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Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief and the Theistic Problem of Evil

JOHN A. I. BEWAJI

INTRODUCTION

In the pioneering works in African religious scholarship by indigenous and Western writers, Idowu, Mbiti, Parinder, Ray, Tempels, and others, have shown that Africans are not so intellectually impoverished as to be lacking in a sophisticated conception of the Supreme Being. Such a Being is recognized and given a premier position or status in their religions. These scholars have also identified some of the attributes of the Supreme Being within the indigenous African religions that they have studied. Some of these attributes have been very similar to those projected in the Christian religious understandings of the Supreme Being--omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, benevolence, divinity, creator, etc.

Their works have provided starting points for further research and discussion, but most students of religions have been wont to ignore this aspect of their worthy contribution to scholarship, and have rather taken their works as definitive and beyond question. Even when contrary views are aired, the pioneering works of these first African theologians, religious scholars, and anthropologists are often cited as authorities to uphold a point of view that was fast losing credibility.

The African, particularly the Yoruba, about whom Idowu, Mbiti and others have written, unarguably, possess a conception of Supreme Deity. In fact, this Supreme Being has many superlative attributes, but the possession of these qualities does not lead to the type of impasse or contradiction that arises within theistic Christian religion; namely, the irreconcilability of the existence of God and evil in the universe. Staying strictly within Yoruba religion, these writers present *Olodumare* as Christian God, Muslim Allah, and *Esu* as Satan or Devil. That this interpretation is wrong and misleading in the consequences it produces is argued here.

OLODUMARE: THE SUPREME BEING AMONG THE YORUBA

Supporting the need for his research into Yoruba beliefs in the Supreme Being, Bolaji Idowu says:

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In all the previous works which have relevance to the religion of the Yoruba, the Deity has been assigned a place which makes Him remote, of little account in the Scheme of things. Very few people who really know the Yoruba can escape the uneasy feeling that there is something inadequate, to say the least, about such a notion; and it is the "uneasy feeling" that led to my investigation of what the Yoruba actually believe about the Deity ¹.

Such a mistaken conception of the Supreme Being among the Yoruba is consonant with the general attitude of the European colonialist who, out of ignorance, derided the culture, custom, religion, political organization, science, commerce, etc., of the so-called "primitive" peoples of the world. Such an attitude easily excuses and justifies their actions in the subjugation and forceful appropriation of the colonies. Surely, a people that supposes the Supreme Being to be a little "higher" than some other being, or puts Him "first among equals" must be inferior to those people who place Deity above and beyond the level of other beings entirely ². Such people need assistance, because

... the native says that he enjoys a life of complete idleness and repose, ... and passes his time dozing or sleeping. Since he is too lazy or too indifferent to exercise any control over earthly affairs, man on his side does not waste time in endeavouring to propitiate him, but reserves his worship and sacrifice for more active agents ³.

And, as Parrinder says, in a rather ambivalent way that exhibits his confusion and the dilemma of the foreign theologian scholar:

Polytheists who justify their worship of lesser gods, when pressed, may refer to the remoteness of the sky or at least to the more pressing demands of the other gods. These are nearer to him, more likely to intervene in his life, and easier of access. They might be annoyed if they were neglected in favour of one sole deity. Any priest will say that his god is a son of the Supreme Being, and that God speaks through His sons. But he will argue that he must obtain the favour of all the spirits, and not please one alone, lest the others withdraw their favour or power ... He is thought to be more remote from human affairs and needs than the other gods which are his sons ⁴.

Further on he says:

On the whole, worship is irregular ... Apart from occasional ejaculations made before a journey or an undertaking, many people do not seem to give God much place in their life ... Prayers are offered to Him at any time and place, though generally these are individual prayers ⁵.

Finally, numerous issues of interest arise from these passages. Remarking on them is only to elicit how they have made this and similar studies necessary. First is the idea of *deus incertus* and *deus remotus* of Westermann that it echoes ⁶. Second is the conception of the divinities as the sons of the Supreme Being--an idea imported, (or smuggled as P'Bitek will say), into the conception of the relationship between God and the divinities from Christian religion. From all available data, there is scarcely any suggestion that Olodumare had any sons ⁷. Other divinities are his creations; some have been with him and are still messengers to Him and no one knows or contemplates their origin as such. Finally, the suggestion that God, because of His remoteness, is seldom worshipped or His peace of mind disturbed by unnecessary worries and that He is called everywhere and anywhere and at any time by (wo)men, seems to be an issue of

self-contradiction. In fact, Idowu has pointed out the error in supposing that Olodumare is not worshipped ⁸.

Idowu, Mbiti, Awolalu, and even Parrinder (when the facts cannot be ignored) have the apparent contradictions in their own works, but these errors have persisted inspite, or because, of them ⁹. Kato, for example, as recently as 1975, says:

Most of his (Mbiti's) writings concern the basic philosophy of African Theology. The basic premise seems to be the presupposition that African traditional religions are well organized systems. It is assumed that the animist in Africa has not only known God truly, but that he has worshipped him ¹⁰.

On the next page he says,

But contradiction is not the worst problem of Mbiti's theology. It is this universalism that poses a threat to Biblical Christianity in Africa. His great enthusiasm in 'Africanizing' Christianity, while done in good faith poses a great threat to the faith which was *once for all* delivered to the saints ¹¹.

For Kato, traditional concepts of God in Africa are defective, inferior and unworthy of his Divine Supremacy. Only the gifted Semites of the first century had clear vision. One may ask what about Islam, and other world religions? His response is an obvious derision. He quotes Okite as saying of Mbiti's *Concepts of God in Africa* that:

... (the book) reads like a massive research project of St. Anselm's intended to prove that even for Africa, God is that than which nothing greater can be conceive ¹².

Now, self-contradiction in a rational being at the level found by Kato is surely inexcusable, but threatening Biblical Christianity as the Pastor is professed to have done is a crime (sin) against his faith. How can any Christian make such a blasphemous comparison or analogy? Thus, his effort fails, as his belated attempt at an anthology aimed at showing African God as a being that which nothing greater can be conceived is doomed *ab initio*. We must wipe out all non-Christian beliefs, religions, cultures, ideas and (projected *ad absurdum*) all non-Christian peoples, to make the earth safe for the second coming of the saviour--unless they repent. The transplantation of Christianity (and Islam) and the Middle Eastern, Arabian culture with its Greco-Roman appendages must be total if humanity in Africa is to see the true light ¹³. Only the achievement of this goal would please Kato.

For brevity, one may systematize what has become glaring from the foregoing considerations. In the first place, the most early writers did not credit the African (the Yoruba) with any knowledge of God. Secondly, irrepressible facts have negated such a position, so the scholars now credit Africans (Yoruba) with ideas, concepts, and even, worship--no matter how minimally--of God. The period is that of development attendant upon the awareness created by African scholars steeped in Christian theological persuasion. Thirdly, the dispute then shifted from the ontological issue of the existence of God to people's conception of Him. That is, do these Africans (Yoruba) really have an adequate idea of this *Imago Dei* ¹⁴? Where and how are they going to come by it? There is no Mount Sinai or Horeb, no green grazing pasture that spreads limitlessly, only dense forests! So, the revelations they can have must be of lesser divinities related to fertility, huge rocks, and trees! That is the position of Kato and those with similar intellectual pretensions.

Then, the onus has shifted back on the African scholar who has always been in a position of weakness. A colonized people need to struggle on all planes to assert their equal humanity with others. So, they introduced the fourth dimension of intellectual smuggling of their Christian beliefs into the religious terrain of Africa; they Hellenized and clothed the African God in borrowed garbs, as if He had always been nude!

In these attempts, some problems have arisen. This has been so because of the conceptual categories and attributes they have used. In this regard, Kato is right in accusing Idowu, Mbiti, Awolalu, etc., of Hellenizing African God. While Okot P'Bitek called for demythologizing and dehellenizing the African God, Kato has called for the eradication of African God, as it amounts to total falsehood¹⁵. But these calls have not even considered whether such conceptualizations of the Supreme Being by the writers have been true to the available facts. P'Bitek's work stemmed from nationalism, while Kato's work stemmed from ecumenism. P'Bitek did show that intellectual smuggling is an academic crime that should be purged, but the implication of the cure and the cure itself consists in the elucidation of their mistakes. One of such mistakes was the absence of a clear discussion of the relationship between God (Olodumare) and evil. As Kato says:

Another problem in Mbiti's presentation is the absence of hardly any reference to evil attributed to God in African traditional religions¹⁶.

