave in Victoria was aggravated by the activities of a gang of swindlers at the port, most of whom were Nigerians.⁶⁹

These activities indicated a downward trend in Victoria's social and economic fortunes. Ngwafor states, for instance, that in the early and mid-1970s, Victoria's fortunes were experiencing a "sharp decline,"⁷⁰ which was reflected in the increasing number of cases of fraudulent activities.

The sentencing of high-ranking administrative officers for corrupt practices in some of Victoria's economic establishments affected the progress of these establishments. After the sentencing of Isidore Frumbi⁷¹ for instance, the economic fortunes of the Victoria Zoo plummeted. Ngwafor's description of the Victoria Zoo in the wake of the Frumbi episode captures vividly the economic decline of that institution. According to him, "The Zoo which used to house about 300 visitors daily, became virtually empty even during weekends. As if unsatisfied with the presence of a new administrator, the lion, elephants, hyena, buffalo and the . . . chimpanzees . . . died in their sleep."⁷²

The implication here is not so much the fact that Frumbi was the lynch pin in the Zoo or the Botanic Gardens, far from that. But his decision to divert government funds partly meant for the Zoo and Botanic Gardens into a fictitious company deprived these establishments of much-needed funds for renovation and improvement. The result was that the Botanic Gardens turned into "a wild forest" harboring "armed robbers" and purse snatchers.⁷³ The decline and collapse of businesses produced economic hardship such that by the mid-1970s, when unemployment in the city stood at 7 percent, "a stage of almost irreparable decline" had been attained.⁷⁴ But the opening of an oil refinery at Cape Limbo near Victoria in 1981 brought a new era in the fortunes of Victoria. Economic activity was revived, immigration into town increased, and the town's communication infrastructure improved.

Conclusion

The social, political, and economic fortunes of Anglophone towns have been affected by several factors, among which are the different cultural influences that these towns have been subjected to. Hence, Victoria's case becomes peculiar, for not only was its cultural space affected, but its social, economic, and political fortunes were determined at one time or another by these different experiences. Its religious underpinnings notwithstanding, Victoria rapidly became an economic nerve center and maintained that status under different cultural influences. Thanks to this status, the town experienced a rapid demographic and architectural transformation.

The wide range of economic and social opportunities provided by Victoria not only turned that city into an El Dorado in Anglophone Cameroon, and much of its fortune remained in the hands of non-Victorians. This remained a major reason why Victoria, unlike Douala,

never became a major political hotbed in the critical years of Anglophone Cameroon nationalism. Perhaps this also explains why the economic and social evolution of Victoria could be seen more in terms of growth than development.

Notes

1 This refers to the English-speaking portion of Cameroon. This portion formed part of British colonial administration from 1916 to 1961. It officially adopted the appellation Southern Cameroons after the 1957 London Constitutional Conference, and after reunification with the Republic of Cameroon in 1961, became known as West Cameroon. With the end of the federal system of government in 1972, this portion was split into the North West and South West Provinces.

2 Other towns in Anglophone Cameroon that had an economic and political significance during the pre-colonial and post-colonial era include Tiko (a port city), Buea (the political capital of German Kamerun), Mamfe (an inland port), and Nkambe (a commercial center and a border town). See George Courade, *The Urban Development of Buea* (Yaounde: ORSTOM, 1970), for a detailed description of the fluctuating fortunes of Buea. Also see John Mformbat Agbor, "The Impact of Transborder Trade on the Economy of Mamfe Since 1961" (B.A. Long Essay: University of Buea, 2002).

3 Emmanuel M. Chiabi, *The Making of Modern Cameroon: A History of Substate Nationalism and Disparate Union, 1914–1961* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997), 190.

4 Shirley Ardener, *Eye-Witnesses to the Annexation of Cameroon, 1883–1887* (Buea: Government Press, 1967), 9, 23. Joseph Jackson Fuller, a Jamaican, was very instrumental in getting King William's consent to purchase the land where Victoria was founded. The actual date for the formal beginning of the settlement at Victoria seem to be surrounded by controversy. Writing in 1958 on the occasion of the commemoration of the centenary of Victoria, the organizing committee of the celebrations wrote that the settlement actually began on 9 and 10 August 1958. Ten years later Shirley Ardener, a British anthropologist, identified 23 August 1858, as the date when Saker bought from William of Bimbia the site from which Victoria grew. Ardener's date is adopted for this study.

5 Victoria Centenary Committee, *Victoria Southern Cameroons, 1858–1958* (Victoria: Basel Mission Depot, 1958), 19.

6 *Ibid.*, 27.

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid.*, 42.

9 Richard Agbor, Ayukndang Enoh, "Afro-Caribbean Repatriates and the Development of Victoria in Southern Cameroons, 1858–1961" (M.A. Thesis: University of Calabar, 1999), 107–8. When the British colonialists took over Victoria in 1916 and began the process of assessing the settlement's fortunes as far as land was concerned, it became evident that descendants of the original settlers owned much of the land in Victoria, in addition to huge tracts of land situated first on the outskirts of Victoria. See Re/a/1948/3, Victoria New Town, planning of, National Archives Buea, hereafter cited as NAB.

10 Agbor, "Afro-Caribbean Repatriates," 22.

11 Ibid. Also see George Courade, *Victoria-Bota: Croissance urbaine et immigration* (Yaounde: ORSTOM, 1975), 90.

12 Victoria, *Southern Cameroons*, 100–1 and Ardener, *Eye-Witness*, 13. The Rev. Diboll, an Englishman, was the first resident missionary and governor; he was replaced by Horton Johnson, a colored, in 1866, and then Samuel Brew, a European.

13 Chiabi, *The Making of Modern Cameroon*, 190.

14 Ibid.; Ardener, *Eye-Witnesses*, 13.

15 When the court became operational, there were a dozen Negro leaders who belonged to this court. See Victoria, *Southern Cameroons*, 1.

16 Ardener, *Eye-Witnesses*, 13–14.

17 Ibid., 14.

18 Ibid., 12.

19 Agbor, “Afro-Caribbean Repatriates,” 112–13.

20 Victoria, *Southern Cameroons*, 76.

21 Victor J. Ngoh, *History of Cameroon since 1800* (Limbe: Presbook, 1996), 71.

22 Simon Joseph Epale, *Plantation and Development in West Cameroon: A Study in Agrarian Capitalism* (New York: Vantage Press, 1975), 29–35. It is estimated that by the outbreak of World War I there were 195 non Africans (mainly Germans) engaged in planting in Cameroon. There were fifty-eight estates in German Cameroon, the majority of which were located around Victoria. See Sanford H. Bederman, *The Cameroon Development Corporation: Partner in National Growth* (Bota: Cameroon Development Corporation, 1968), 14. In fact, of the twenty-one plantations in Victoria Division, about seven were located around Victoria.

23 Qf/e/1940/1, Petition from the Victoria Federated Council Regarding Mortgage of Farm and Land Estates by Natives, NAB.

24 Victoria, *Southern Cameroons*, 75.

25 Joseph B. Ebune, *The Growth of Political Parties in Southern Cameroons, 1916–1960* (Yaounde: CEPER, 1992), 93.

26 Ngoh, *History of Cameroon*, 87.

27 Victoria, *Southern Cameroons*, 76; Qf/e/1933/5, Victoria, New Town, Mondoli, Mingili, NAB.

28 Victoria, *Southern Cameroons*, 77.

29 Courade, *Victoria-Bota*, 13.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Victoria, *Southern Cameroons*, 78.

33 Courade, *Victoria-Bota*, 14.

34 The origin of New Town seems to be shrouded by controversy. New Town appears not to have been entirely a creation of the Germans. The Bakweris, who are considered to be the indigenous inhabitants of Victoria, hold that a Bakweri village called *Liengu Mboke* existed on the site before the creation of Victoria. This settlement sprang from indigenous Bakweris who were ostracized from nearby villages for witchcraft and other misdemeanors. Interview with Ludwig Ngomba, 65 years old, Mutengene December 19, 2002. Mr. Ngomba is a native of Mokunda, a village situated 2 kms from Victoria. Given this controversy, one is tempted to conclude that all that the German colonialists did was to officially designate *Liengu Mboke* as an African Residential area.

35 Courade, *Victoria-Bota*, 14.

36 Re/a/1924/5, Township and Supreme Court Area, Victoria, NAB. Arnett puts Victoria's population in 1924 at 20 Europeans and 800 natives, while Courade, *Victoria-Bota*, 3, puts the settlement's population in that same year at 1,577 inhabitants, Europeans and natives included. Also see Memo from the Resident Cameroons Provinces, Lagos, April 4, 1928, 9–10, NAB.

37 Re/9/1924/5, Township and Supreme Court Area-Victoria. See Correspondence between the Resident Cameroons Province, to the Secretary Southern Province Lagos, October 22, 1926, NAB.

38 Re/9/1924/6 Township of Victoria, Re-Bota's Position (Victoria Division), NAB.

39 Re/9/1924/1 Township and Supreme Court Area-Victoria, Memo from the Secretary Southern Provinces to the Senior Resident Cameroon Province February 27, 1928, NAB.

40 Re/9/1924/5, Township and Supreme Court Area-Victoria, Memo from the Resident Cameroon Province Buea, to the Secretary Southern Province Lagos, on Supreme Court Area, Victoria, May 26, 1926, NAB.

41 In October 1933, the elders of New Town petitioned the D.O. complaining about the sharp fall in the prices paid for their cocoa products. The farmers indicated that prices for their cocoa crops had fallen by half of what they were before the depression. See Qf/e/1933/5, Victoria, New Town, Mondoli Mingili, Letter from the Elders of New Town to the Divisional Officer Victoria, 10 October 1933, 5, NAB.

42 Qf/e/1940/1, Petition from the Victoria Federated Council Regarding Mortgage of Farm and Land Estates by Natives, NAB.

43 District Officer Victoria to Senior Resident Cameroons Province, Buea, 2 April 1940, NAB.

44 Indigenous Land Tenure System provided that an indigene could claim ownership of a piece of land provided his fathers were the original settlers of that land by way of erecting a building or making a farm on it.

45 Qf/e/1940/1, Petition from the Victoria Federated Council, NAB.

46 Ibid.

47 Lands on Freehold allowed the occupants to have certificates of occupancy in perpetuity free of rent, with free right of transfer. These lands were occupied by the missionaries (Basel and Baptist) and the extended families of the Williams, Martins, Haddisons, Steanes, Johnson and the Burnleys—all descendants of the initial settlers in Victoria. Lands on Leasehold belonged to the Carrs, Brohms, Bodylawsons, and Harts while Crown Lands were those acquired by the governor and held for public purposes. Plantation holdings were those under the control of plantations. See Re/9/1948/3, Victoria New Town, Planning of, NAB.

48 Memo from the Resident Cameroons Province to The Honourable Secretary Southern Provinces Enugu, 10 January 1930, NAB.

49 Ibid. The following were granted Certificates of Occupancy in perpetuity under these conditions: Manga Rohm, Peter Mokeba, James Beecroft, Patrick Johnson, Pastor Burnley, David Carr, Manga Williams, Carl Steane, James Kofele. See Qf/e/1925/6 Government Land Victoria Division, Registration of, NAB.

