

Olufemi Taiwo. *How Colonialism Preempted Modernity in Africa*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010. xii, 352 pp.

This book is about the nature of the relation between colonialism and modernity. It addresses the key issue of how and why colonialism was a bulwark against any transition to modernity in the continent. Olufemi Taiwo selected three West African countries and former British colonies, Nigeria, Kenya, and Tanzania, as case studies in the post-independence decade, to answer those thorny questions.

Taiwo's major assumption is that the legal system inherited from colonialism was not fair and this explains why liberal democracy and the rule of law failed to take root in Africa. He challenges what has become conventional wisdom in studies pertaining to colonialism and modernity: the belief that colonialism was a uniform phenomenon affecting the whole continent in the same way and that colonialism and modernity are twins.

A great deal of care should be taken to differentiate between colonialism and modernity, because historically they are separate and should also be separated for analytical purposes. They do not, in fact, belong to the same discourse. African colonialism is different and specific. Former colonies like the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa have, by every accord, reached the highest steps of modernity. This is not the case with the "dark continent." What Africa has achieved are superficial markers, Taiwo insists: rapid urbanization, limited industrialization, mass consumption, more schooling, and a road infrastructure. The distinctive marker of modernity is its politico-philosophical discourse summed up in three concepts: subjectivity, reason, and progress. It is here, that Taiwo breaks new ground.

Suggesting that Africa is impermeable to modernity or that Africans are congenially unable to work modernity are non plausible, racist theses. Africa and Africans, indeed showed openness, flexibility, adaptability, and diligence to modern forms of life when they were offered the opportunity.

Contrary to previous scholarship which lumps European colonists together, Taiwo believes that missionaries, differently from traders and especially administrators after them, should be credited for the implantation of "civilization" in Africa. They proved more revolutionary than the administrators in their interaction with Africans. They introduced Christianity and set up an educational system for the indigenous population. But, most importantly, missionaries, like the Rev. Henry Venn, according to Taiwo, were keen on creating a middle class committed to civilization as partakers of its fruits. They involved native Africans in their "civilizing" mission and trained them to establish and run their own lives and institutions, beginning with their churches. Even though the missionaries' most notable contribution was in the realm of religion and education, they similarly promoted agriculture, medicine, architecture, and printing. In so doing, they had many converts who responded enthusiastically and took over the task of modernizing their African communities in partnership. Samuel Ajayi Crowther, James Africanus Beale Horton, Rev S.R.B Attoli Abuma, and others were Taiwo's "prophets without honor" and the apostles of modernity.

Henry Venn and those who shared a similar philosophy wanted a total remaking of the African world, a development that was to be anchored on commerce and civilization, which

was believed to be a prerequisite to Christianity, a remaking and a development which would start under their supervision, and which eventually would be turned over to Africans themselves. This is what Taiwo calls the autonomy model according to which Africans can be trusted to run their own affairs and had to be equipped with the capacity for self-support.

The opposite model, the conservative and reactionary one, is the aid model; the one recommended and implemented by administrators –soldiers, residents, hired guns, who since the late nineteenth century governed Africa. These, like Lord Lugard, favored recruits of chiefly provenance, not outcasts; inaugurated socio-cryonics with its attendant consequence of preserving or shaping existing institutions, regardless of their state of health or relevance to serve their needs of a cheap empire-building; and had a narrow imperialist perception of their mission, to do whatever for the glory of the mother country and the profits of their sponsors. To this main “philosopher of the empire” the African belonged to the infancy of the human race. Worse still, he was a savage, an animal who was capable of mimicking humans. That was a sterling view of one of the most celebrated administrators of the British Empire in Africa.

For Lugard and many administrators like him, the African failed to cope with the rest of humanity and was not, therefore, in a position to enjoy the fruits of civilization. They had to grow and mature before admission to the community of adults. This is why throughout the entire period that he served as administrator in Nigeria, Lugard fought a fierce battle against a specific group of natives: the Western-educated elite made up mostly of returning slaves and indigenous converts to Christianity.

Such racist views of Africa and Africans were strongly reflected in the legal system that Anglophone countries inherited from Britain and which accounted for the failure of such countries to have representative and fair systems. Given that the inhabitants of the colonies were judged to be beyond the pale of British citizenship for no other reason than their being characterized as inferior human beings, they were not, then considered as individuals and could not, as a result, aspire to the position of a citizen and holder of rights. Moreover, the modern legal system is built on a basic philosophical disposition that is suspicious of power and of the state in which it is vested. Such suspicion is absent from the legal discourse about Africa.

Africa was in the process of turning modern, but colonial officials aborted those efforts when they set up indirect rule in the service of their countries. Taiwo remained, however, positive about the prospects of a modern Africa.

This study, which matured over almost a decade, should be recommended to philosophers, students of African studies, and all those concerned with the future of Africa.