Now, Kato seems to be saying that Olodumare is partly evil; that is his interpretation of the understanding of evil by Africans. This needs to be subjected to closer examination. It is this and related matters that constitute the point of departure of this essay from the works of Mbiti, Idowu, and others. When the African theologian scholars discuss the attributes of God among the Africans, they ignore the problem of evil. The attributes they ascribe to Olodumare are, according to Idowu, that he is creator, king omnipotent, omniscient, judge, immortal, and holy¹⁷. In another work, Olodumare is unique, real, controller and one¹⁸. According to Mbiti, God (Olodumare) in addition to those attributes listed by Idowu, has other attributes such as transcendence, immanence, self-existence, pre-eminence, greatness, causal powers, immateriality, mysteriousness, unity, eternity, plurality, mercifulness, kindness, love, faithfulness, and goodness¹⁹. All these attributes, when co-present in the Supreme Being to the maximum, generate the problem of evil in any religion. This problem has remained a cancerous one in Judaeo-Christian religion (post Old Testament) and has been the source of truculent atheism, skepticism, and agnosticism. We will briefly examine this problem as it arises in Christian religion and ask whether this problem is equally or even ever present in the Yoruba understanding of God (Olodumare).

THE THEISTIC PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEM OF EVIL

The theistic problem of evil can be properly appreciated if one apprehends the import of the following passage from Quinn. Of theistic religions, he says:

According to theists, human persons are called upon to worship God. Theists typically hold that their reverence and adoration are the appropriate responses to Him. This view presupposes that God deserves or merits worship. If a being were not worthy of worship, then surely worship directed at such a being would be widely inappropriate. But what features must

a being have to be fitting and deserving object of worship? It seems clear that only a morally perfect being could be worthy of unqualified devotion typical of theistic worship. Moral goodness falling short of perfection might earn a being admiration but never adoration. This is why it is essential to theistic orthodoxy that God be thought of as perfectly good ²⁰.

That Christianity and other theistic religions believe in God is a basic component of these religions. These religions would not have any further significance and would lose their followers and devotion if the God-head is detracted from. As such, affirmation of the existence of a perfect God is a necessity. However, the affirmation of the existence has often sprung from diverse cognitive directions and sources syncretized into an absolute epistemic criterion. To support the position that God exists, some would adduce revelation--that God disclosed Himself in varying degrees appropriate to circumstances to certain people such as Moses, Mohammed, and the writer of Revelations in the Holy Bible; some others will claim knowledge of the numinous by direct intuition from the innermost of their being; some will adduce moral grounds to support such knowledge; some others will use the nature of the cosmos to support their epistemic affirmation, while others yet claim the knowledge by a leap of faith. By whatever method of cognitive discovery God is arrived at within all forms of theism, certain attributes are said to be intrinsic to His nature to deserve the exalted and unparalleled devotion and worship.

While it could be philosophically interesting to critically analyse the validity or otherwise of the various epistemic sources and grounds for the existence of Deity, while atheism and agnosticism, and of course, theism, has been occasioned by this type of philosophical undertaking, this is not of direct relevance to our discussion of the problem of evil. Our concern is with the given-ness of Deity in theism. This given-ness also has certain attributes. It is the consequence of these attributes that brings into focus, against the background of factual and rational experience and contemplation, the problem of evil. Going back to Quinn in his very ingenious and lucid essay quoted from above, one clearly sees the ramifications of the issue. He avers that:

Theists also hold that God created the heavens and the earth. God is, therefore, responsible for at least some of the good and evil in the cosmos of contingent things. Theists cannot avoid grappling with the problem of evil. How could a perfectly good being create a cosmos containing less good than the very best he could have created? And if a being worthy of worship could create the best cosmos he could, is a theist committed to holding that this is the best of all possible worlds ²¹.

Thus, properly understood, the Divine Being, worthy of worship in the great scriptural religions (and here the reference points are Christian and Islam), has been conceptualized in such a way that He has all positive attributes in superlative and unlimited degree, and lacks all negative attributes totally. As the greatest conceivable Being, He is not in want of any positive attribute, or predicate.

But this is what experience seems to contra-indicate. For, if that being, so conceived and not otherwise conceivable, created the inhabited world of humans so organized, then one needs to account for at least the natural disease and evils that have recurrently plagued the universe created by this being. One may leave aside moral, economic, socio-political evils as being

dependent upon man, and as such preventable if man so wills. Formulated minimally, the problem of evil for the theist is this:

If God is omnipotent, omniscient, creator (causa sui or prima causa)

All-loving, all-good, all-merciful, then how can we explain evil?

Does God cause evil?

If God does not cause evil, then who causes it?

Who created this cause of evil?

Was the creator of evil all-knowing, past, present, and future?

Or, is God actually all-good, all-loving and all-powerful but unable to stop evil-- which is patently absurd?

Or, does God not wish to stop evil ²²?

This is the dilemma that the theist has to squarely face! Christianity and other monotheistic religions, conceptualized in this fashion, do not seem to have any easy way of escaping either of the horns of the dilemma or of passing between. If they choose to say that God did not create evil, then it would follow that there either is no evil in the world, which is patently false, unless we redefine our concepts, or that someone else created evil, which means that God did not create everything. Even with this caveat, there would still remain the problem of accounting for who created the creator of evil--or else, evil is self-caused, which is equally unconvincing. If they choose to say that God did not wish to eradicate evil, then it could mean either He lacks the power to do so, or He is sadistic and malevolent, options which are totally unacceptable to the theist. There then seems no way of escaping the problem without either redefining and limiting the attributes of Deity or becoming an atheist, or at least, an agnostic.

The most popular attempt to deal with the problem in Christianity and Islam consists in saying that Lucifer, or Devil, or Satan, who was formerly God's deputy or right-hand angel, is the cause or originator of all evils in the universe. That he used to be a good angel charged with powers second only to that of God, but, that through conceit and conspiracy, he became demonic and totally evil. Thus, although capable of having appearances of temporary goodness, whatever schemes he may conceive are ultimately in the pursuance of his diabolical goals of evil. He is thus the Devil. What a good Christian and Muslim should do then is to bear his/her coat of armour and join God's salvation army and fight against the evil one--Satan, the prince of darkness.

Persuasive and simple as this seems, it cannot escape obvious objections or, at least, rejoinders. If God had been all-knowing and all-good, He would not have created Satan or Lucifer. If, *par impossible*, He did create Satan in error, then it should not have been too difficult for Him to rectify the error and improve or destroy Satan, unless He is not, *contra hypothesis*, all-powerful.

Before going further to consider this problem as it relates to Olodumare among the Yoruba people, it should be emphasized that the problem of evil did not arise within the context of Old Testament religion. There God could and did exercise His powers to suit the ends He designed and desired--which desire is coincident with ultimate up-rightness and justice, even though the justice is from the Jewish perspective. Hence, He caused the destruction of Pharaoh's army and

used an earth tremor to destroy the walls of Jericho, while commanding Saul to utterly slay the Amalekites. There He was the Creator who stood firmly for justice and only forgave the penitent who makes atonement or remission for sins against Him and His chosen people. Nowhere was God regarded in the Old Testament as evil or as a weakling for doing these things that caused people great harm. Even the New Testament episode of sending demons into swine that later perished in the Sea was interpreted by the gossellers as something good--not minding the investment of the owners of the swine who were non-Jews.

On the extra-theological plane, one may ask the relevant epistemic questions as to the source of the knowledge of the creator of evil, Satan or Lucifer. Was it based on eye-witness experience? Was it based on inference derived from such an account? Was it mere speculation from the latter phenomenon of apparently inexplicable natural disasters and human suffering? How are we to fight an enemy about whom in all we know are partisan accounts? How do we even come to the knowledge that Lucifer is the origin of all evil and not just the fall-guy and scape-goat used for the deliberate desires and actions of a Theistic God?

Such questions will surely not be entertained by a committed theistic, yet they are relevant and should not detract from his commitment to his God as it will only further enhance his understanding of his God. I do not see how man is any worse for his knowledge that God is disposed to reward or punish with good or evil, depending on human goodness or evilness as the Old Testament does show.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL IN YORUBA PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

It is purely an academic issue to start by saying that Yoruba people do have many divinities through which each group approach Olodumare it follows that one cannot speak of a Yoruba traditional religion. Such line of reasoning will only assist in detracting from the crucial task of understanding how the Yoruba conceive of evil before Christianity. As far as it is rationally possible, it should be stated emphatically that the problem of evil did not, does not, and need not arise within Yoruba traditional religion. In fact, this initial axiomatic assertion needs all the emphasis it can elicit; in spite of all efforts to show the contrary, only this conclusion seems the plausible and defensible one.

Olodumare has all the attributes which Idowu, Mbiti, Awolalu, Dopamu, and other theological scholars have annotated; that is, Olodumare is the origin of the universe and in the language of Anselm, He is the Being that which none greater can be conceived.

Let us consider some of these attributes, particularly those that have generated the dilemma of how to account for evil in Christianity. In this regard, we shall be brief and state the facts as they have been presented by other scholars and as found in Yoruba traditional religion.

(a) Olodumare is the Creator, Cause and Origin of all Things:

Here Idowu says:

... we have learnt that the divinities were brought into being by Olodumare and that the work of creating the earth was commissioned by Him. Everything in heaven and on earth owes its origin in Him. In His capacity as Creator He is known as Eleda-- "the Creator", "the Maker".

He is the Origin and Giver of Life, and in that capacity He is called Elemi-- "the Owner of Spirit", or "the Owner of Life" ²³.