50 Qf/e/1925/6 Government Land Victoria Division.

51 Between 1924 and 1953 Victoria's population had more than quadrupled from about 1,577 inhabitants to about 7,000 inhabitants. See Courade, *Victoria-Bota*, 3; and Chiabi, *The Making of Modern Cameroon*, 189.

52 Chiabi, *The Making of Modern Cameroon*, 191.

53 *Ibid.*, 192.

54 Dan N. Lantum, "Highlights of Population Change in West Cameroon before 1961" *Abbia*, September–December 1969, 23, 61.

55 Ephraim N. Ngwafor, *May Former Victoria Smile Again* (London: Institute of Third World Art and Literature, 1989), 7.

56 Victoria, *Southern Cameroons*, 57.

57 Chiabi, *The Making of Modern Cameroon*, 189.

58 Courade, *Victoria-Bota*, 4, estimates that the number of Europeans in Victoria jumped from about 100 in the 1950s to 250 at independence in 1961. Many of them ran department stores and shopping centers like John Holt, R & W King, CCC, ICC, and Printania, while the Lebanese tycoon called "Potokri" ran a monopoly in the film industry with two cinema theaters, "Rio" in New Town and "Rivoli" in Gardens. Also see Ngwafor, *Former Victoria*, 7–8.

59 Ngwafor, *Former Victoria*, 17.

60 *Ibid.*, 12.

61 Courade, *Victoria-Bota*, 16, 17.

62 Re/1940/3, Town Planning and Development, Victoria, NAB.

63 This exercise was, however, limited to the Government Station, where names of streets could be found like Suffolk Road, Supper Road, Norfolk Road, Market Street, Royal Scots Avenue, Devonshire Avenue, Connaught Avenue, etc. See Re/1940/3, Town Planning and Development, Victoria, NAB.

64 At independence in January 1961, French Cameroon adopted the appellation the Republic of Cameroon.

65 Imports at the Tiko-Victoria port dropped from 22,450 tons in 1971 to 8,597 tons in 1973, while exports dropped from 41,471 tons to 20,119 tons. See Simon J. Epale, *Social and Economic Report on the South West Province 1973–74* (Buea: n.p., 1975), 29.

66 *Ibid.*, 30.

67 *Ibid.*, 50.

68 Ngwafor, *Former Victoria*, 32; and Epale, *Social and Economic Report*, 48.

69 Epale, *Social and Economic Report*, 48.

70 Ngwafor, *Former Victoria*, 32.

71 Isidore Frumbi was the Forest Officer in charge of Victoria. He was accused of siphoning funds meant for the running of the Victoria Zoo and Botanical Gardens into a fictitious company called Jani and Sons. He was sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment.

72 Ngwafor, *Former Victoria*, 34.

73 *Ibid.*

74 *Ibid.*, 7.

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URBAN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN ZIMBABWE

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Douglas T. Feremenga

Context

Understanding urban development in Africa is important, because it gives an indirect picture of rural development and its failure; this partly explains the rate of urbanization growth in sub-Saharan Africa. People leave their land and go to the cities because the agricultural sector collapses and does not allow for survival. In southern Africa, the agricultural sector is characterized by extreme dualism: the white-dominated commercial sector, consisting of large, capital-intensive farms, co-exists with an impoverished black-dominated smallholder sector, which produces mainly for subsistence.

In the case of Zimbabwe, the recent intensification of the land reform program by the incumbent government has paralyzed the agricultural sector. Those who seek only to occupy farms and not to continue their productivity are strangling organized agriculture, which results in the intensification of the rural-to-urban exodus. At the same time, there is very little industry that can absorb this new labor force in the cities, so people end up creating a parallel economy—the informal sector—which becomes the backbone of and the buffer zone between the formal sector and the rest of society. From this point of view, African cities are actually a reserve of very cheap, desperate and therefore docile labor that can be

supplied to the local businesses and transnational corporations. In this way, there is reproduction in another form of the function of cities during colonial times, when cities became pools of landless peasants who had to find wage labor in order to pay taxes in cash.

There is an urban development crisis in Africa—one that is defined by many as a governance crisis, by some as a political crisis, by others as an economic one, while still others see it as a manifestation of Africa's historical path. Economists who at one time thought they had the solution are, centuries later, still as confounded as those who came before them; politicians are confused, delusional, and defensive, while the general populace is frustrated and impatient with the status quo.

Africa is a diverse continent with diverse challenges. It is a product of a history that encompasses the slave trade, colonialism, the First and Second World Wars, the Cold War and its concomitant situation, internal tribal conflicts, and a myriad of post-independence challenges. Social, economic, political, and religious institutions were put in place by the imperial masters, which resulted in the suppression of the indigenous population and the ridiculing of its identity and culture. The colonialists relied on their armies for control, not on democracy and consensus. They broke down Africa's pre-colonial socio-political systems and replaced them with coercive laws that were brutally enforced.

Infrastructure was barely available and where it existed, it aimed at exploiting and controlling natural and human resources for the benefit of the imperial masters, rather than developing the colony. Even when the development of the colony was contemplated, particularly in areas like Zimbabwe where "settler" communities existed, it was aimed not at the development of the whole society but only of the settler segment and, depending on the country, a few who had been integrated into the colonial system. The rest of the people lived in dire poverty. Little, if any, attention was given to the notions of good governance, democracy, or African advancement.

Economically, there was the creation of the dependency syndrome, enforced by making the colonies produce what they did not need and need what they could not produce (see, for example, Saul and Leys, 1999). Colonialism focused on the exploitation of the large mineral reserves, alienation of land from native populations, establishment of plantation economies and, more significantly, the establishment of what Wekwele (1994) terms "settler colonies." To a large extent, all of this activity lowered the cost of imperialism at the expense of reconstruction and nation-building for the future independent African States.

According to the 2002 Zimbabwe Central Statistical Office (CSO), the population of Zimbabwe is 14.6 million, three million of which are believed to be in diaspora (*The Herald*, 2003).

As shown in table 1, population growth reached rates as high as 3.5% per year in 1951 and gradually declined to 3.0% by 1980, mainly due to the guerrilla war of liberation, which continued for about sixteen years until 1980, when the country gained independence. The 2002 preliminary results put the growth rate of the 1992–2002 decade at a little over 1.5%. Analysts attribute this low rate to three main reasons: a lower birth rate; a much higher death rate, especially among people in their twenties and thirties, from HIV/AIDS and related illnesses; and the several million Zimbabweans residing outside the country. In urban areas, the population has steadily increased from 942,800 in 1969 to 1,941,610 in 1982, and 5,419,680 in 2000 (World Gazetteer, 2002).

Zimbabwe's Historical Journey

Zimbabwe was a British colony from the time of its occupation in 1890 by the British South Africa Company (BSAC) to the year of its independence

Table 1: Population size and growth

Year	Population (Thousands)	African	European	Others*	Growth rate (Percent)	Urban pop (% of total population)
1901	712,600	700,000	11,100	–	2.4	–
1911	906,600	880,000	23,700	2,900	2.4	–
1921	1,147,100	1,110,000	33,800	3,300	2.5	–
1931	1,464,200	1,410,000	50,100	4,100	3.2	–
1941	2,005,900	1,930,000	69,300	6,600	3.5	–
1951	2,828,400	2,680,000	138,000	10,400	3.5	–
1961	3,968,000	3,730,000	221,000	17,500	3.3	13
1962	4,098,300	3,860,000	220,000	18,300	3.3	–
1969	5,134,300	4,880,000	130,000	24,300	3.0	–
1982	7,477,400	7,297,200	1,477,000	32,400	3.0	–
1992	10,412,500	10,284,300	82,800	43,500	3.1	31
2002	11,634,663	–	–	–	1.5	36

Figures obtained from the Central Statistical Office's Statistical Yearbook, 1997 and 2002 Preliminary Census Results; UNDP Human Development Report 1997.

* "Others" category refers to Asians and Mixed.

Figures across rows do not add up to the total population due to the omission of other minority groups and also rounding off error.

in 1980. At the time of independence, the liberal political economy was built into the institutions that the independent African government inherited from the colonialists. The political economy, distorted by racial, political, economic, and social segregation, produced gross regional inequalities. With the attainment of independence in 1980, the African government embarked upon the task of transforming the colonial socio-economic system. Such transformation was to take the form of a new socio-economic order based on the concept of a socialist egalitarian society, which was to be a complete antithesis of the Western liberal colonial order. The policy framework of the new order was published in a document entitled "Growth-With-Equity: A Policy Statement" (Zimbabwe Government, 1981). However, despite the political rhetoric, there has been no substantial ideological turnabout; the growth-with-equity policies, as noted by Rambanapasi (1991) present a mixed bag of functional and normative (i.e., territorial) policies, because of a lack of a new political economy framework.

The Colonial Era (1890–1980)

Cecil John Rhodes created the BSAC in 1889 with a capital of £1 million to fulfill his imperial Cape-to-Cairo railway dream (Weiss, 1994). According to Weiss, he was granted a royal charter that empowered the company to enter the region beyond the Limpopo River and administer it with all the powers of the state. These included the right to raise taxes and to maintain an army, police force, and civil service. During the scramble to control Africa, concession hunters wrested rights from African chiefs to search for minerals in their territories. The BSAC had two such concessions: the Litunga and the Rudd concessions, giving it claim to areas north of the Limpopo and Zambezi rivers, officially named northern and southern Rhodesia. The Rudd concession gave the BSAC claim to southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) after negotiations with the Ndebele King Lobengula, whom the BSAC incorrectly assumed had control of both Matabeleland and Mashonaland, which together form the present-day Zimbabwe (Weiss, 1994). In 1890, the BSAC dispatched the Pioneer column, a mix of soldiers and settlers, to occupy Mashonaland and thereby begin colonization in earnest. On September 13, 1890 the company raised the British flag on a plain in Mashonaland, land that had once been under the prominent influence of chief Harare. The British built a

fort on this site and named it Fort Salisbury, in honor of the then–British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury.

For Summers (1994), colonial conquest was a bloody business, punctuated by force, resistance, and brutal campaigns of “pacification.” The BSAC had the illusion that they could rule by force and use the majority of the country’s inhabitants in any way they pleased. The political framework for planning and development was racist, and the urban areas were managed for the benefit of the European population. Urban planning and development were merely part of the colonization process. In this regard, Rakodi maintains:

The colonial state was a peculiar extension of the metropolitan capitalist state, intervening in the processes both of accumulation and reproduction by ensuring a labor supply, controlling labor, maintaining law and order, devising means of controlling land allocation, raising revenue to finance the colonial administration and investing in infrastructure. . . . Urban policy required the creation of an urban population which was available at wages below the full costs of reproduction and which could pose no threat to colonial administrative control (1986: 212).

Town planning was largely a technical activity to create a built environment. In 1904, an urban area was defined in the census as “any center with a population of more than 25 non-Africans, where individual land holdings are less than 15 acres in extent and at least half the adult male inhabitants are employed in industrial sectors other than agriculture” (quoted in Wekwete, 1987: 4).