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Meine Pieter van Dijk (ed.). *The New Presence of China in Africa*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009. 224 pp.

Africa is a new frontier for Chinese expansion in the early twenty-first century. At the Beijing Summit and the Third Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in November 2006, Chinese President Hu Jintao pledged to give aid and open its market for over four hundred types of tariff-free import items from Africa. Even though China has neither the power nor infrastructure to be a First World nation at the moment, it has the ability, resources and political will to be a champion of the developing world. Meanwhile the United States is facing serious military setbacks in Iraq and Afghanistan and losing the diplomatic battles against North Korea and Iran over their nuclear weapon programs. It has become increasingly difficult for Washington to maintain its global dominance. Against this significant shift of balance of power, Meine Pieter van Dijk has brought together a team of economists to evaluate the success of China in fostering closer diplomatic and economic relations with African states.

All the ten chapters are divided thematically into four sections. In part one, the introductory chapter by Meine Pieter van Dijk sets the framework for understanding the rise of China in Africa and the geopolitical implications for the West. Filip de Beule and Daniël Van den Bulcke review the remarkable accomplishments of China's open door policy and highlight the importance of Africa for its economic growth. As China becomes "an outward investor, both as a market seeker and a resource seeker," it has made significant inroads into Africa's industrial, commercial and agricultural sectors (p. 49). Therefore, the new Chinese presence in Africa should be seen as an extension of its economic policy.

Part two explores how China has combined the strategies of providing government aid, promoting direct investments and creating free trade agreements to expand its influence. According to Jean-Raphaël Chaponnière, most Chinese aid and loans were spent on the infrastructure projects and the transfer of technical knowledge. This has challenged the Western paradigm that regards neoliberal structural reform as a precondition for Africa's capacity building and development. Peter Kragelund and Meine Pieter van Dijk reconstruct a regionally diversified picture of Chinese economic activities in Africa. They point out that most Chinese investments are concentrated in those countries with strong diplomatic ties with Beijing. Meine Pieter van Dijk stresses that Beijing has developed numerous free trade partnerships to reorient the African economy towards the fast-growing Chinese market.

Part three presents in-depth case studies of Chinese expansion into Africa. Anders Bastholm and Peter Kragelund investigate the scale of Chinese investments in Zambia's mining, construction, and agricultural sectors. Because Beijing has provided Chinese state-owned enterprises with easy access to investment capital and the necessary banking services, these companies are more competitive than the multinational firms in Zambia. Meine Pieter van Dijk looks at the Chinese responses to the civil war and human rights abuses in Darfur in 2008. At least in Sudan, China was under tremendous international pressures to set aside its policy of non-intervention and to negotiate directly with the warring factions. However, what distinguishes China from other Western powers is the diversification of its investment strategies in Africa. According to Meine Pieter van Dijk, China recently built an industrial zone in

Ethiopia and an export processing zone in Tanzania, and invested heavily in African banking institutions. Evidently, the Chinese state-owned enterprises have enjoyed strong support from Beijing and prepared to make long-term business decisions rather than seeking immediate profits.

In the concluding section, Peter Knorringa asserts that the growing Chinese economic influence may not contribute to the rise of African corporate responsibility as the West has expected. But this assessment overlooks the fact that many African ruling elites have advantaged themselves by tapping into the Chinese aid, investments and bilateral trade. Meine Pieter van Dijk draws attention to the importance of energy security. As with other global powers, China is concerned about energy supplies in the midst of high oil prices and a global rush for oil, natural gas, and other resources essential for industrial development. Beijing has succeeded in pursuing a pragmatic policy that serves its diplomatic and economic agendas since the 1990s.

This edited book vividly portrays a strong sense of pragmatism and opportunism in China's Africa policy. Overall, China today is determined to maintain a stable international environment for its economic growth and to avoid provoking a vigorous response from the United States towards its expansion. Such geopolitical and diplomatic agendas are as important as economic concerns. One methodological problem of this work is that most contributors only draw on western language materials to investigate the subject. If they had studied the Chinese official and unofficial sources, they would have acknowledged that Beijing has constantly adjusted its strategies to maintain its competitive effectiveness in the continent.

Equally important is the growing Chinese cultural influence in Africa. From 2001 to 2006, more than 10,000 African government officials and technical personnel received training in China. Today Beijing has founded twenty-four Confucius Institutes in seventeen African countries to promote the study of Chinese language and culture, and offered scholarships to African students to go to China (Paradise, 2009; Sautman and Yan, 2009). In addition, there have been increasing numbers of Chinese migrants in search of business opportunities in Africa (Dobler, 2009). These technicians, students and migrants are the new agents of China's penetration into the continent.

In conclusion, the editor and contributors have presented accurate, up-to-date quantitative data about the rise of Chinese influence in Africa. This book is an important reference for anyone interested in the latest development of Sino-African relations.

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