The evidence that Olodumare is the creator of everything is displayed in virtually all accounts of the relationship between Olodumare and the Universe. Where He did not directly cause or create, He instructed the divinities to create and He supervised the creation work. So, He created both the good and the bad, the well-formed and the deformed, the rainy season and the drought. Through Him must be sought the cause of all things. And everything there is has a rationale and can be understood and used by the thoughtful and gifted like the herbalists and medicine men.

(b) Olodumare is the Most Powerful Being for Whom Nothing is too Great or too Small, Below or Beyond to Accomplish:

Here the powers of obas, ancestors elders, witches, herbalists, medicine men, divinities, etc., are all derived from Olodumare and are limited and limitable by Him. It is this feature which transmutes in the language of patristic and scholastic church-men into the concept of omnipotence, and this cannot be quarreled with, since the Yoruba obviously believe that all good and bad take their origin from Olodumare ²⁴.

Here, as in the creativity of Olodumare, one should not be surprised that good and evil are all in the control and dispensation of Olodumare. Ultimately, each proper usage or improper usage of such power is subject to Olodumare's final pronouncement of judgement. His ways are such that evil doers never escape punishment.

(c) Olodumare's Knowledge is Incomparable and Hence Has no Equal:

Having avoided the usage of the classical and neo-classical diction of omnipotence, it is also advisable to avoid the nomenclature of omniscience in the description of the over-arching knowledge and wisdom of the Supreme Deity among the Yoruba people. This is not because it has built-in conceptual difficulties and engenders dilemmas. There is no disputing the fact that Olodumare has the greatest knowledge. However, the fact that some things happen "behind His back" or "without His direct awareness" has been borne out in the practical aspects of creation, sustenance, and running of the universe, here, there, and everywhere, including even the domain of Olodumare (Orun or heaven). He has had recourse to the use of Orunmila and Ifa, the wise ones and the means of discerning the situation of things past, present, and future.

This suggestion concerning the limitation of the knowledge of Olodumare might seem to be the one most open to controversy among those too used to the erstwhile tradition originated by Idowu and enhanced by the cross-pollination of religion. Hence, it is pertinent to buttress it with concrete examples from extant materials in Yoruba tradition.

In Idowu's works one finds: (i) the account of how solid earth was created reported the commissioning of some divinities to perform the job, how someone failed and how ultimately the task was completed by others and the report had to be carried back to Olodumare ²⁵. (ii) Olodumare once consulted the oracle to find out about His possible death and we hear this Ifa passage saying:

Korofo, the cult of the underground
Is the one which consulted the oracle about Olodumare
and declared that his death would never be heard of ²⁶.

Another one says:

Olodumare has rubbed His head with bar-wood dust (Iyerusun)
He will never die
(His) whole head is become exceedingly hoary ²⁷.

All these are recorded in Ogbe (O) yeku by Idowu. The English translations provided by him do not seem to be either the most appropriate or the most accurate and faithful. The second line of the first Ifa quoted speaks as if it was not Olodumare that Himself consulted Korofo, the Ifa Priest of the Underground, but Korofo who did the consultation, without any request, about Olodumare. Also, the second one speaks of the oracle as supporting the immortality of Olodumare. However, properly understood, it will be obvious that it was Olodumare who consulted His wise men. In the same vein Okanran Osa says,

The young never hear that cloth is dead
Cloth only wears old to shreds
The old never hear that cloth is dead
Cloth only wears old to shreds
The young never hear that Olodumare is dead
Cloth only wears old to shreds
The old never hear that Olodumare is dead
Cloth only wears old to shreds ²⁸.

Apart from the picturesque and onomatopoeic presentation of the stanza, one must bear in mind a crucial elucidation made by Idowu himself which is of singular importance in the consideration of Olodumare's attributes. He says:

The myth connected with this verse also has it that it was Olodumare Himself who sought the means of immortality. In consequence, he was told to make some sacrifices to provide Himself with a large piece of white cloth. When the necessary rite had been performed, the white cloth was spread over Him so that He was completely covered. From that time He became immortal ²⁹.

Contrary to the earlier misleading translation, one must observe that Idowu was being faithful to his sources in this passage. Here he was able to purge himself of the shackles of Christian ontological categories and theological demands. There are multiple instances relating to the omnipotence, omniscience, and creativeness of Olodumare, but only one more instance will be cited. Thus, Idowu says:

... there is a story which has it that Olodumare Himself was once perplexed over a very important matter. All the other divinities tried but failed to tell Him the reason for His perplexity; only Orunmila succeeded in putting his finger on the source of the trouble...³⁰.

This shows that although Olodumare has the supremacy of wisdom, yet He has endowed a divinity with the task of divining the causes of problems, pronouncing cures or remedies and advising. To mellow the full implications of this fact Idowu then states:

Obviously, this story was formulated to enhance the importance of Orunmila without any realization that it might detract from Olodumare's attributes of "all-wiseness" ³¹.

Obviously, contra Idowu, this fact is neither anathemic to the Yoruba, nor does it present any incongruity in their perception of Olodumare. Also, it does not in any way detract the least bit from the "all-wiseness" of Olodumare. This is because he mistakenly supposes that since Olodumare created Orunmila and his wisdom in the first place, so, tapping from the resources of a created being cannot amount to a reduction in the attribute of the creator. Supporting this point Wande Abimbola suggests:

According to the myths, there were occasions when there being no physical barrier between heaven and earth, Ifa was summoned by Olodumare to use his great wisdom to solve problems for Him ³².

The faithfulness of Abimbola results from the fact that he was concerned with the corpus of Ifa as the embodiment of the wisdom of Olodumare as bequeathed to Orunmila. He was not concerned with a definition of the attributes of Olodumare. Later, he recounts a story of a quarrel between an Ifa priest and Orunmila, and how Olodumare had to ask for both sides to the dispute ³³. The Yoruba do not see anything incongruous in this type of arrangement because justice demands fairness to all concerned in any dispute. Apart from that, "the child is wise, the adult is wise, is the foundation of which Ile-Ife is built", as the Yoruba popular saying goes, and it indicates that nobody should pretend to have all knowledge. We shall return to this and related issues later. For now, let us consider one other attribute of Olodumare, the Supreme Being among the Yoruba people.

(d) Olodumare is the Good Judge:

In Yoruba traditional religion many attributes are coincident in the goodness of Olodumare. These include impartiality of judgement, where a case is brought before Him He listens attentively to both sides. Others are holiness and benevolence. God dispenses justice with compassionate fairness, but He does not brook crookedness or pretentious smartness. As the Supreme King, after His court there is no other court of appeal for redressing wrongs; for this reason He does not take arbitrary decisions that conflict with the dictates of justice ³⁴.

Now, occasionally, because of the limitation of our understanding of God, man may impute judgmental defects or actions to Olodumare, whereas, to the Yoruba, this only underscores the fact that Olodumare is beyond human comprehension. If we had access to all antecedent factors and future events it would be possible to completely understand Olodumare's action. Here only Orunmila has access to this type of knowledge and he uses the knowledge to assist the universe. The inescapability of judgement in Yoruba belief is remarked by Idowu as follows:

Olodumare is the final disposer of all things. He is the Judge. He controls man's destiny and each will receive from Him as he deserves. But here on earth judgement has already begun for every man according to his character . . . it is Olodumare who judges character ³⁵.

And Mbiti says:

In many societies, it is believed that God punishes individuals through illness, misfortune, barrenness or death. The Yoruba consider God to be judge over all, and when misfortune befalls a moral offender, people say, "He is under the lashes of God" ³⁶.

In a discussion of related matters, I wrote:

There is no doubt that God is the most powerful Being and that He has all the superlative attributes one can consider, but the Yoruba do not think that such a being cannot do evil or cause evil. It is part of the attributes of the Supreme Being to be able to utilize all things ³⁷.

The implications of these attributes of Olodumare are that He is the most Powerful Being, the Creator, the Wise and Impartial Judge who exercises inexorable control over all in the universe. The problem of evil fails to arise within the context of Yoruba belief in Olodumare because a being with all the attributes stated above is conceivable as capable of both good and bad. He uses both for the ultimate good governance of the universe ³⁸. In fact, to say that God does not or cannot do evil is to unnecessarily circumscribe His power. In this regard I had earlier stated:

Equally, some of the attributes of Olodumare are diametrically at variance with those of the Christian God. Consequently, some theoretical and doctrinal problems that arise within Christianity do not arise for Africans . . . The sources of evil are God-devised and help to maintain high moral standards. The Christian God is ever-merciful, slow to anger but quick to forgive (in fact He does not desire the death of the sinner but that he repent and be saved), whereas, the Yoruba Olodumare is a morally upright God who metes out justice here on earth and not necessarily in the hereafter where we are not sure anybody will witness and learn from it ³⁹.