The number of non-Africans was particularly important given, that all urban areas were on European land, per the land tenure system established by the land commission of 1894. This developed into the various land apportionment acts that alienated land from Africans (Moyana, 1984). Urban Africans were regarded as migrants and temporary sojourners who provided labor for the urban economy, but would retire to their tribal homes—hence the “Africa of the labor reserve” (Amin, 1972). Furthermore, the European settlers’ conviction of their cultural superiority led them to believe that blacks had neither the intellectual skills nor the educational attainment to understand democracy (Mungazi, 1992). Indeed, Africans were regarded as apathetic, redundant, ill-informed, uneducated, and, therefore, unable to make their own decisions.

The Statutory Framework for Urban Planning and Development

The dilemma faced by Europeans was whether some social distance should or could be kept between the European and African races. The two societies were stratified along racial, ethnic, and cultural lines, yet functioned in the context of constant physical proximity. A network of regulations that controlled the residence, labor, and mobility of the indigenous populations was thus put in place. Consequently, statutory constraints, urban locations, master-and-servant ordinances, and registration and pass requirements patterned the very fabric of African lives (Kennedy, 1987). Indeed, a variety of legislations were used to control the African population in Southern Rhodesia.

First, the Land Apportionment Act, No. 30 of 1930, provided for different land rights that segregated the native Africans and barred them from owning any urban land. Land alienation resulted in the high-potential, prime agricultural zones being parceled out to European settlers under freehold and leasehold arrangements. Indigenous communities were forced into native reserves, mostly in marginal- and low-potential areas of the country, where they were to exist under a system of customary tenure (S. Moyo, 1996). According to Moyo, the land problem for Africans was considered purely in rival terms while labor migrancy was viewed as the natural order of things. In 1925, 63.4% (516,335 people) of natives lived in native reserves, 18.5% (150,650) on alienated land, and 15% (122,088) on crown land, while only 3% (24,874) were in towns and mines (Gann, 1969: 268).

Realizing that the accommodation of natives was becoming a major issue, the Land Apportionment Act was amended in 1961, culminating in the Land Apportionment Act Nos. 37 and 66. The first amendment was to “regularize a number of anomalies in the legislation and secondly, to provide for home-ownership schemes in the municipal townships” (Alban Musekiwa in Zinyama, et al., 1995: 52). Financial constraints, however, meant that Africans could not afford the full cost of a house and land, let alone the development of infrastructure services. There was also a Not-In-My-Backyard (NIMBY) attitude within the European community, who vehemently rejected the idea of having African townships located in close proximity to their own residential areas. The idea of Europeans subsidizing the cost of providing service in African areas was never accepted, either. Musekiwa notes that clinics, recreational centers, and other welfare

services in the townships were financed by Africans themselves through levies on the sale of beer. The Land Apportionment Act was later updated and amended, resulting in the Land Tenure Act No. 55 of 1969, which stressed the need for municipalities to establish decent African townships. Local authorities were now required to provide decent accommodation for urban blacks and accommodate married couples with children. This legacy of racial imbalance in the distribution of land has endured into present-day Zimbabwe, and the “land question” remains one of the post-independent nation’s major problems.

Second, the Town Planning Act of 1933, molded by the 1932 British Act, gave powers to local authorities to control and guide land use development. It was this act that gave the municipalities of Bulawayo, Gweru, Masvingo, Kadoma, Harare, and Mutare powers to prepare urban planning schemes (Wekwete, 1987). With the advent of the automobile, this act was also necessary as a control mechanism for peri-urban sprawl. The Town Planning Act was later consolidated in 1945, further elaborating the role of urban planning schemes.

This Act, according to Wekwete, resulted in the appointment of town planning officers for Harare and Bulawayo and the establishment of a town planning court that would arbitrate when conflicts arose between the public and private interests in urban schemes. By 1945 the adequacy of the schemes was being questioned, and following the recommendations of an advisory group, the town planning legislation was broadened to include a regional component. A two-tier system of master and regional plans dealing with policy issues on one level, and local and subject plans focusing on land use and development control on another, was established (Wekwete, 1987).

Third, there was the Native (Urban Areas) Accommodation and Registration Act No. 6 of 1946, which required all residents of African townships to be registered in the form of pass books. This enabled municipal authorities and police to carry out regular inspections in African townships, and it also provided for strict control of squatters and any unlawful urban development (Wekwete, 1987). Under this Act, local authorities were required to set aside native urban locations and to provide in such areas adequate housing for all urban Africans, except those housed on approved private premises. Employers were required to provide free housing for their employees or to rent and pay for their accommodation in the townships. Accommodation thus became tied to employment, and houses had to be vacated upon termination of such employment.

The strict control of the urban population resulted in disparities between and within cities in terms of city size, racial groups, and gender; these are still evident in post-colonial Zimbabwe. Mutizwa-Mangiza's study (1986) of the rank-size distribution of urban settlements shows that Zimbabwe conforms to the general rank-size rule. Typically Zimbabwe is dominated by Harare, which has developed into the country's primary city. The other cities, particularly from the third largest and smaller, are relatively undersized. This imbalance was one of the reasons cited for the development of the growth center/service center policy in the post-independent era. Table 2 shows the rank-size distribution of the top five urban settlements in Harare, for different years and by population size. The criterion for defining urban areas is that their population is above 2,500 (Wekwete, 1987). This, according to Wekwete, was superimposed on the earlier definition that emphasized the number of non-Africans in urban centers.

Fourth, the Vagrancy Act (Chapter 49) of 1960 (amended in 1972), together with the Law and Order Maintenance Act (Chapter 39), seriously derogated the personal freedom of the Africa people. Sections 50 and 51 allowed the Minister of Law and Order to restrict persons to particular areas of Southern Rhodesia for periods of up to five years (Palley, 1966). Civil authorities were empowered to arrest without warrant or send back to tribal areas those Africans who could not prove to be gainfully employed or who were not formerly registered urban residents, or could not show visible and sufficient means of subsistence (Palley, 1966; Wekwete, 1987).

Fifth, the Urban Councils Act of 1973, amended in 1980, is perhaps the most comprehensive of all local government acts in Zimbabwe, but, like all the other statutes adopted from the colonial era, it is based on delegated authority. This Act imparts a functional hierarchy through which all local governments in Zimbabwe are directly linked to the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works, and National Housing (Local Government). The Minister of Local Government has powers to veto and intervene in the operation of local government, and can invoke the power of *ultra vires* where there is considered to be abuse of powers. Local authorities have, under this Act, powers relating to development control and provision of infrastructure, *inter alia*. Councils can raise their revenue, but only from fees and taxes on land and basic services such as water, electricity supplies, sewerage and drainage, fire services, and entertainment, rather than from the operation of industrial and commercial projects (Rambanapasi, 1991). Funding sources also include interest on monies invested by the councils, income-generating projects, royalties from natural resources such as timber

Table 2: Rank-Size Distribution of Urban Settlements by Population Size in Zimbabwe: 1962, 1969, 1982, 1992, and 2002

Urban Area	1962	Rank	1969	Rank	1982	Rank	1992	Rank	2002*	Rank
Harare	310,360	1	364,390	1	656,011	1	1,189,100	1	1,919,735	1
Bulawayo	210,620	2	236,320	2	413,814	2	621,755	2	965,058	2
Chitungwiza	–	3	–	3	172,556	3	274,923	3	411,724	3
Mutare	42,540	4	46,170	4	69,621	5	131,401	4	189,052	4
Gweru	38,480	5	41,970	5	78,918	4	128,012	5	154,901	5

Information obtained from Central Statistical Office in Harare Zimbabwe: Census 1982, 1992, Preliminary Results for 2002; Statistical Yearbook, 1997; and The World Gazetteer 2003.

* 2002 population size based on preliminary census results.

and minerals, and loans and grants from central government and other non-governmental agencies. This makes government grants the main source of finance for most urban councils to carry out a number of prescribed functions such as the provision of urban housing for low-income groups and the provision of clinics and schools on behalf of the central government. Government grants, however, continue to decline every year, and councils are forced to provide services and operate using their own funds.

Sixth, the Regional Town and Country Planning Act of 1976 (amended 1980, 1996), is the “holy Bible” of urban planning and development in Zimbabwe. Like the preceding urban Acts, it is modeled after the British Town Planning Acts that put emphasis on the local government system as the basis for planning. Its major shortcoming is that it does not refer to the broader aspects of development planning, but is confined to the planning for the built environment. There are three distinct sections in this Act, dealing with (i) powers to plan, (ii) powers to control development, and (iii) powers to set up the administrative framework for planning. Part IV of the Act bestows upon local authorities powers to control development, which by definition primarily relates to the use of land and the buildings or structures thereof (Wekwete, 1989). Local provincial authorities in Zimbabwe owe their very existence to this Act.

Post-Colonial Era (1980 to the Present)

When Zimbabwe gained independence in April 1980, planning was immediately high on the agenda, in an effort to establish a new socio-economic order. The black majority government was determined, at least in theory and rhetoric, to correct the past imbalances of the colonial era.

Aware of the high levels of spatial inequality that existed in the country when it took office, the government of Zimbabwe introduced the Growth-With-Equity (GWE) policy in 1981, which provided a set of policies, goals, and objectives consisting of the central government’s concept of a centralized delivery system. This was meant to redress the socio-economic, regional, and sectoral imbalances inherited from the colonial era through the establishment of “an egalitarian and socialist society,” and the achievement of rapid socio-economic redevelopment utilizing both human and natural resources (Government of Zimbabwe, 1981). To this end, a radical transformation of socio-economic structures was proposed.

Regional or provincial development plans, together with participatory structures of the national administrative hierarchy, were created

through the 1984 Prime Minister's directive on provincial governors and local government authorities. In a study that pre-empted this directive, McAuslan identifies what he terms the "confused state of local government," and contends that this is the key challenge to an effective planning system in Zimbabwe. The Prime Minister's directive was meant to reorganize and alter the colonial local government and planning systems and, in the process, clear this confusion.

The directive, subsequently consolidated in the Provincial Councils and Administration Act (1985), in particular sought to combine administrative decentralization of local authorities; decentralize development initiatives from the primate cities of Harare and Bulawayo to smaller towns and growth points in less developed regions; and promote democratic public participation in the development process (Rambanapasi, 1991). This was to be achieved through a hierarchical organization of institutions whose main actors were to be the provincial governor, the provincial council, the provincial development committee (as subcommittee of the council), the district administrator, the district council, the district development committee, the ward development committee, and the village development committee. This is schematically presented in figure 1.

The Prime Minister's Directive, together with the Provincial Councils and Administration Act of 1985, sought to: ensure people's participation in planning and development; facilitate the decentralization of decision-making (devolution); and promote ownership of the means of production. Provincial plans had to play both a functional (growth allocating/distribution) and a territorial (redistribution) role. However, in his analysis of the provincial plans' content, structure, and methodology, Rambanapasi (1991) finds that the nature of these plans makes them unsuitable tools for the achievement of the stated GWE national goals. Planning in Zimbabwe has thus been ironic in that it continues to operate on a purely functional or allocative basis inherited from colonization, and has ignored the requirements of the new policy framework of GWE. GWE was meant to be a balance between the functional and territorial approaches to planning, yet in practice planning has remained functionally skewed in a hierarchical manner. The "equity" element of the policy framework has been completely ignored and does not influence the contents of provincial and district plans, because of the relegation of territorial or normative variables to a passive secondary status of mere information.