All the scholars we have considered have agreed that evil, as such, is not understandable. Nothing is intrinsically evil. We call something evil because it does not favor us or because it causes us distress. We may not know or understand the reason for the event or action, but ultimately it forms part of the overall design of Olodumare. His attributes do not preclude the device and use of evil for the betterment of society. God is the creator. He created everything, both positive and negative. Why? We cannot know. His ways are incomprehensible. God is the most powerful Being, hence, He does and can do anything, including good and evil. It is only natural that the most powerful Being should not suffer any handicap or hindrance, especially in the execution of justice. God is all-wise (omniscient) and knows all things. Ifa aids Him in this regard as the agent He created as the repository of wisdom and knowledge. There is no conflict in saying this. He still remains the overall controller of this being to whom He has entrusted wisdom. This is unlike the Christian God, who after having endowed Satan with powers second only to His own loses control over Satan. Finally, God is Judge; He judges all according to their deserts; He rewards uprightness and punishes evil.

Thus, Olodumare is more akin to the Old Testament Yahweh in his requirement of honesty and uprightness. This ensured law and order in the societies involved. When the Christian God is introduced, it become easy to sin all morning and afternoon and repent in the evening and have all your sins forgiven through a special dispensation of grace. This introduction created room for a permissiveness that has never been witnessed in Yoruba society before. A chasm was created over which no bridge was erected. Hence people swear on the Holy Bible and Holy Q'uran without qualms, while they balk when called upon to do the same for Ogun, Sango, or

some other divinity. They find a convenient, but dubious, excuse in the denigrating, culturally enslaving explanation that swearing by Sango or Ogun is idol worshiping. Making a similar point, about Igbo religion Onuoha says that:

The traditional religion makes no apology for exposing the law of retribution. Every act of immorality disrupts the balance of the ontological order and God has ordained that the law of reciprocal effect should restore this order automatically. This law operates blindly like a reflex or a boomerang. The suffering incurred by every sin must be undergone. God's justice cannot be compromised ⁴⁰. This system of justice prevents crime and criminal tendencies in society.

Questions may arise regarding the purely philosophical issues of how we discern the law ordained by Olodumare and how such a law operates and whether such a divine law is not weaker than a man-made humanistic scheme. One must, however, acknowledge that these academic issues do not bear any direct relation to the problems of communal life. These questions are relevant on the purely academic plane for any theologically based morality, not just traditional moral systems alone. Anyway, what better justification does one need than that anarchism and criminality were rare phenomena in traditional African societies--problems now plaguing so-called civilized societies that embrace theistic religions. This is the fact that some scholars have celebrated in their reference to a good old African past. This is not saying that there were no dark spots in this African past; there were wars and criminal activities, but these were easily controlled. In fact, no one deliberately does evil and gets away with it. Rituals only appease acts of omission or mistakes, mellows the punishment, and is payment for a crime committed in error. If the old system of oath making, swearing, and contractual agreements can be reinstated into the legal system one may witness a better dispensation of justice and a reduction of crime.

Secondly, one finds that the belief in punishment in the world of man enhances good behavior more than one that defers it till a time no one knows. Yoruba believe that those who secretly commit crime suffer secretly in silence. Apart from this, efforts are made to expiate crimes as it blemishes the offender, his family, his age-group, his clan, and his society. Grievous offenses call for death and excommunication, and stigmatize future generations. As unrecorded conventions, they have been more effective than all the legal codes enacted and which operate on the ability of a smart lawyer to pick loop-holes in the system for exploitation.

Finally, when one considers this system and the understanding of Deity, evil, and justice, one finds it really has more rational justification and a more humanitarian basis than the permissiveness that has eroded all norms of decorous behavior in present society. To me it is more reasonable to use the putative existence of a just Deity whose punishment is here and now, or visited on direct offspring (up to the fourth generation, as the Old Testament says) than allow the sinner to go on sinning, hoping that he will (may) one day repent. Thus, the Yoruba attitude to the new dispensation is that before the evil doer is punished in the hereafter, many serious and good things would have been spoiled.

ESU AND OLODUMARE: CONFLICTING INTERPRETATIONS

The usual understanding and interpretation of Esu is as one of the major divinities among the Yoruba people. According to Idowu:

... Esu is primarily a "special relations officer" between heaven and earth, the inspector general who reports regularly to Olodumare on the deeds of the divinities and men, and checks and makes sure reports on the correctness of worship in general and sacrifices in particular ⁴¹.

This clearly shows that as a divinity capable of doing his duties as charged by Olodumare, Esu occupies a prominent position among the divinities. He discharges these duties without fear or favor. Thus, Esu is a good minister of God. He is the enforcer who ensures that due reward and punishment ensues on any action. He is, therefore, courted and even bribed. When such overtures fail to mitigate punishment, Esu is then given a bad name.

This has even been more so with the advent of Christianity and Islam. The new religions sought for equivalence of the Devil and Satan and found Esu a convenient one, because all those who force people to do the right things are always unpopular. Idowu, in spite of the above statement, was still compelled to champion the ambivalent understanding of Esu, when he said:

There is an unmistakable element of evil in Esu, and for that reason he has been predominantly associated with evil things. There are those who say that the primary function of Esu in this world is to spoil things. But even so we cannot call him the Devil ... what element of "evil" there is in Esu can be found also to some degree in most of the other divinities ⁴².

The indecision echoed in this, and in many other passages in Idowu's works, has provided material for much fanciful interpretation and reductionism. Misinterpreted, Dopamu, in his recent book, *Esu: the Invisible Foe of Man*, labored extensively, but, to my mind, unsuccessfully, in spite of the intellectual competence and erudition he displayed, to achieve the much desired Christian and Muslim equivalence of Esu with Satan ⁴³. This tendency was also present to a lesser degree in an earlier work Dopamu co-authored with Awolalu, as they both echoed the Idowu ambivalence regarding Esu in Yoruba religion ⁴⁴. The dissatisfaction which Dopamu had with the mere confusing indecision exhibited in this jointly written book gave way to the outright equivalence of Esu with Satan in his own work. Hence he says:

In Yoruba belief, Esu is often associated with the power of evil referred to by Idowu. And it is in this sense that we shall regard Esu as we go on with our exposition of his figure, nature and character ⁴⁵.

Dopamu's project would have served a dual end if it had succeeded: First, it would have provided an intellectual justification for an initially gratuitous and malicious translation of Esu as the Devil or Satan and the attendant introduction of the problem of evil into an alien cultural and religious environment. Secondly, it would have provided the first accurate treatment of an issue of interest across many disciplinary investigations.

Let us examine his grounds for equating Satan with the Yoruba divinity called Esu. These are: (a) Esu is Satan, because the Christian and Muslim Scriptures say so; (b) the Yoruba people seem to have accepted the equivalence by Christians and Muslims; (c) the Yoruba hold that originally Esu was not intrinsically evil, but he was *disobedient* and *proud* and became the embodiment of evil, always opposing and destroying that which is good; (d) since the Yoruba put the responsibility for all evil and suffering elsewhere instead of with Olodumare, then Esu must be the cause, along with his agents; (e) that since Esu is overwhelmingly versatile and capricious, his evil nature over-shadows his good; (f) Awolalu believes with Idowu that there is an element of evil in Esu. Hence, Dopamu, concludes that Esu is Satan or the Devil of the New Testament--an out and out evil being.

These do not seem to me to be cogent arguments on which to anchor such a critical conclusion as the religious, metaphysical, moral, cultural, and linguistic one that Esu is Satan and, in effect, stand Yoruba tradition on its head. In the first place, that the scriptures translate Satan as Esu does not justify such translation. In the search by the foreign religionists for an appropriate equivalence of Satan, the nearest divinity was latched upon, regardless of differences, and without any advance warning that such a translation is totally arbitrary and one of mere convenience. Many Yoruba words have been similarly translated, leading to the continued commission of the error of misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and confusion against which Sodipo and Hallen warned in the first chapter of their seminal book, *Knowledge, Belief and Witchcraft* ⁴⁶. There, following Quine, they argued against unguarded word for word translation of one linguistic term into another because of indeterminacy of meaning between the first and second language.

Secondly, that the Yoruba have accepted the translation provided by these devotees of the new faith does not mean that the translation is accurate; a lie repeated often enough easily takes on a garb of truth. This is more often than not the case since daily the various religious teachers keep drumming it into the ears of the Yoruba that they were wrong *ab initio* in their conception of Esu whereas the scriptures were right. The fear of eternal damnation in hell-fire (also a new phenomenon in the religious terrain of the Yoruba people) ensures silence even in the face of blatant falsehood.

Thirdly, nowhere do we find Esu as being willfully and maliciously disobedient or proud to Olodumare, contrary to the imputation resulting from the Biblical fall from favour of Lucifer. He might have been boastful because he upholds justice without fear or favor, but neither Idowunor Awolalu, nor Dopamu himself, have been able to justify this. The passage to which Dopamu refers in the work of Lijadu shows that, unlike the intractable Satan of the Scriptures, both Olodumare and Orunmila can and have always been able to overpower Esu ⁴⁷. Tradition shows that Esu is an indispensable friend of all the other divinities and an intermediary between Orun and Aye. Where then is the equivalence that the Yoruba Esu is Satan?

Fourthly, we come to a very crucial issue that deserves very careful attention. This concerns the belief ascribed to the Yoruba people by Dopamu that, since the Yoruba believe that God does no evil, it must mean that it is Satan or Esu that is responsible for all evil. As we have repeatedly said, the Yoruba believe that Olodumare can use both good and bad in the process of ensuring justice. In doing so, Esu is instrumental in a large measure. He carries out the will of Olodumare most of the time. He can favor or disfavor one, depending on the moral probity of the individual concerned. If Olodumare ordains a law, if the divinities, the ancestors, the society make laws and someone breaks them, what better officer can enforce the law than the legitimate custodian of the law? This is what Esu does. The absolute polarity of good and evil makes no sense in the understanding of either Esu or Olodumare.

Fifth, the overwhelming versatility of Esu results from the task entrusted to him, while the "capriciousness" attributed to him is based on the fact that one may never know whether one has broken the law or not. It is only when suffering or setback results that the person suspects the contravention of a law. Finally, the fact that someone believes that some element of evil exists in Esu as in other divinities, does not make those other divinities to be all evil, nor does it

make Esu evil. It needs to be emphasized that the Yoruba believe that both good and bad always go hand in hand.

As this essay is primarily concerned with an exposition of Olodumare as believed by the Yoruba people traditionally, the phenomenon of Esu is only of secondary relevance. Because of its link with the problem of evil one may end this section with some cross-reference of materials. Of relevance here is Onuoha's discussion of Igbo religion in related matters. He says:

They do not think to assign a separate ultimate cause to evil since they realize that evil is an imperfection, a not-entity, the absence of good or being. Evil does not require a cause. It is the Christians who have elevated Ekwensu to the rank of anti-God or Satan. Igbo religion has no room for such an "evil incarnate" or devil who does nothing but evil.⁴⁸

Similarly, Mugo Gatheru suggests:

When the missionaries brought the Bible to the Kikuyu, our people understood the Old Testament right away, for many of the customs of the ancient Jews were very much like ours. Like the Hebrew people of old, the Kikuyu are God-fearing people . . . They had no idea, of course, about Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, or the devil . . . They had no Devil either ⁴⁹.

These passages represent the situation among many traditional African societies. But the influence of faith and the need to explain a phenomenon in a new language has affected the understanding and interpretation of the religion and culture of the Yoruba people. The import of this socially, economically, politically, culturally, etc., as of other influences, has only begun to be felt as acutely as possible in the disintegration of the Nigerian and other African societies. Here, Babayemi's words are extremely relevant. He said:

It is also to be understood that while in Christianity and Islam, there is the structural opposition between God and the devil, that is, the forces of evil constantly confront God's work to destroy it. There is no such structural opposition in the African concept. In fact, the Yoruba Esu could not adequately represent the Christian Devil or the Islamic Satan; Esu in Yoruba is not opposed to God's work . . .⁵⁰.

CONCLUSION

In this essay, I have attempted to show that the imposition of foreign interpretations on Olodumare has created dilemmas which are unresolved, and apparently irresolvable, thereby generating atheism and agnosticism. I also argued that this has led to deleterious social, moral, economic, political, and cultural beliefs. Thus, there is the implicit call to a reappraisal of Yoruba and other African religious traditions and cultural background, but not with a view of going back into the "dark ages", but one of building a humane, law-abiding, responsible society. The discussion of some of the attributes of Olodumare only serves to accentuate the fact that the problem of evil in the Judaeo-Christian tradition is alien to our Yoruba ancestors. The pioneering works of the first African theologians and scholars should be taken as pathfinders and not as the finale of all research and investigation, to be repeatedly parroted as the truth ⁵⁰.

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Decentralization, Local Governance and the Democratic Transition in Southern Africa: A Comparative Analysis

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INTRODUCTION

What factors are required for viable, democratic, local governments in Africa? This is an important question for several reasons. First, in an era of continuing economic problems and structural adjustment, national governments have been forced to reduce the services they provide. While the private sector may pick-up some of these, collective and non-profit-earning social goods must be delivered or funded by sub-national governmental units if they are to be provided at all (World Bank, 1994). Second, research over the last two decades has suggested that highly centralized and top-down service delivery is expensive, cumbersome, inflexible, adapts slowly to new information (if at all), and is prone to political abuse (Esman, 1991). Third, government collapse and incapacity, with spontaneous patterns of local initiative in education, sanitation and marketing, suggest there is an untapped local capacity to make collective choices and take collective action (Green, 1995; Wunsch and Olowu, 1990; Fass and Desloovere, 1995). Finally, a growing body of research suggests that democracy must be rooted in functioning local, participatory self-governance institutions. This literature emphasizes the importance of the growth of civil society, development of public "ownership" of political institutions, mobilization of talents and resources into constructive patterns (positive sum rather than zero-sum or negative-sum political interaction), and countervailing power vis-à-vis national institutions (Harbeson, Rothchild and Chazan, 1994; Wunsch and Olowu, 1990). Despite these compelling reasons, most "experiments" in decentralization and local democratic governance suggest that African local democracy and governance has failed in virtually everywhere it has been tried (Olowu, 1990)!

Some important recent research suggests that these problems are rooted in specific policy choices and strategies pursued by African governments. These policies include deliberate withholding of resources, whether fiscal or juridical (Mutahaba, 1989), from local entities for political or ideological reasons; central bureaucratic hostility and weakness (Smoke, 1994); turbulent economic and policy environments which have undercut local institutions (Olowu and Wunsch, 1995; Wunsch and Olowu, 1996); absence of complimentary reforms needed in national administrative law and systems (Ayee, 1997); and underdeveloped local civil society

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<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v2/v2i1a2.pdf>

that left local governments "rudderless" as they tried to develop policy and deliver services (Olowu and Wunsch, 1995; Wunsch and Olowu, 1996).

This paper reports the results of a 1995-1996 comparative analysis of local government in the context of current political reforms in South Africa, Botswana, and Swaziland in an effort to arrive at the preconditions for efficient and effective local institutions of collective choice and of service delivery. At a theoretical level, this paper reports the general patterns observed and the specific findings in each country. Since all countries are in periods of dynamic change, it will also review relevant contextual aspects.

DECONCENTRATION AND DEVOLUTION IN THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

Much of the debate, and perhaps the policy choices, regarding African local government has been structured by terminology first developed by James Fesler in the 1950s. Fesler argued it was important to distinguish between devolution and deconcentration in analyzing local government systems, and in describing patterns of "decentralization" reforms. Devolution refers to the distribution (or re-distribution) of authority to make decisions and to take action by local governments independently of central administrative oversight. Central governments might retain overall legal control (equal protection under the laws, voting eligibility, allocating authority to raise revenue, ensuring general law and order, and regulating fraud and corruption) and the authority to alter local government powers. Within those boundaries, devolution exists if local entities have substantial authority to hire, fire, tax, contract, expend, invest, plan, set priorities, and deliver the services they chose. Deconcentration, in contrast, occurs when local entities act largely as the local agents of central governments, manage personnel, and expend resources allocated to them by central government authorities. Deconcentration refers to essentially the redistribution of central resources to localities on the sufferance of those central authorities. These terms have, since Fesler, been revived, updated and applied by several scholars of Africa and elsewhere. Cohen and Peterson summarize much of this discussion in their recent monograph (Cohen and Peterson, 1996).

Debate and discussion about effective local governance in Africa since independence has often hinged on these as alternative strategies. For example, the operating policy of most African states has reflected a bias toward deconcentration. Kenya, Ghana, Tanzania, Zambia and others have several times trumpeted "decentralization" revolutions. Overtime, however, it became clear that these were really only modest policies of deconcentration. Scholars, in contrast, have often argued instead that real improvement in local government performance (e.g., efficiency, energy, effectiveness, and local participation) could only be expected when devolution was pursued (Wunsch and Olowu, 1990).

Recently, a third factor has also been found to be important for effective local governance: a viable local political process. Dele Olowu and Wunsch, for example, found that substantial decentralization efforts in Nigeria during the later 1980s and early 1990s were weakened by the absence of viable local political processes to convey information to the public about government decisions, to organize publics to be attentive to government actions, to mobilize public opinion regarding local government, and to hold local officials accountable for their performance. The absence of attentive local publics and of close linkages between officials and citizens appeared

to explain many of the problems found in local governmental performance in Nigeria (Olowu and Wunsch, 1995; Wunsch and Olowu, 1996).

In fact, if one considers the arguments implied by all three strategies, they can be seen as complimentary aspects of a single model rather than as independent or mutually exclusive. For example, advocates of deconcentration emphasize the fiscal, skill, and personnel poverty of localities, and their need for central resources to function. They also emphasize the problem of providing effective direction for local administrators. Advocates of devolution emphasize that the residents of local governments will be unlikely to participate, invest attention or resources, or learn many of the lessons of governance unless their local governments can make real decisions with effective consequences. The same applies to local officials as well, who, furthermore, are unlikely to invest extra attention and energy in local affairs and programs unless they are accountable to localities rather than the center. In fact, most African local authorities are woefully short both of revenues and trained personnel, and have remained either largely passive or only spasmodically active (in limited areas), in the post-independence era.