Central government dictates the *modus operandi* of lower-level institutions. While admitting that the District Councils are insensitive to local needs because they spend time fulfilling bureaucratic directives,

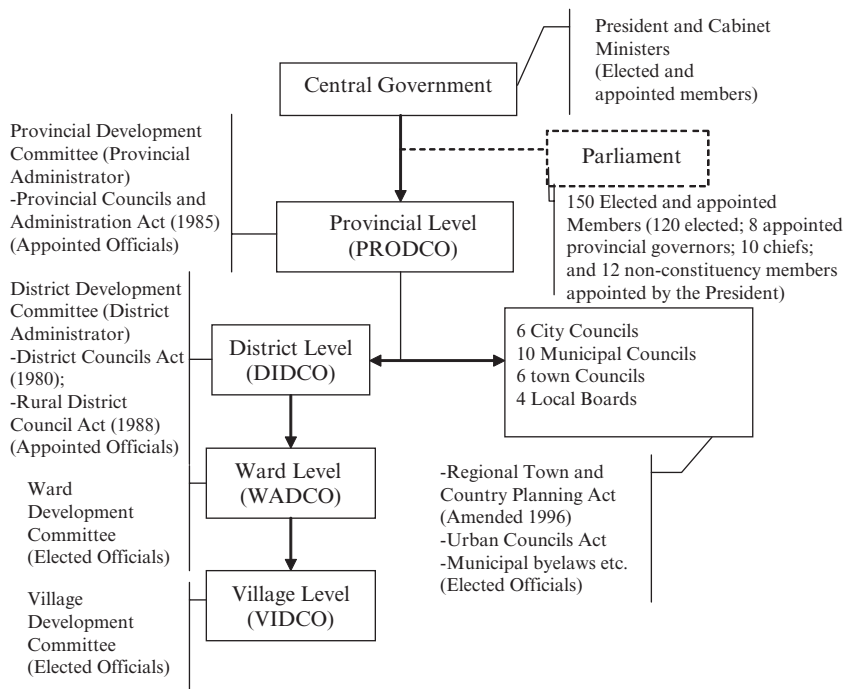


Figure 1. Intergovernmental relations in Zimbabwe.

an Administrative Officer in one of Zimbabwe’s District Councils comments:

Councilors may make decisions but the District Council has no power. For example, District Council minutes are sent to the Provincial Administrator. If the decisions are perceived to be in conflict with central government’s position or policies, the Provincial Administrator can amend them in consultation with central government. Consequently, the District Councils end up receiving directives from central government (quoted in Makumbe, 1998: 39).

Makumbe further notes that there is evidence to indicate that appointed officials exercise more authority than elected representatives at the sub-national levels of the local government structure. Government officials interviewed by Makumbe justify this state of affairs by arguing that they are the ones who know available central government resources for the implementation of development programs and projects, so they should

make the critical decisions regarding these programs and whether projects are to be funded (Makumbe, 1998: 37).

Clearly, although post-independence Zimbabwe has adopted new socio-economic goals and objectives, the organizational or conceptual restructuring of town planning as an activity in public planning has been limited. Planning remains a technical activity that is poorly integrated at municipal levels. The most fundamental change upon independence was the democratization of the political system and the removal of racial overtones, which removed the system of institutionalized racial discrimination. The balance of power shifted from the white minority to the black majority and immediately the key objective, at least in theory and rhetoric, was to change government structures and institutions in order to maximize potential benefits to the majority Zimbabweans who were formerly discriminated against.

The functional nature of the center-local relationships developed under colonialism largely remained in place, despite territorial tendencies inherent in the development policy of "Growth With Equity" and the institution of provincial governors under the Regional Town and Country Planning Act amendment of 1980. Decentralization in post-colonial Zimbabwe only meant increased development and administrative activities for local authorities, without the financial autonomy to support these activities. The model for local government is top-down, sectoral, and based on a link-pin system, inevitably resulting in functional center-local relations (Helmsing and Wekwete, 1990; Rambanapasi, 1991). Zimbabwe uncritically borrowed policies from elsewhere, especially the former colonial master, Britain; this resulted in the continuation of colonial practices under the guise of a reformed local government system that was supposedly responsive to the new needs of the post-colonial nation.

There are numerous problems relating to institutional, economic, political, gender, and social aspects of local governance in Zimbabwe that need urgent attention. Institutionally, there is a lack of a clear mandate through which the various urban development stakeholders can operate. The system is polarized and politicized, resulting in central government's meddling too much in local affairs, particularly in the operation of non-state organizations.

Noting that becoming legitimate is the most potent factor that accounts for the strength of the state, Migdal writes:

It is an acceptance, even approbation, of the state's rules of the game, its social control, as true and right . . . legitimacy includes the acceptance of

the state's symbolic configuration within which the reward and sanctions are packaged. It indicates people's approval of the state's desired social order through their acceptance of the state's myths (Migdal, 1988: 33).

In Zimbabwe, there is a legitimacy crisis that manifests itself through voter apathy, intimidation, violence, and allegations of vote-buying and election-rigging. The Rights Ranking Index (2003), which pools rankings from the World Bank, Freedom House, Economist Intelligent Unit, World Economic Forum, PriceWaterhouseCooper, Institute of Management Development, and the Political and Economic Risk Consultancy, ranks Zimbabwe among the 50 worst countries in the world. Zimbabwe is ranked 216 of 249, scoring (6) for political rights, (5) for civil liberties, (7) for economic freedom (with "7" being the worst score in all three), and (8) for corruption (where "9" is the worst possible score).

The government of Zimbabwe had to deal with numerous problems associated with the colonial public service sector. The public bureaucracy was, for example, too small to handle the developmental needs of a now much larger clientele with a myriad of urgent needs, like education, health, reconstruction of an infrastructure destroyed during the war of liberation, and provisions for new infrastructures where none had existed. Even though public service provisions have greatly expanded, there are still numerous problems. Kavran (1989: 11) observes that political interference by individuals in the management of the public sector is excessive and advises that this is detrimental to efficiency. In addition, this report finds that the public servants themselves are also a major problem because of their lack of professionalism manifest in the way they conduct business and their general attitude toward the public.

The public service sector is a product of colonial administration that was characterized by resource extraction or revenue collection, maintenance of law and order, and subjugation of the indigenous population. Today, some of these characteristics endure in the form of heavy taxation and various Acts, such as the repressive Public Order and Security Act—which many critics argue resonates the colonial Law and Order Maintenance Act—the Private Voluntary Organizations Act, and the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act. These Acts have been invoked by the post-colonial state to detain, intimidate, and victimize pro-democracy actors such as labor activists, students, women, congregants, civil society activists, civic and political leaders, and the general population of Zimbabwe. Undoubtedly, these laws seriously undermine the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and democracy in the country.

Organizationally, Zimbabwe suffers from excessive centralization whereby decision making is the preserve of a few top officials, usually in the head offices in Harare. This results in annoying bureaucratic delays since even simple yet sometimes urgent matters need the approval of the top officials. The Zimbabwe Human Development Report (2000: 76) finds that the departments that deal with the public the most often are the worst culprits, such as the health sector, which was rated as giving the worst service; the Registrar-General; the Department of Social Welfare; and the police.

Of particularly grave concern is the degree of corruption in the public sector in Zimbabwe. Corruption, defined in the United Nations Development Programme Report (UNDP, 1999: 7) as the misuse of public power, office, or authority for private benefit through bribery, extortion, influence peddling, nepotism, fraud, speed money, or embezzlement, is an evil prevalent in both public and private institutions in the country. In government departments and parastatals, shady deals linked to programs such as the VIP Housing Scheme and the War Victims Compensation Fund often make newspaper headlines. Senior civil servants and Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) officials consistently appear in court charged with looting the housing scheme funds, AIDS donations, and/or levies. In the private sector, widespread reports of incidents in which high-ranking company executives and government officials enriched themselves through kickbacks and other underhand methods at the expense of the majority are also common. As hardships worsen, corruption, like an octopus, is spreading its tentacles into all levels of society. Corrupt deals (i.e., bribes) have become an integral part of doing business in Zimbabwe, where most people are struggling to make ends meet under difficult economic circumstances.

From the UNDP's perspective, corruption is an issue of poor governance and is directly and indirectly related to the human condition, in that if public power and authority are used for private gain, the public interest suffers. The corruption perceptions index (CPI) used to rank corruption among 90 countries annually by Transparency International using the perceptions of business people, risk analysts, and the general public, ranked Zimbabwe 45th, with a CPI of 4.1 in 1999 (where 10 is highly clean and 0 is highly corrupt). In 2000, Zimbabwe ranked 65th out of 90 countries, with a CPI score of 3.0. In 2003, Zimbabwe ranked 106 out of 133, with a CPI score of 2.3 (Transparency International 1993–2003). This means that corruption is perceived to be worsening. High levels of corruption “reflect or symptomize institutional ineffectiveness or even

decay” (ZHDR, 2000: 82). Indeed, the organizations and institutions that are supposed to combat corruption in Zimbabwe are themselves corrupted and seem inadequate.

After a first decade (1980–90) of slow growth, and a second decade (1990–2000) of painful, economic adjustment, Zimbabwe’s economy is in a major crisis. The colonial legacy of socio-economic imbalances is still apparent in the economy. The shortfalls that exist with respect to the gap between policy planning and implementation at the national level, as well as the limited capacity and inadequate consultation of stakeholders on national economic policy issues, weak management of government expenditure, high budget deficits, and huge domestic and external debt have had far-reaching implications for the urban economies—which, for the most part, heavily rely on government allocations to boost their development capacities. National issues of privatization and the Zimbabwe government’s decision in the 1990s to cut back on investment in the social sectors of health and education in response to the economic structural adjustment programs, for example, had devastating implications at the local level.

The economic crisis in Zimbabwe and the gradual impoverishment of its society can be traced to the failure of the system of economic governance, which by its nature is a central function and, therefore, a responsibility of central government. According to an economist with the Zimbabwe Economic Society (2000), the birth of the National Economic Consultative Forum in 1997 created some space for national dialogue on economic policy; however, it still lacked the powers to effect binding decisions, to the extent that economic policy-making and planning remained centralized. The determination of national development priorities, the Forum argues, remained the monopoly of the ruling party, ZANU-PF.

The link between economic governance and development resonates in view of Zimbabwe’s mediocre performance on particular development indicators. In the Global Human Development Index (HDI), Zimbabwe slipped from 79 of 130 (0.614 index) in 1990 to 145 of 175 (0.496 index) in 2003. Poverty levels increased (ranked 90th of 94 developing nations), life expectancy at birth declined from 56 years (1970–75) to 33.1 years (2000–05), and the GDP per-capita annual growth rate dropped from 0.2% (1975–2001) to –0.2% (1990–2001) (UNDP, 2003). The UNDP estimates that 17% of Zimbabwe’s population has no access to safe water, 29% has difficulties in accessing health services, and 38% face constraints in accessing sanitation. An estimated 13% of the children under five years of age are underweight; 36% of Zimbabwe’s 11.4 million

people are living on less than US \$1 a day, while 64.2% are living on less than US \$2 a day.

Any discussion of economic governance and economic issues in Zimbabwe is incomplete if it fails to be cognizant of the highly debated, politically sensitive, and potentially socially explosive land question. Polanyi best highlights the importance of land when he observes:

What we call land is an element of nature inextricably interwoven with man's institutions. . . . [It] is tied up with the organizations of kinship, neighborhood, craft, and creed—with tribe and temple, village, guild and church. . . . It invests man's life with stability; it is the site of his habitation; it is a condition of his physical safety; it is the landscape and the seasons. We might as well imagine his being born without hands and feet as carrying on his life without land (Polanyi, [1944] 1957: 178–79).