The argument regarding a viable local political process combines both of these perspectives. Such a process is necessary to provide policy direction for local officials, information to allow learning and fine-tuning of policies and programs by local officials, and accountability regarding performance. Resources provide the "raw material" of local governance, authority provides the structure that allows local political entrepreneurs to combine resources to produce local services, and a viable political process energizes, directs, and redirects political entrepreneurs in their activities. Simultaneously, the political process provides an arena for political entrepreneurs to explain and market their activities, trying to build support and raise additional resources. When they fail, the political process is the mechanism that reviews and replaces them. Usually a viable local political process includes an active civil society, some general political organizations (e.g., factions, parties or their surrogates), a legislative arena, opinion leaders and their publics, and mechanisms to gather and spread information. With all this in mind, it may appear reasonable to hypothesize that effective African local governance requires deconcentration (of resources and personnel), devolution (of authority) and development of a viable local political process.

This working hypothesis was recently applied during nine-person weeks of exploratory field research on local government in Southern Africa: Mupmalanga Province of South Africa, Swaziland, and Botswana. Each research site was assessed for the resources available to selected localities (deconcentration), the authority devolved to localities (devolution), the health of a local political process, and the effective functioning of local governments. It was expected that the more fully developed were the units considered on each of these criteria, the more effective local government would be. The variables were measured via a multi-indicator, multi-method strategy. This included interviews with local officials, political personnel, leaders of civil society organizations, academic and donor personnel, site observation, including of equipment, maps, meetings, personnel, and business, and review of appropriate documents, including plans, budgets, personnel systems, audits, minutes of meetings, and the like.

SOUTH AFRICA: MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

Although the dramatic events in the Republic of South Africa may be familiar to most people, the laborious process by which a new structure for local government was hammered-out in negotiations that continued through 1993 is not as well-known. The Local Government Negotiating Forum (LGNF) was often overshadowed by the more dramatic national interim constitutional negotiations, but many believe its results will have as great (or greater) impact on the new South Africa (Pycroft, 1996). The major players in the LGNF were SANCO (South African National Civic Organization) and the National Party. SANCO was the national federal body that grew out of the informal "civics" that arose in the black urban areas of South Africa during the 1980s. The "civics" drove the apartheid governmental authorities out of the black urban areas and provided some level of local governance.

The Nationalist Party was, of course, the ruling party of South Africa from 1948 until the African National Congress (ANC) took power in the free election of 1994. Both were galvanized into discussions by the obvious conflict and stalemate that existed between Africans and the minority dominated local governments. Their search for a mutually acceptable solution led to the Local Government Transition Act of 1993, and relevant provisions of the 1993 Interim Constitution Act. The major consequences of these acts for local government was the establishment of varying institutional frameworks for local government (for e.g., metropolitan, urban, and rural), all of which provided for: non-discriminatory participation in local political affairs; a partial-proportional representation system for local elections in the former white, Asian, "Coloured," and black areas; a guaranteed and substantial role for local government; and a process for amalgamating former white, Asian, "Coloured," and black jurisdictions in an institutional framework that placed most operational responsibility on the formerly white executive and managerial structures, the ones which had been best resourced and were most institutionally developed (Cloete, 1994; Pycroft, 1996). The final constitution of 1996 essentially maintained this structure (Cameron, 1997).

Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province (formerly the Eastern Transvaal) was the first research site. It is located in the eastern part of Mpumalanga Province, a generally fertile agricultural region of rolling hills. Only fifty kilometers from the world-famous Kruger Game Park, it has a diversified economy based on agriculture, services, tourism, and light industry. Formerly a largely white municipality of 24,000 (22,000 white, 1,000 Asian, 1,000 "Coloured"), it has grown to an estimated 250,000 with the addition of two former "homeland" townships, Kanyamazane and Matsulo, each approximately 65,000 people, and various peri-urban areas. Additionally, it has become more of a regional government, as it now stretches from Nelspruit to Matsulo, a distance of some 50 kilometers.

Along with substantial growth in population, racial diversity, and size, the new Nelspruit also faced several other significant changes. These included the recent elections of new legislative personnel and of the (largely ceremonial) mayor, vastly expanded service responsibilities for Nelspruit in the former black townships, and an enlarged personnel system which included personnel from both the former white and black local government units. All this occurred within continued ambiguity regarding, the role of the new provincial governments, the status of the former "homeland" areas still under rural council rule, and the

size of central government revenue subventions to be allocated to upgrade and develop the former black townships. In this section, we review the four factors outlined in section II regarding local government in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga Province.

Resources: Over the long-run, the Nelspruit area has been a resource-rich area. The personnel staffing local government are highly educated, professionally qualified, and experienced. Their facilities are modern, spacious, comfortable, and equipped with computers, software, and personnel able to manage and use them.

The municipality supports generous services (public utilities, roads, economic development, planning, housing sites, etc.) to the Nelspruit population, which is virtually entirely white, from a local tax base that has generated typically 130 million Rand (around \$45 million US per year). This budget has been adequate to provide services, to staff the local civil service personnel slots, and to service whatever capital borrowing the locality chose to make.

Future resource adequacy is less clear. The revenue base, which is composed of property taxes ("rates") and water and electricity service fees, has limited scope for expansion. Rates are set primarily on site value rather than on improvements, and payroll taxes, sales taxes, income taxes are practically difficult to implement and not under consideration at the regional and national levels which would need to authorize them for local use. Revenue allocations from the national government are uncertain and almost inevitably will be limited in size to a small portion of local needs. The much awaited grants from the Rural Development Fund (RDF) are likely to meet only a small portion of the needs (Cameron, 1996). But local needs will grow enormously with the vast increase in local population caused by municipal amalgamation. The possible addition of what were called the "traditional area," nearby areas formerly administered by the defunct African "homelands," will add to Nelspruit's responsibilities (Pycroft, 1996; Cloete, 1994). Revenue sources in the former black townships are inevitably limited given the poverty there and the culture of "non-payment," the refusal of Africans to pay water and electrical charges, and any rates/taxes due in urban areas to protest apartheid. Additionally, the municipality already experienced a substantial increase in personnel costs with amalgamation with the former black townships.

The most current budget estimates by Nelspruit's government suggested that capital investment needs for the former black townships added to Nelspruit is roads, water, sewers, and street lights were 220 million Rand (approximately 75 million dollars US). The current capital budget was 35 million Rand (approximately 12 million dollars US), leaving a 185 million Rand capital budget short-fall. Operating or current costs are estimated to be 150 million Rand (approximately 52 million dollars US) which leaves a 30 million Rand short-fall from the current operating budget of 120 million Rand. This was a bare-bones budget proposal, essentially only to continue those minimal services offered in the townships, not to upgrade the areas to Nelspruit standards. Overall, then, Nelspruit has been a well-resourced local government. However, it faces serious challenges in the immediate future given the changed ratios of resources to needs.

Authority: Historically, Nelspruit, like other white municipalities, was a powerful juridical body. Working within broad parameters set by central government, it hired personnel, levied and raised taxes, established budgets, set local service priorities and development strategies, borrowed funds (with central Ministry of Finance approval) for capital development, and the

like (Cameron, no date). According to the interim constitution of 1995 (Chapter Ten and Section 245), provincial legislators must not "encroach on local government to such an extent that it compromises the fundamental status, purpose and character of local government" (Cloete, 1994, pp 44-45). Broad statutory, regulatory, and executive powers were also established in the interim constitution for local governments to enable them to provide for local welfare, and to raise money through various taxes, fees, levies and the like (Cloete, 1994). When one considers the new constitutional framework, it does not seriously change the authority of local government. However, the amalgamations that grew from the LGNF process fundamentally changed the political dynamics at the local level as they brought about black majority control.

The major potential change-agent on the horizon is the newly established Mpumalanga provincial government. While Nelspruit's civil service personnel are almost 100% white (except for the generally junior grade personnel absorbed from the black municipalities), the provincial personnel are virtually 100% black. How the provincial government will relate to Nelspruit (and other similar cities) over the long-run is unclear, as the agenda of the two groups might well be expected to diverge, and it might be expected over time to encroach on Nelspruit's accustomed independence.

In the short-run, however, the provincial government was in confusion stemming from its recent establishment. It was unclear about its own role and legal authority, preoccupied with hiring personnel and disagreements over priorities. So far, the provincial government had little impact on the municipal government, and personnel interviewed in the provincial government did not aspire to interfere much in the municipal government. Provincial personnel did not review municipal budgets, personnel decisions, municipal priorities, tax rates, etc. In 1996, the provincial personnel in Mpumalanga believed these issues were best left to the municipal political process to decide.

Political Process: The established local political process was largely rendered irrelevant by the "new dispensation" after 1994. The latter has probably quintupled the electorate, and introduced many "new" groups and interests to Nelspruit's government. However, the representative institutions (council) and linkage institutions (political parties and civil society) between the population and the municipality are still underdeveloped. Furthermore, institutional arrangements now in-place to facilitate these are flawed in their design, while the interest groups organized at the "grass-roots" level are still weak and fragmented.

The municipal council is the only representative body at the local level. The effective chief executive is a civil servant, the town clerk. The mayorship is an honorary office, filled by election from the council, and without any executive powers. While the council does have full authority over local budgetary and programmatic decisions, in Nelspruit its effectiveness in encouraging and focusing a local political process remains unclear.

With forty members meeting only monthly, the council is a large, part-time body. It is not clear how well it will be able to connect public wants and concerns with municipal administration. It has no staff, and its members have no offices. Its only committee is a fifteen person "management committee" which meets three or four times monthly, but it also is without staff or office facilities. Furthermore, the personnel are largely new to public office: in Nelspruit 36 of the 40 members had never held public office before.

Existing municipal procedures reinforce the powers of the town clerk. The council only sees the budget as a finished document. The absence of functionally specialized committees reduces its effectiveness in analyzing the implications of the proposed budget for programs and services. Miscellaneous other problems also appear likely to hinder the council. Most of the members live long distances from the Nelspruit city facilities, and must use unreliable and slow public transport to journey from home to the offices. Furthermore, most must continue employment elsewhere, further pulling them away from time to learn and follow municipal government. At an intangible level, councilors face the challenge of constructing new roles both their own and for a formerly placid, service-oriented city government, and dealing with a limited budget and with constituents who have increased expectations of, but limited experience in the process of democratic governance.

The ANC, whose leadership heads Nelspruit council, is the strongest single political party in the area. Nonetheless, ANC's local strength was compromised by a large Nationalist Party delegation in the Council and by alleged tension between it and SANCO. There was conflict in the former black townships between elected and defeated ANC council candidates. At the time of this research, the ANC did not appear to be developing a coherent agenda for local government, its policies, or activities.

A large number of non-governmental organizations and personnel from the "civics," the grass-roots organizations of the anti-apartheid era movement, have survived the transition and are more-or-less active. Though loosely organized, SANCO elected several persons to the council. Their cohesion and cooperation there, and any coordinating role for SANCO, appeared questionable at the time of this research. The political interest and capacity of the local voluntary organizations was also uncertain. Composed of women's groups, sports clubs, student organizations, anti-AIDS efforts, and the like, these organizations often depended on the efforts of a single person or a small leadership circle, were financially precarious and at times dependent on shrinking donor funding. They and the "civics" frequently looked to the national rather than the local government for their needs. In general, these groups were not yet emergent "local publics" which could attend to local government policy, nor had they been major players in the recent local elections. They appeared to be inadequately informed about local government policies, programs, and resources.

Probably the most coherent and organized component of the black African community was a number of local business-owners. They had been working for several years with Asian and some white business firms to increase their access to capital, and expand marketing opportunities via a local multi-racial chamber of commerce. How their agenda, and the pressing needs of the largely poor and unemployed or underemployed black population might cohere into a single political force was also not clear at the time of the research. Thus, a viable local political process after post-apartheid, 1995 local elections had not yet taken root in Nelspruit.

Local Government Effectiveness: The executive branch of the Nelspruit municipality is a highly organized and sophisticated governance institution. The planning, programming, budgeting, managerial, and auditing functions appeared to be well designed and implemented. Municipal officials were knowledgeable about the details of their budgets, each other's responsibilities, the general budgetary implications of the spatial reorganization, and the

challenges of training and working with a town council that has many members entirely new to politics.

Budgeting, planning, and management support services (human resources, property management, purchasing) functioned well. Budgetary figures (estimates, expenditures, operating capital, and revenue budgets) were easily available, and estimates and actuals were very close, reflecting good planning and performance. "Structure Plans" (general land use plans) and "Town Planning Schemes" (zoning regulations) were available, up-to-date, and of professional quality. Revised plans were in progress. The Management Service Office had accurate and timely data on personnel budgets and was trying to solve the management problems of integrating civil service personnel from the old homelands (black townships) with the Nelspruit personnel. The town planner was occupied with the challenges of planning for the "new" areas of responsibility. Offices were well organized, well staffed, and had sufficient resources.

Similarly, the Town Clerk (city manager) was well versed in the conditions and priorities of the newly added areas. He could discuss the challenges he faced: balancing revenue versus expenditures; strengthening personnel management; reconciling traditionally European versus African communication patterns (i.e., formal/Gazette style versus grassroots consultations and discussion); educating the new town council; and developing working relationships with the new Mayor and the new Chair of the Council Management Committee (the key legislative-oversight role). In 1995, the relationships among all three were positive and cordial. All these patterns are indicators of a stable bureaucracy, with the capacity to identify problems, set priorities, develop programs and budgets, and implement them in a relatively transparent and efficient way.

However, beyond the purely managerial and organizational dimension, Nelspruit was not at all effective in delivering services to its new constituents. It is not even preparing to begin doing so. Specifically, while local officials were thinking a lot about this "new era," they did not appear to be engaging in serious reprogramming of resources to meet their new responsibilities. So far, some personnel had been redeployed, but only from the former black areas to the Nelspruit office, a 50 km. distance. There was no clear plan to reconfigure those offices to improve and expand services to the "new" areas, and adjust to becoming, in effect, a regional government. Similarly, officials appeared to be approaching the coming budgetary process in a largely incremental way. Existing programs and investments that focused on Nelspruit town would be marginally modified to reflect the reorganization, but there was no evidence of a fundamental reconsideration of resource or service flow, or of changed personnel responsibilities. Officials in Nelspruit repeatedly emphasized the need for revenues to expand in the new areas before services could be expanded. There were no plans to reconfigure service priorities to reflect the needs of the new areas.

This lack of plans could be considered in light of the fact that officials had already "swallowed" a substantial increase in fiscal responsibility in absorbing and achieving salary parity for the former homeland personnel under a one-time grant from the provincial government. With the new area-wide council that was to begin functioning in January of 1996, any specific planning might have been premature. Additionally, ambiguity regarding possible national development grants and such specific problems as the town's authority in traditional

areas had also left the civil servants with uncertainty. Nespruit's executive branch personnel appeared to embrace the status quo.

SWAZILAND

The research in Swaziland targeted local governments in Mbabane and Manzani, the two largest cities in the country. Like the South African case, though perhaps less dramatically, these local governments are entering a new era owing to changes in the larger social and political environment.

Propelled partly by recent rapid urban growth and partly by donor encouragement, a major conference was held in Swaziland in 1990 on its urban government. This was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the "World Bank" or IBRD). Among the conference participants were the Prime Minister of Swaziland, the senior executives of Mbabane and Manzani, the Acting Minister of Finance, most key urban decision makers, and senior representatives from each major, related ministry. It was the first major review of urbanization policy in Swaziland since the Urban Government Act of 1969, the legislation that then guided Swaziland's local government authorities. In 1969 only 14% of Swaziland's population lived in urban areas, and Mbabane and Manzani together held only 30,000 people. The 1990 conference participants projected that 45% of Swaziland's population would be urbanized by the year 2000, and Mbabane and Manzani would probably increase to at least 200,000 in population. There was widespread concern in 1990 about the ability of urban governments to manage existing growth, including sanitation, transportation, education, housing, and employment. Participants therefore recommended substantial revision in the statutory structure of urban government. This would include establishing a new ministry responsible for urban government, better coordination of housing, land, infrastructure and urban development by urban authorities, expansion of urban revenue sources, closer ties between urban councils and local populations, and election of local councils (USAID, 1990). Many of these changes would require amendment (or replacement of) the 1969 Local Government Act, a structure which established central government control over weak urban governments.

Swaziland has moved only tentatively toward democratic reform. Parliamentary elections were held in 1994 (the first since King Sobhuza suspended the constitution in 1973), and local government ("council") elections occurred in 1995. In neither elections were political parties allowed to contest. More importantly, the traditional elite's hold on power remains unchallenged. It controls most land, the monarchy still controls the national development fund, and it dominates local rural affairs via the traditional chiefly Tinkundla system (Sallinger-McBride and Picard, 1989). Together, the intangible influence of democracy in South Africa, burgeoning urban growth, deteriorating urban conditions, donor support for urban political reform, and resistance to change by a traditional elite, shaped the Government of Swaziland's program of urban governmental reform in the early 1990s. A new Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was established by 1995, and several donors supported projects to upgrade urban managerial skills. Elections had replaced the formerly appointed urban

councilors. Within the structure of the 1969 local government statutes, HUD expanded substantially the effective authority of urban governments. A revised "Urban Government Policy" which would substantially add to the authority and resources of urban areas, was presented to the Cabinet in 1995 (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 1995).

Resources: Mbabane and Manzini present a mixed resource base picture. Local revenue systems in Swaziland face several overall problems that restrict their capacity to meet local service and development needs. These include: (1) administrative practices which hamper collection of local revenues; (2) high expectations that the national government would "bail-out" local governments in serious deficits; (3) limited local tax base and authority, and resistance to raising rates on the existing base; and (4) poor utilization of other revenue sources.