And yet, as soon as colonialism began, the possession and utilization of indigenous peoples' land became its primary focus. To this, Jomo Kenyatta, the first Prime Minister and President of Kenya, laments: "When missionaries came to Africa, they had the Bible and we had land. They taught us to pray with our eyes closed, and when we opened them, they had land and we had the Bible" (Kenyatta, [1938] 1965).

Zimbabwe has a history of disproportionate land distribution, with less than 1% of the whites in the country owning more than 75% of the land. The economy inherited at independence contained serious built-in disparities and inequalities compounded by the patterns of asset ownership, particularly of land. For instance, under the Land Tenure Act of 1969, 18 million hectares of land was allocated to blacks, but an almost similar amount of prime land given to 250,000 whites. Worse, Africans were relegated to reserves, particularly Gwaai and Shangani, which are located in agro-ecological zones with poor soil and sporadic rain, while whites occupied prime arable land. Unequal and inequitable land distribution, insecurity of land tenure, and unsustainable and sub-optimal land use were, therefore, the main components of the land question at the country's independence in 1980.

Land remains a particularly volatile issue in Zimbabwe. Newly formed and self-proclaimed "ex-combatant" housing cooperatives continue to grab land—including state land, city council land, and private land—for their own benefit. These new types of housing cooperatives view any open land as readily available and "up for grabs," whether earmarked for future development, designated as open space, or unsuitable

for residential development. This is creating much chaos and many difficulties for urban planners, who are dealing with the polarized issues of “land grabbing” while trying to make sure that any development still makes sense within the parameters of the existing plans.

At the macroeconomic level, Zimbabwe ranks 79th out of 80 in the growth competitiveness index, which looks at the set of institutions and economic policies supportive of high rates of economic growth in the medium to long term (five to eight years). The country’s macroeconomic environment is considered the least competitive of the 80 economies ranked in the 2002–03 report. In technology, it ranks 75th, and in public institutions it ranks 68th. It ranks 70th in the microeconomic competitiveness index, a drop from 65th in 2001, with company operations and strategy ranking 68th, a relative strength compared to the quality of the country’s business environment, which ranks 70th.

The Heritage Foundation and *Wall Street Journal* ranked Zimbabwe 153rd of 161 countries included in the 2003 Index of Economic Freedom. Zimbabwe is described as a repressed economy scoring miserably on all the variables. On a scale where 5 is the worst possible score, Zimbabwe scored an average of 4.40 consisting of the following: trade policy (5 “very high level of protectionism”), fiscal burden of government (4 “high cost of government with an expenditure of 48% of GDP”), government intervention in the economy (3 “moderate level”), monetary policy (5 “very high level of inflation”), capital flows and foreign investment (5 “very high barriers”), wages and prices (4 “high level of intervention”), regulation (4 “high level”), banking and finance (5 “very high level of restrictions”), property rights (5 “very low level of protection”), and black market (4 “high level of activity”).

Part of the development problem in Zimbabwe seems to emanate from the ideological prostitution between neoliberalism and the socialist egalitarianism proclaimed at independence. A review of the rhetoric and policies of the Mugabe government reveals an inherent contradiction that has plagued Zimbabwe since its independence. In concurrence, van der Walt (1998) observes that there was a clear and seemingly irreconcilable divergence between the ascendant development paradigm, supported by Mugabe and others, which “spoke the discourse of Marxism whilst overseeing the functioning of capitalism,” and the apparently marginalized minority perspective, which canvassed for full adherence to ZANU-PF’s espoused Marxist-Leninist ideology. Since it took over the reins of power in 1980, the political elite’s perception of foreign capital interests has often been labeled as “contradictory and conflictual” (Lehman, 1992: 15).

The apparent distrust of foreign capital in Zimbabwe also stems from Rhodesia's international history before independence, and its location within the orbit of the (real or imagined) reprisals from the erstwhile apartheid regime in South Africa (J. Moyo, 1992: 314).

The disagreement over the appropriate development path "can be explained by the inability of the governing elites to consolidate and solidify their power bases into a united ideological force" (Lehman, 1992: 15). This ideological rift has been portrayed as a disagreement between vocal radicals and pragmatists. Radicals adhere to a heterodox model of development rooted in the belief that the "structural causes of economic crises are found in the depressed condition of foreign exchange availability, the unequal relationship between core and peripheral states, and the declining terms of trade" (Lehman 1992: 16). Regarding foreign capital, radicals believe that the government should intervene in the economy, oversee the generation and allocation of foreign exchange, and keep liberalization at bay, as the latter could "increase the economy's vulnerability to external forces and impinge on economic firms, and entail the surrender of Zimbabwe's sovereignty to market forces" (Lehman 1992: 17). Wholesale nationalization of state-owned enterprises, income and land redistribution, and "dividend and remittance controls, import controls, and wage and price controls" are some of the linchpins of the radical economic strategy. Pragmatists, on the other hand, advocate "the maintenance of foreign capital ties in order to foster the interrelated policies of foreign borrowing, export growth and rising investment" (Lehman 1992: 17).

Both of these views have been either articulated or reflected in official rhetoric and policies. On the one hand, government officials have made statements against foreign capital. Concurrently, however, the level of restriction placed upon foreign capital has fluctuated widely since independence, further reflecting the lack of a coherent development ideology and strategy. From 1980 to 1984, foreigners could repatriate approximately 50% of their after-tax profits, but further restrictions were later placed on remittances (Lehman 1992: 18). Furthermore, although the government did not embark upon nationalization on a grand scale after independence—as happened in the former Zaire, for instance—it did pursue the policy of "Zimbabweanisation" on a more limited scale (Lehman 1992: 26). Unlike Mauritius and Botswana, where the ethnic (i.e., religious and other) conflicts appear to have been contained if not resolved, in Zimbabwe "ethnic, class and political divisions remain as powerful obstacles to a coherent development strategy" (Lehman 1992: 15).

Zimbabwe's President Mugabe argues that "runaway market forces are leading a vicious, all-out assault on the poor" ("The Zimbabwean Model," 2002). He decries the modern trend of "banishing the state from the public sphere for the benefit of big business." For him, greedy businessmen cause price increases, and his solution is price controls. He also attacks privatization as a policy that benefits big business, and calls for an end to neo-liberal policies that have been offered as the solution to sustainable development.

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development in South Africa, Mugabe delivered a speech in which he contended:

The multilateral program of action the world set in Rio has not only been unfulfilled but it has been ignored, sidelined and replaced by a half-backed unilateral agenda of globalization in the service of big corporate interests of the North. The focus is profit, not the poor; the process is a globalization, not sustainable development, while the objective is exploitation not liberalism (South Africa Media Center, 3 September 2002).

While delivering a speech at the Non-Alignment Movement in February 2003, Mugabe decried the new age of "unilateralism *cum* hegemonism," supported by an interventionist military doctrine that bids the more powerful to impose their will on those who are weak:

Colonialists now assume a varied form, and seek to garner all of us of the Third World as we get globally villagized under false economic pretences. We are cheated to believe that we shall all be equals in that village, but are denied to assume military strength of the same magnitude as that of the western and more highly developed states. . . . Trade between rich and poor must be free and uninhibited, and no preferences or derogations will be tolerated in this global village governed by WTO norms. Politically our sovereignty will not have the same weight as that of big brother, and big brother has the right to determine the justice of our systems and not we, his.

For Bond (2002), however, Mugabe's radical rhetoric is only meant to confuse matters, since his socialist vision faded away long ago. "Talk left, act right," according to Bond, is the chosen Mugabe formula as the ruling ZANU-PF party continually seeks to revive popular memory of days past. For example, in June 2001, the president of the Zimbabwe National Student's Union was interrogated by Mugabe's Central Intelligence Organization after he was accused of "working with the MDC to topple the government," when in fact he was leading a widespread

student protest over unaffordable university fees and privatization of campus facilities and services.

Reassessing the Urban Development Challenges

In poor peri-urban neighborhoods such as Epworth, Dzivarasekwa Extension, and Hatcliffe Extension, service provision is weak. The participatory planning systems that can effectively link people with local governments and other stakeholders are barely available. Consequently, poor people in these neighborhoods have little, if any, influence on the resource allocation system in Harare. Decentralization is very weak and lacks a clear mandate within which the various stakeholders could effectively operate. At the national level, coordination between various institutions is tenuous, complex, and politically difficult. The Poverty Alleviation Action Plan (PAAP) has the components necessary to create a clear strategy to address poverty; unfortunately, this remains a largely theoretical concept. The PAAP provides few mechanisms for the redistribution of resources that could provide real opportunities for the urban poor, while safety nets are practically non-existent.

For urban poverty reduction policies to be effectively implemented, there is a need for a clearly defined institutional mandate. Current policies fall short of expectations because of unnecessary duplication of efforts, power struggles, and a scramble for scarcely available resources among various stakeholders and between government departments. Vital social policy issues like health, education, rule of law, and the provision of safety nets for vulnerable groups require attention. In all these areas, government, both at the city and state level, should not be seen as sole provider but as a participant in a collaborative effort with other urban development stakeholders.

The Harare case confirms that state institutions continue to suffer from financial and manpower shortfalls that severely constrain their capacity for economic and social policy formulation. Poverty alleviation is a big challenge that can be overcome only by working at multiple levels. At the national level, urban poverty policies can be implemented at the macro, meso, or microeconomic level. Central government is the major player at the macro level, and is responsible for coordinating national needs with various global opportunities at the mega level, through such policy actions as affecting investment decisions and trade by opening its markets and goods. The micro level, on the other hand, requires the

participation of all stakeholders. Micro-level activity should inform the development of policy and an effective governance environment at the macro and mega levels. Similarly, macro and meso level structures and processes need to empower people so that they can build upon their own strengths. State and private institutions, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, and international donors all play a pivotal role in promoting various development policies at the micro level.

The meso level lies between the macro and micro levels. It is at this level that city governments play a lead role by translating macro-level policies to micro constituencies and by providing support to local level development initiatives. Central governments are increasingly recognizing the importance of city governments and are increasingly decentralizing more activities to them. Unfortunately, in the case of Zimbabwe, decentralization is half-hearted, as it lacks the devolution of decision-making powers and financial autonomy. The Harare City Council is tasked with a lot of responsibilities but has no financial and manpower capacity to carry out its mandate. The role of various other stakeholders, particularly non-government organizations (NGOs), is a blessing, particularly for those people in peri-urban Harare who seem to be a last priority under the current government policies.

Urban governance is undoubtedly one of the major challenges facing authorities in Zimbabwe. Local governance is about the roles and representation of all development stakeholders in governance issues, and it is about informal and formal politics. The global development model promoted by the notion of governance brings other stakeholders to the same table with the state. The Zimbabwean case shows that this new model can be problematic when the relationships between the various stakeholders, particularly the state and NGOs, are contradictory. In Zimbabwe, issues of political participation remain unresolved.

As was the case in the colonial era, the urban development system in Zimbabwe is still hierarchically structured and top-down in approach, and therefore fails to mobilize community participation. The community is voiceless, frustrated, and impatient with the status quo, thus killing any chance of collaborative efforts for community development. Lacking any form of defense mechanism, the poor continuously suffer in desperation as they try to get access to the services that will satisfy their minimal livelihood needs. Desperation in individuals leads to deterioration in self-esteem and consequently in the capacity to negotiate with other stakeholders. Community action, planning, and management are important, but are ultimately meaningless if they leave out the people who reside

in the affected communities. Issues of tenure are particularly important to the residents of Epworth, Dzivarasekwa Extension, and Hatcliffe Extension. Indeed, tenure provision will not only lift the spirits of these residents, but will also empower them and provide their best route to recovery. Without tenure, the status of these residents remains temporary and vulnerable to exploitation by politicians interested in advancing their own agendas.

Conclusion

The case of Zimbabwe's transcendence from the colonial era to independence shows that institutions indeed endure. Particularly for the urban poor, little has changed in terms of their plight, and for some, things are getting worse. In the face of hostile institutional and political environments, the role of the planner has to change significantly. Planning is failing to respond to the changing socio-economic needs of society and lacks innovation, as planners face political pressures that tend to be associated with short-term political gains. For example, in election years, the most environmentally damaging practices of urban agriculture are permitted to continue, and a blind eye is turned to squatter settlements. Haphazard, illegal settlements such as Whitecliffe and Tongogara along the Harare-Bulawayo road, Sally Mugabe Heights in Borrowdale, and Mbuya Nehanda in Dzivarasekwa Extension—all works of the self-proclaimed ex-combatants—are mushrooming unchallenged. Political promises are consistently made, despite the fact that there are no resources to support the rhetoric.

Overall, there is a breakdown in the governance structure. This breakdown results in numerous problems, including the failure of governance systems to provide adequate infrastructure and services; failure to promote environmental health; failure to disseminate adequate information regarding such critical issues as HIV/AIDS; failure of planning to provide adequate land to accommodate the needs of the urban poor; failure to provide the security of tenure to the urban poor; and failure by decision-makers to have a strategic vision. Financial resources are scarce and there is little support given to the informal sector. Furthermore, high housing standards are putting houses beyond the reach of the poor. The poor are therefore compelled to degrade the environment while executing their survival strategies. There is an urgent need to review the nature and effectiveness of the existing planning systems.

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15

SOMALIA'S CITY OF THE JACKALS

POLITICS, ECONOMY, AND SOCIETY IN MOGADISHU, 1991–2003

Omar A. Eno

In 1991, when the capital city of Mogadishu was destroyed and devastated by inter-tribal wars between militias from the nomadic groups, Ahmed Naji Sa'ad, a famous Somali singer, composed a song to demonstrate his empathy with the historical city of Mogadishu. The title of the song poses a question to all Somali bards, which to date nobody has answered it. The title is: "*Xamareey waa lagu xumeeyay ee yaa ku xaal maridoono?*" ("Oh you Mogadishu, home of history and heritage, you have been awfully and unjustly wronged, but, who will redress you for the destruction and devastation you suffered [in the hands of warlords, the Jackals]?")—Ahmed Naji Sa'ad, 1990s.

Introduction

In spite of the huge body of literature on the African urban crisis which focuses on themes such as overpopulation, unemployment, housing, prostitution, and environment (White: 1989), related issues of "inter-tribal" and civil wars in urban Africa have not been adequately addressed. For example, the question of the destruction and devastation of Somali cities, particularly Mogadishu—the capital city—and its environs, has not been seriously studied. The painful and senseless civil war in southern Somalia

ravaged historical cities, caused displacement of population as well as the obliteration of cultural heritage sites. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to explore the situation of the residents of Mogadishu who were compelled to adapt to a system of multiple administrations under the warlords mainly as a result of the civil war. The paper will also examine how the events that unfolded in Mogadishu influenced the movements in surrounding communities. In order to achieve the aforementioned objectives, this study will proceed by providing a brief account of developments in Mogadishu before the civil war.

Urban and Historical Development of Mogadishu

Mogadishu is one of the oldest cities in southern Somalia. It is situated along the East African coast. By the late nineteenth century, Mogadishu was comprised of the Shangaani and Hamarweyne districts, but it subsequently expanded its borders. As a result, Mogadishu evolved as the most important commercial city in the Benadir coast. Other important settlements within the region of this coast include Merka, Brava, Kisimayu, and Warshekh. Mogadishu was founded more than ten centuries ago, and since then became renowned for its thriving commercial relations with China, Persia, India, and the Arabian Gulf coast. As early as the twelfth century, travelers identified Mogadishu as a stoned wall and fortified city with a prospect of an emporium maritime trade and commercial entrepôts (Cassanelli: 1982). By the fifteenth century, the Portuguese strategy of exclusively controlling the trade routes of East Africa along the Indian Ocean coast plunged Mogadishu into commercial decline (Ahmed: 1993). Subsequently, in the eighteenth century the city fell under the control of the Omani Sultanate with its capital in Zanzibar Island (modern Tanzania). Under the authority of the Omani Sultanate, Mogadishu continued both its internal and external trade-relations with the outside world, particularly southern Arabia. For example, production of textiles in this settlement and others along the Benadir coast was expanded for export. Also the export of Ivory continued while slave plantations were established between the two rivers (Juba & Shebelli), located in the vicinity of the Benadir cities to grow grain for export. From this historic moment onward, Mogadishu was gradually dragged into the intricacies of European colonial political subjugation of African states. In 1889, Italy purchased the Benadir coastal cities of southern Somalia from the Sultan of Zanzibar, Sayid Said.

By the late nineteenth century, Mogadishu possessed many historical buildings partly consisting of marvelous mosques with Arabic and Asian architecture. These structures continued to be viewed as the epitome of southern Somalia's historical and cultural heritage, as well as the genesis of Somalia's civilization. As Mohamed highlights:

Many features of Mogadishu, particularly its urban morphology, illustrate the influence of the different periods. The old original urban centers, Hamarweyne and Shingaani, still stand on Mogadishu's initial site, but they were extensively damaged in these years of civil war. Shingaani suffered the most of the city itself. [With its] Arab influence in architecture [however], the Italians were the first to formulate and effect urban planning in their area of residence in Mogadishu. Before the collapse of [the Somali State] in 1990s, [Mogadishu] was the dominant national urban center in terms of governmental activities and military positions (Mohamed A. Ahmed: 2003).

The Italian takeover of Somalia Benadir did not foster the preservation of the existing historical and cultural heritage sites in Mogadishu. Traditionally, the significance of preserving cultural heritage is related to enhancing the appreciation of the present situation of Somali society through the examination of the past. Thus, the historical and cultural heritage of Mogadishu as in any given society is central to the link and memories of human originality which bonds with the past and the unfolding present. Unfortunately, in the Benadir case, the Italian colonial authority was more interested in developing agricultural plantations to boost the Italian economy overseas than to cautiously preserving the vestiges of the urban past.

At this point, it is necessary to examine Somalia's political background, especially the current inter-tribal civil wars, which in turn led to the unprecedented destruction of historical sites. Prior to European colonization the different groups, which constituted modern Somalia were administered separately. Therefore, the creation of a modern Somali state began with the unification of five previously independently administered colonies; Italian Somalia, British Somali-land, French Somali-land, the Ethiopia Ogaden, and the northern frontier district of Kenya (UNDP Report: 2001). In 1960, two of the five territories became independent; Italian Somali-land in the south obtained its independence on July 1, 1960 from the Italian colonial authority, while the British Somali-land in the north obtained its independence on June 26 of the same year from Britain (Dualeh: 2002). Soon after independence both states (Italian

Somali-land & British Somali-land) were conflated and formed into “the Somali Democratic Republic” (Mukhtar: 1996). In 1960, a general election was held and Aden Abdullah Osman was elected as the first president of the Somali democratic republic. Osman served his full five years period but was defeated in the next election by Abdirashid Ali Shermarke who, in turn, served for four years as the second president.

A vexed Somali layperson, who probably felt that his rights were abused, assassinated Shermarke in October 1969. This assassination was followed by a military coup d'état led by the General Mohamed Siyad Barre. Initially, the general populace supported the military take over that took place on October 21, 1969, under the belief that such a change would correct the ills of Shermarke's corrupt administration. Unfortunately, an unforeseen and bleak future was awaiting Somalia. As a matter of reality; it began the longest and the most arduous journey under general Barre's military dictatorship. From 1969 to 1991, Somalia experienced a malignant military administration, which was based on nepotism, human rights abuses, extortion, and hooliganism (Mukhtar: 1996).

The Rise and Fall of the Military Regime

When General Mohamed Siyad Barre came to power in 1969, he became popular quickly, mainly by cunningly vowing to restore equality, justice, and economic development to all Somalis. Barre pretentiously exploited tantalizing themes, such as unifying greater Somalia, reconciling inter-tribal differences, and enforcing the rights of women and minorities, bringing self-sufficiency, and egalitarianism that would satisfy the wishes of the general public. However, his pretentious strategy to please the general public did not last long, as the government began suppressing opposing views. Subsequently, Barre's clan became the single group that enjoyed extensive privileges. Thus, the popular support for the military regime and the predicted potential prosperity soon faded away, giving way to fear and intimidation. The new regime abrogated all forms of freedom and arrogated to itself and to its loyalists all profitable public institutions. This resulted in increasing popular mistrust of the military rule while violence became a political weapon or the instrument of state power. (Bahar, interview, 2002). This situation did not improve, but rather deteriorated, to the point that in 1991 every able-bodied Somali citizen from the Hawiya group purchased a gun and joined the popular struggle against the

military regime. After twenty-one years of military dictatorship, in 1991, a group of rebel militias, mainly from the Hawiya tribe, came together under the name "United Somali Congress." Their main objective was to liberate the Somali people from a corrupt military regime and to restore impartial administration. Since then, Mogadishu has fallen apart while its people are increasingly dissatisfied with the way the warlords and their militias are handling societal affairs. In this regard, each warlord introduced his own rules and regulations to the section, which falls under his domain (Barrow, interview, 2002).

The ouster of the military regime was precipitated by brewing internal disorder, particularly the lack of valid leadership. For example, other than the nomadic history and culture of the dominant groups, efforts were made by the state officials to discourage scholars from studying and acknowledging historical sites, languages, and religious heroes of non-nomadic Somalia. The aim was to undermine the non-nomadic cultures and to protect the interests of particular clans while renouncing the aspiration of others.

The civil war caused massive socio-economic destruction, including asset stripping, forced displacement, and the disruption of food supplies which led in turn to mass starvation in the riverine and inter-riverine regions of southern Somalia (UNDP Somalia: 1998). According to a UN estimate, some 1.5 million Somalis fled the country, and as many as 2 million were displaced internally. The civil war led to further fragmentation of political power; between 1991 and 1998 several regions either seceded or declared regional autonomy. Geographically and structurally, Somalia was divided into three regions, north, central, and south. However, after the Somali civil war of the 1990s, the northern region, which the British originally colonized, seceded and formed "the Republic of Somali-land." Also, the central region declared its own regional autonomy under the name of Puntland state. Unfortunately, all eyes were and are set on the south, which is the object of this paper. While the northern and central nomadic regions were relatively calm, some of their natives went to the sedentary southern region to create chaos in Mogadishu. As Cassanelli confirms, the warring nomad factions, who are portraying the entire Somali crisis as a civil war, can mislead others, especially non-Somalis. However, the reality is that this war is about material resources, particularly the inter-riverine fertile farmlands and the coastal regions including Mogadishu, which belong to the non-partisan and vulnerable groups (Cassanelli: 1996). Besides, in the south, a sedentary region, various armed militia groups from the central nomadic regions are the ones

currently contending to gain total control of the southern regions (Mukhtar: 1996).

Above all, the natives of the southern regions were unarmed, thus, they were forced out of their homeland by the militias, while people from other nomadic regions were transplanted into the inter-riverine and coastal towns (Prendergast: 1994a). These contending militia groups virtually destroyed the non-nomadic farmers of Bantu/Jareer origin, the Digil and Mirifle groups, and the mercantile Benadiri communities of Mogadishu city and its environs (Mukhtar: 1996).

In the wake of the Somali civil war, thousands of ordinary citizens fled and took refuge in the neighboring countries of Kenya, Ethiopia,¹ Djibuti, and Yemen. Subsequently, Mogadishu, the Somali capital, was stripped of its scarce resources by either the former members of old regime or the armed militiamen who felt that the looting was part of their rightful "spoils of victory." Thus, law and order in Mogadishu exist nominally, but in reality everyone is vulnerable. The collapse of government and the dissolution of the military in 1991 left the country awash with stockpiles of weapons acquired by the Barre military regime from Cold War allies. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc in Europe, a gigantic number of weapons was released onto the international market. This meant that, in the early 1990s, the warring groups in Somalia were able to draw on the existing arms in stores and also imported new ones into the country; this contributed to the destruction of Mogadishu. Basically, what the warlords have offered the Somali society for the past twelve years is guns and bullets, death and dilapidated cities. Put simply, the protracted conflict between the contending nomadic clans offered total failure (Mohamed Eno, interview, 2002). Soon after the fall of the military regime and the takeover by the warlords, a deep dichotomy and a struggle for the top position emerged among the militia factions. The capital city of Mogadishu remains divided into more than eight wards, each under the control of a warlord. Under such an environment, the warlords have fashioned-out arrangements to ensure relative order in their "colonies" (Jamaal Haji: 2002).

Somalia has several major and minor clans. Among the major clans currently contending for Somalia's power are the Hawiya and the Darood. Since independence, the latter has dominated Somalia's political arena and leadership. Therefore, by ousting Barre's regime (Darood), the Hawiya felt it was their turn to take control of Somalia's political leadership by organizing its own militia forces under the auspices of USC (United Somali Congress). In the process of organizing the militia groups against Barre's

forces, several Hawiya militias had joined forces to realize their objectives (Drysdale: 1994). After ousting Barre and his regime, the Hawiya groups did not have a proper plan to govern the nation, so their coalition fragmented into several units that began to fight against each other for the leadership of Somalia (Drysdale: 1994). Almost all the contending warlords in Mogadishu are from the Hawiya group.

Each warlord controls a section of Mogadishu city with the support of his immediate clan affiliates; this situation actually enforces and prolongs the anarchic situation in the settlement. Currently, there are no schools, no hospitals, no banks, no post offices, no water system, no electricity, no single currency, and no legitimate leadership. Several border posts have been placed within Mogadishu where each warlord exercises and imposes his authority upon his subjects. Also, there are about four different kinds of local Somali currencies and a few from neighboring countries being used in Mogadishu, but the U.S. dollar remains the standard core currency. The inflation rate in Mogadishu has skyrocketed (Aweis, interview, 2002). The question that immediately comes to mind is: How do the warlords and the Somali society manage to survive in such chaotic arrangements?

Multiple Administrations in Mogadishu City

Generally, the problem of economic growth and political instability of sub-Saharan Africa is receiving increasing attention among scholars. Indeed, no single cause explains the population growth and economic decline syndrome that confronts sub-Saharan Africa. Rapid societal change on a continental scale is a complex process, and many variables must be considered simultaneously (White: 1989). As mentioned earlier, since 1991, Somalia fell into a state of anarchy, which resulted in, among other things, a total breakdown of the social infrastructure. One of the political outcomes of the civil war is that the militias, headed by warlords, created multiple systems, which caused confusion in Somali society. Although there are some independent forces—such as the non-governmental organizations (NGOs), informal professional networkers, interest groups, and other organizations—who tried to alleviate these confusions, unfortunately, they are failing in their role as auxiliary infrastructure-builders and service providers. There has been limited appreciation of these multiple administrations by Somali society, particularly in relation to provision of services and to community activities, because they are too complicated for the

majority of urban poor people to grasp. (Abdullahi, interview, 2002). Thus, the solution is much more complex than the simple either/or alternatives that have so often been considered in the last twelve years in the Somalia conundrum.

However, according to the warlords, the multiple administrations in Mogadishu city are meant (1) to ameliorate the human rights abuses against the “minorities,” women’s rights, and the rights of the outcast groups, and (2) to improve the economy. In fact, these administrative objectives are to create an egalitarian Somali society that will be politically and economically affluent. After all, two of the main reasons to oust Barre and his regime were his autocratic military dictatorship and his failure to restore hope, economic development, and respect for human rights. The takeover by the warlords was supposed to be a new and progressive beginning to all Somalis. In fact, the result was the opposite; after the removal of Barre, the situation in Somali society has gone from bad to worse. According to a UNDP report,

In 1992, Amnesty International described the civil war and the famine in Somalia as a human rights disaster. Famine, it argued, was not the result of climatic factors and a deficit in food production, but was the consequence of long-term political processes and a civil war in which humanitarian and human rights norms were systematically violated (UNDP: 2001).

Due to this manmade disaster and devastation in Mogadishu and its environs, mortality and malnutrition were at a peak. According to Abdi Aden of Oxfom-UK, he described Mogadishu city and its surroundings as “one big graveyard” (Aden, interview, 1994). The people of Mogadishu have been the prime victims of looming atrocities, genocide, and massive human rights abuse.

The Somali civil war has turned this once-venerated city of Mogadishu into “the home of Jackals for nomads.” In the wake of the Somali civil war, some warlords have deliberately starved some Somali communities to death because of their clan affiliations. Such unfortunate communities did not have militias of their own for protection. Hence, when the international NGOs attempted to supply provisions and relief supplies to them, the warlords demanded a ransom for giving safe passage to the food deliverers. Otherwise, the militias would simply blowup the NGO trucks or kill the drivers and loot the supplies that were destined to the starving and unarmed people of the inter-riverine area. (Film: *Black Hawk Down*, 2001).

These militiamen are the backbones of all factions, and they consist of young males between 12 and 30 years of age. These militias take their orders directly from the warlords who normally provide them with food, weapons, ammunition, and narcotic drugs. Furthermore, the main struggle among the warlords in Mogadishu is to maximize the control of the scarce resources of this devastated city and its environs. Usually, these resources are generated from the revenues collected from the roadblocks, harbors, airports, and commercial centers such as markets, wholesale areas, and distribution centers. Unfortunately, all of these incomes are channelled into the pockets of a few warlords and businessmen. Consequently, most of this income goes toward purchasing more weapons and ammunition for further human destruction and toward other war-related expenditures; the desperately needed reconstruction of the local infrastructure is neglected (Eno: 2001a). Despite all the taxation rhetoric by the warlords, the "minorities" and the vulnerable are the only ones who pay taxes regularly; others rely on the mighty power of their clan affiliation for tax exemption.

Some of the warlords and the areas under their control in Mogadishu are: (1) Muse Sudi Yalaho, who controls some parts of Karan and Wadajir, (2) Omar Fiinish, who controls a large area of Wadajir, (3) Osman Hassan Aato, who controls Sei Piano area, (4) Said Bulbul, who controls a portion of Sei Piano up to the police post of Afgoye, (5) Mohamed Kanyare Afrah, who controls Daynile and its surroundings, (6) Hussein Mohamed Farah Aideed, who controls the Wardhigley area, particularly Villa Somalia, and who also controls some areas in Madina, (7) Ali Gedi Shidor, Hussein Boot, and the group known as Waceyslaha, who control the Beeyhaani area in the Shibis zone, (8) Abdikassim Salad Hassan, who controls Hodan and some parts of Hawl-Wadaag, and (9) Mohamed Dhere, who controls some arears of Karan and all the way to Bal'ad. There are a few more warlords, but they are less significant militarily.

Each warlord has a heavily guarded head-office in his area, where every day at sunset those who collected taxes deliver the daily collections. Each warlord nominated few close relatives or loyalists as cabinet ministers or spokespersons. The largest part of each warlord's financial gain comes from the businessmen who virtually control the economy of Mogadishu as a whole. These businessmen monopolize the import and export trade, while the warlords and their militiamen provide security and safety. There is also a strong relationship among the businessmen from all eight (or more) sections of Mogadishu. For example, when a businessman imports goods from abroad he does not pay duty to a central government,

which does not exist; instead he pays protection fees to the warlord, and the same applies for export (Barrow, interview, 2002). Another problem with Somalia's multiple administration, which is destroying the city of Mogadishu and its environs, is the environmental impact. Businessmen affiliated with the warlords are vigorously cutting down trees for charcoal, thereby destroying forest reserves. Like many parts of African cities, Mogadishu people rely heavily on charcoal as domestic fuel. However, the situation in Somalia's forest resources is worsened by the export of charcoal to Arabia. Thus, the forest resources of this region are already in critical condition, because many businessmen are selling huge amount of charcoal to other countries (Arabia) in order to generate foreign currency, destroying so many trees; for a similar situation in West Africa see White (1989).

Another mind-boggling exploitation and misuse of Somalia's national resource by the warlords and their allies is within the fishing industry. As we all know, Mogadishu and the Benadir coastal cities are rich in various fishery products. However, without supervision and without the sanction of qualified personnel from a legitimate central authority, the warlords are extracting various and precious fishery commodities, virtually killing this industry without any consideration for the future national interest (Aweis, interview, 2002).

Each warlords controls a section organized like a self-contained polity, which is "supposed" to have all the necessary and basic services to its subjects. These services include communication systems, radio stations, remittance centers, electricity, hospitals, water supply, schools, markets, transportation system, police stations, prison system, and judicial courts. However, in these courts, Muslim clergymen (Sheikhs) decide minor cases, while more serious cases tend to be taken to the warlords for final decision. Kinship is also important in the judicial matters. People from "minority" clans often have no means of seeking redress owing largely to the fact that they do not have their own warlords, hence they are called *Looma-oyayaasha*², or the vulnerable (Eno: 1997a). The Human Rights Watch/Africa reports that "the protection of the [Somali] population [is] in their discriminatory application. Protection, compensation, and justice too often depend ultimately on one's kinship group and its relative power in a local community" (Human Rights Watch/Africa: 1995). To the despair of the unarmed groups from the inter-riverine and coastal regions of southern Somalia, the result of militia takeover has not been freedom and justice as initially claimed by the warlords; rather, it was the replacement of one tribal dictatorship (Barre's) with many militia dictatorships,

and the continuation of macabre injustices and looting (Omar Eno: 2001b). For example, in the event of violence or misunderstanding between two groups in a business center or a market place, the solution must come first from the businessmen of that area, or from the tribal leaders of the parties in conflict. And ultimately, when they fail to resolve the problem then it is taken to the warlord, who normally rules in favor of the feared clan to avoid further confrontation and disruption of business activities. As mentioned earlier, in Somalia, most of the work on infrastructure building is done by international NGOs. In fact, the warlords sometimes blackmail these voluntary NGOs to pay protection fees. While the NGOs provide to the needy Somalis medical care, medicine, food, water, employment, and education, the warlords are thriving out of lawlessness.

During the early years of the war, people were deserting cities and taking refuge abroad or in neighboring countries. Others opted to move to safe locations within Somalia where they would obtain protection and support from their kin groups. As a result, the word refugee became synonymous with Somalis. During the civil war in Somalia, those who could manage to travel either by air or by boat reached very far and became destitute in foreign or neighboring nations. Thus, most of the displaced indigenous residents of Mogadishu do not feel they are safe or economically viable to go back to their homeland (Ahmed: 1995). In fact, the number of Somali refugees within Africa is soaring, and those in the overseas Diaspora are skyrocketing in numbers as well. Estimates suggest that there are over one million Somalis in the Diaspora who play a major economic role in Somalia through the remittance of money and other necessities from overseas. Basically, a huge number of families in Somalia are financially supported from abroad, either by relatives or spouses. For several years, financial remittance was handled largely by Al-Barakat, a money transfer agency established by people related probably to the warlords. Al-Barakaat functioned effectively, however, the U.S. government closed it due to suspicions that it was linked to the Al-Qaeda network. Since then, it has been replaced by a privately owned organization named Dahabshiil, a remittance agency that is more efficient in services than the banned Al-Barakaat. Dahabshiil is more efficient because of its speedy transfer of money and its reliability.

In tropical Africa, traditionally the towns and cities are known as economic, political, and spiritual developing centers of the community at large, hence they are seen as the driving engines to progress (Gavrilova: 1971). However, the situation in Somalia is quite contrary to this popular

expectation. Due to the lack of a central and legitimate government, the people of Mogadishu are being held hostage by multifarious warlords, thus stagnating all possibilities of economic growth, political consciousness, and communal well-being. As a result, the city of Mogadishu has lost its valuable cultural heritage and historical morphology, and most of its population has been displaced due to unnecessary inter-tribal civil war in southern Somalia.

Conclusion

In conclusion, destabilization led to de-urbanization and disasters. Therefore, Mogadishu's current and main concern is the high rate of malnutrition and the chronically poor socio-economic conditions across the southern regions. These include: (1) lack of sustainable infrastructure; (2) depletion of household assets; (3) lack of labor opportunity; (4) limited benefits to the unprivileged of economic growth; (5) lack of dependable macroeconomic management; and (6) dependency on a limited export market. The warlords and their multiple administrations in Mogadishu have created all of the above anomalies. Unfortunately, Somalia's economy was notoriously unconventional even before the collapse of the state institutions. Thus, it is almost impossible at the present time to obtain accurate economic measurements of growth, especially in the face of growing informalization and deregulation of the economy. Nevertheless, in Mogadishu, yearly per capita income is estimated to be US \$300 for the urban population, US \$106 for the nomadic population, and US \$149 for the rural population. These estimates situate Somalia at or near the bottom of the global per capita income earners (UNDP: 2001). Considering the above economic indices, there is the possibility of further impoverishment of both rural and urban households.

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- Mohamed Abdulkadir Eno. Interview in his office in Nairobi, Kenya, 2002.
- Jamaal Haji Mohamed. Interview in Mombasa, Kenya, 2002.

Film

- Black Hawk Down*. This is a film about U.S. Marines in Mogadishu during Operation Restore Hope and the humanitarian relief operation to save the Somalis devastated by a civil war and inter-clan conflict, 2001.

Notes

1 Amazingly, with the exception of the Somali Bantu/Jareer who identifies themselves as Africans, every Somali nomad has ethnically claimed a descendent of Arab ancestry, by fabricating untenable lineage, which connects them to Prophet Mohamed. Thus, Somalis saw nothing wrong to identify themselves with the Arabs. However, during the Somali civil war of 1991 when many refugees really needed foreign assistance, I saw no Arab nation coming forward for Somalia's rescue, they utterly abstained. To the Somali society's surprise, Ethiopia and Kenya, *the Africans*, have opened their doors for assistance to any Somali refugee. Unfortunately, according to Somalia's mythic beliefs, Ethiopia and

Kenya are supposed to be “the enemies” of Somalia. I hope that we Somalis have learned something, because “a friend in need is a friend indeed.”

2 Literally, the word Looma-oyayaasha means in Somali language “those (unarmed) whom nobody would cry and drop tears for them when killed.” In other words, they do not have the clan protection and potential backing for retaliation, so remain vulnerable and easy prey.

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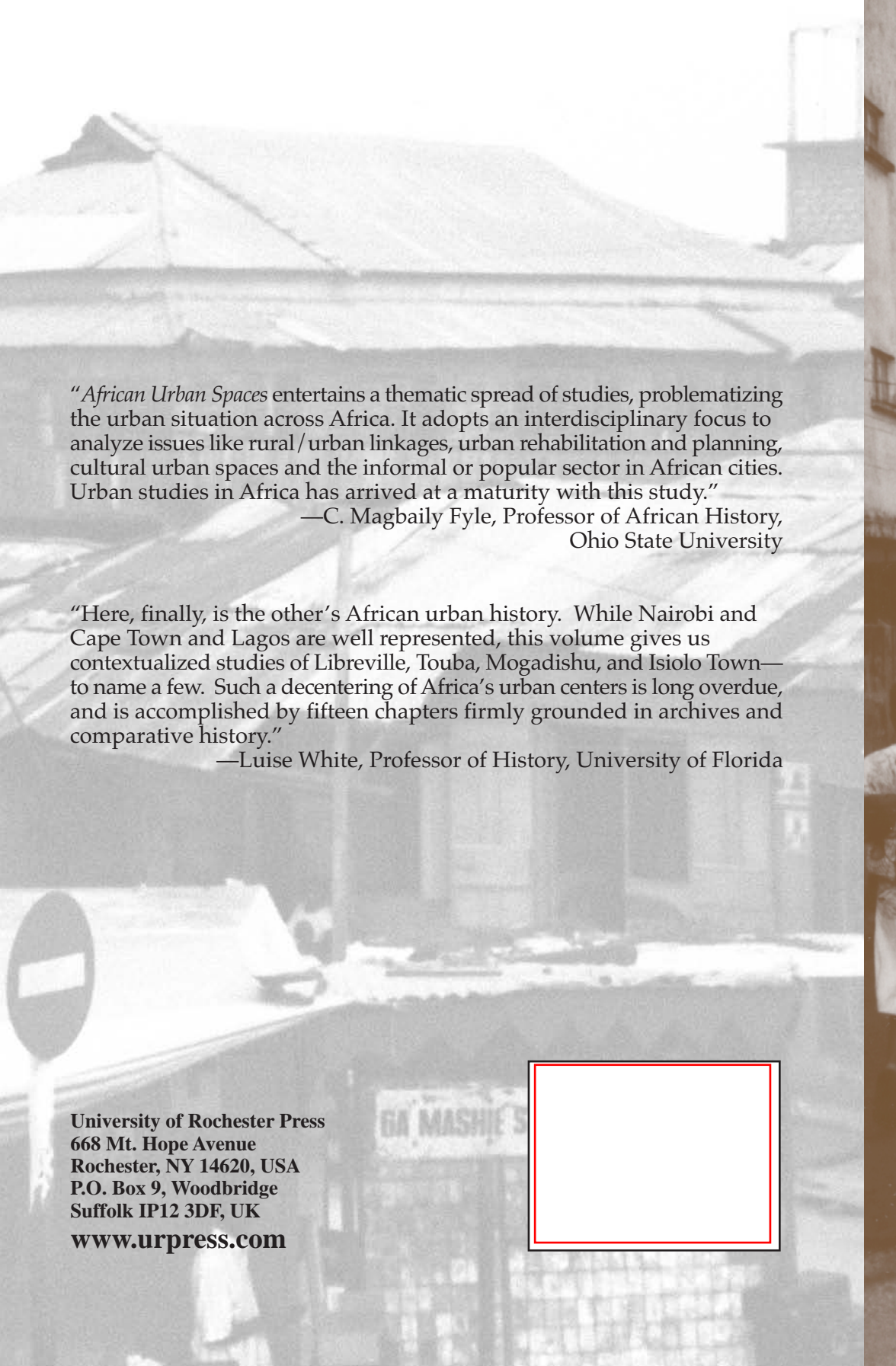
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African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective presents new and interdisciplinary approaches to the study of African urban history and culture. It presents original research and integrates historical methodologies with those of anthropology, geography, literature, art, and architecture. Moving between precolonial, colonial, and contemporary urban spaces, it covers the major regions, religions, and cultural influences of sub-Saharan Africa. The themes include Islam and Christianity, architecture, migration, globalization, social and physical decay, identity, race relations, politics, and development. This book elaborates on not only what makes the study of African urban spaces unique within urban historiography, it also offers an encompassing and up-to-date study of the subject and inserts Africa into the growing debate on urban history and culture throughout the world.

The book is divided into four sections. Following an overview on the state of urban history in Africa today, the first section of the book deals with the concept of built space and how religious factors, colonial ideologies, and conceptions of urban areas as more “modern” spaces shaped the development of urban environments. The second section turns to racial and ethnic factors in the formation of African urban spaces in Kenya and South Africa. Colonial discourse in Kenya employed racial stereotypes of Africans and Indians to justify segregation, pass laws, and exploitation, and left a legacy that impedes the development of urban areas today. In South Africa, racial categories were complicated by class, occupation, and age, factors that set Afrikaner miners apart from other Afrikaners, and a younger generation of radical colored elite apart from their parents. The third section explores the development of complex and cosmopolitan urban identities within African cities and the global nature of colonial rule that encouraged new movements of goods, peoples, and ideas. Foreign influences, including Christians, Muslims, Europeans, and Vietnamese, as well as other Africans, contributed to the increasing heterogeneity of African cities, but also created new residential and occupational patterns. The last section focuses on the problems of urban society and depicts the historical roots of poverty, crime, overcrowding, and general urban decay in Nigeria, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, and Somalia today. They also show how an understanding of their origins can suggest ways in which urban problems can be alleviated. The opportunities provided by the urban milieu are endless and each study opens new potential avenues of research. This book explores some of those avenues and lays the groundwork on which new studies can build.

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"African Urban Spaces entertains a thematic spread of studies, problematizing the urban situation across Africa. It adopts an interdisciplinary focus to analyze issues like rural/urban linkages, urban rehabilitation and planning, cultural urban spaces and the informal or popular sector in African cities. Urban studies in Africa has arrived at a maturity with this study."

—C. Magbaily Fyle, Professor of African History,
Ohio State University

"Here, finally, is the other's African urban history. While Nairobi and Cape Town and Lagos are well represented, this volume gives us contextualized studies of Libreville, Touba, Mogadishu, and Isiolo Town—to name a few. Such a decentering of Africa's urban centers is long overdue, and is accomplished by fifteen chapters firmly grounded in archives and comparative history."

—Luise White, Professor of History, University of Florida

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