Poor administration and collection of rates in the past led to a significant pattern of non-payment by 1995. No clear figures on actual collection percentages were available because the revenue rolls were disorganized and account records were not kept from year to year. Consensus among officials was that a large proportion of revenues were never collected. The locally powerful were a real problem. They used their political connections at the center to evade local collection efforts. Local governments' administrative weakness made them unable to sell property for taxes, and thus impeded recovery of unpaid rates. Poorer people, when approached directly by their local councilors, had a better record of paying rates.

Mbabane was particularly lax in its enforcement. Since its accounting system did not "age" ratepayer accounts, there was no record of accounts in arrears. The city also failed to follow the prescribed procedures for collection of unpaid taxes, and had taken no action over a six year period. Since 1995, Mbabane attempted to pursue delinquent ratepayers. The city posted announcements in the local newspapers to alert ratepayers who were two to three years in arrears that their property would be put up for auction. Three properties were sold over a two month period in 1995 with an additional thirty slated for auction in early 1996.

Virtually all local officials and leading citizens interviewed regarded the national government as the funder of last resort. Indeed, more than once local officials referred to the national government as likely to "bail-them-out" if they were in real financial difficulty. A pattern of large recurrent subventions (about 40% of the operating budget on average in the larger cities), capital grants, and central tolerance for accumulating deficits reinforced this attitude. Subventions are fairly stable; capital grants are more variable.

Revenue sources at the local level are not extensive. There is intensive resistance to further increases in property rates. Commercial and industrial ratepayers have organized in Manzini and Mbabane to contest recent rates increases (which were in the 50% range in 1995). Residential rates have not been substantially increased much yet, but would encounter resistance in view of the limited services that many residents receive. Currently, only the central government may collect revenue from business taxes, licenses, income, and petrol. To local officials, this is a situation when they feel they are obligated to provide services (street maintenance, refuse collection), but cannot collect taxes on those persons and businesses using these services. The amount of non-taxable central government property in Mbabane is also a matter affecting local revenue potentials.

Rents and fees are the only other sources of urban revenues. These could be greatly increased in some areas, but even when such increases have been budgeted, they have not been

collected. The reasons for this are unclear, but lack of political will and administrative weakness are both likely explanations, and overall these are in severe deficit. Privatization may be the only answer to resolve these questions if the political will to collect fees that cover costs is absent. Business license fees, motor fuel tax, auto registration fees, and other new sources of revenue have potential to increase revenues, but these fees have not yet been authorized by the national government. Unless such new taxes are imposed, Swaziland's urban governments will have to cut costs in over-staffed areas, or eliminate subsidies in their services. As table I shows, revenue shortfalls in Mbabane have in the past been met by central Government subventions. This may not be possible in the future.

TABLE 1

Mbabane			
ddYears	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96 (Budget est.)
Revenue Estimates	6,990,000	8,073,000	13,365,000
Government Payment, Grants, Subventions (recurrent budget only)	1,877,000	2,335,000	4,734,000
Expenditures	7,839,000	9,408,000	12,916,000

Currency: Emalangeni (1 US\$=5.0710 Lilangeni)

Source: City Council of Mbabane: Estimates For The Year, 1995/96.

The human resource base of Swazi local authorities is also weak. A few executives were clearly well trained. One town clerk, for instance, who held an MPA from Harvard, is familiar with his responsibilities and quite competent. But overall, personnel of such quality was rare. In Mbabane, an unqualified person held the position of acting treasurer. Most often, personnel other than the town clerk lacked appropriate skills, the situation being worst in smaller cities and towns.

Authority: Some progress toward devolution of authority has been made in Swaziland, largely because of leadership by HUD. Specifically, the larger urban areas (Mbabane and Manzini) may now hire and fire their own personnel, establish property tax rates, let contracts, prepare their annual budgets, and manage their own funds. However, there are important ways in which this authority is circumscribed. Although used sparingly, HUD retains authority to approve and disapprove all local budgets. Moreover, local governments cannot raise funds for

capital investments. Authority to borrow is unclear, and there are currently no markets for municipal loans (e.g., insurance companies, pension funds, bond markets).

The three key institutions in the Swazi fiscal governance system are the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, and the Ministry of Public Works. These three meet annually to review capital requests from all other ministries. Their dominant role in capital decisions has important implications for Swazi development as a whole and for local government. This lack of local autonomy in capital investment greatly reduces the effectiveness and political ability of urban government and makes forward planning difficult. Revenue flows from the center are highly variable and appear to be arbitrary as well. This also has implications for the political process, as the ability of local officials to build coalitions, to be taken seriously, and to concentrate local political activity in local institutions is seriously compromised by such arrangements.

Other national agencies are also problems at times. The Tender Board, which approves all contracts with the private sector, appears to be a bottleneck for the cities' public projects. In 1995, it had not met to review proposed projects for approximately six months. HUD's own National Housing Board, which is responsible for overseeing public housing projects, also has a mixed reputation for efficiently completing local projects. The Ministry of Home Affairs has disputed some urban authority policies like regulation of alcohol sales.

The recommendation to enact revenue-sharing mechanisms created serious inter-ministerial tensions. HUD supports a formula-driven allocation and a system of direct grants that would provide local governments with the opportunity to meet broad, national priorities, but to set their own priorities within them. In contrast, the Ministry of Finance is opposed to the concept of revenue sharing and supports instead tied transfer payments keyed to its revenue projections. The Ministry of Finance's proposal would continue the current problems for the local planning process and local government autonomy. In general, then, some progress has been made in devolving authority to Swaziland's larger urban areas. However, particularly in the fiscal area, important strings continue to be held by central ministries.

Political Process: Swaziland's local governments have only recently begun to develop a viable local political process. While elections were held for municipal councils in March, 1995, communication channels have not been institutionalized between the public and officials. There are a number of private, voluntary organizations active in Mbabane and Manzini: charitable organizations, sports clubs, student groups, trade unions, professional organizations, and women's groups. However, they have not institutionalized any relationship with local government that could make them assertive publics against local authorities. A businessman's association in each city comes closer to this, as do ratepayers groups, which largely duplicate the businessmen's associations.

Local councilors, in office since the elections of May, 1995, report having made initial direct contacts with their constituents, as well as attempts to influence municipal government to bring government services to them. The scale of needs (roads, electricity, water, sewage, housing sites) is so great while the resources are so limited, that it is not clear that the average urban dweller will see much improvement from this. Councilors were unclear regarding their roles vis-à-vis local government administration: they had no clear vision on the separation of powers between themselves, local executives, and HUD. Representatives of the public seemed equally

uncertain on these questions. Nor was it evident anywhere that a process to develop this understanding was underway. The Tikundla system, the structure which organizes the authority of traditional chiefs, continued in urban areas, producing ambiguous authority and responsibility for municipal officials in areas nominally under the control of urban councils.

Local Government Effectiveness: Overall, these interviews and several reports recently completed on urban administration in Swaziland strongly suggested that urban policy-makers and administrators had not developed effective problem identification, planning, programming, budgeting, or implementation capacities (Dupuis, and Cooper and Lybrand, 1995; Ernst and Young, 1995; Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 1995). The two larger cities seemed closely to follow previous year budgets instead of considering and consciously planning for future needs and changing priorities. Financial and personnel management was equally weak.

In the area of budgeting and financial management both Mbabane and Manzini faced serious problems. First, neither had any programmatic context included in their budgets. These were simple line item budgets which provided no programmatic direction to city activities, or goals and benchmarks against which to assess performance. Second, both Mbabane and Manzini tended to project seriously overly optimistic levels of rate collection and/or to engage in deficit spending. Neither city "aged" its rate collection accounts and thus made little if any effort to collect from historic non-payers. Mbabane had serious problems in tracking its expenditures, with accounts running several months late. In 1994-95 this led to a deficit of nearly Emalangenani 2.0 million (equal to around 800,000 dollars U.S.). This pattern recurred over several years, leading to a built up deficit of nearly E 8 million. Mbabane also shows consistent patterns of wide discrepancies in estimated versus actual tax expenditures, amounting to more than 50 percent in several areas (City of Mbabane, 1995; Ernst and Young, 1995). While all governments must adjust for unexpected contingencies, this pattern of wide discrepancies suggests that budgeting or management may be seriously flawed.

Fiscal management problems included running city commercial services (such as a slaughter-house) at severe losses. There was severe over-staffing in other service areas (building inspection), so that their costs exceeded fees by several times. Activities that could be contracted out (such as maintenance of vehicles) were continued by city departments at costs that seemed higher than market prices. Though several of these service areas are presumably commercial they were not financed from the fees they generated. These figures are illustrative of these problems:

TABLE 2

MBABANE: 1994-95		
-	COSTS	FEES
Building Inspection	337,215	25,815

Slaughter-house	87,152	27,141
Nursery School	122,401	33,705
Cemeteries	151,500	2,899
Parks	886,786	700
Sports and Recreation	143,765	3,928
Market costs	183,038	28,981

Currency: Emalangeni (1 US\$=5.0710 Lilangeni)

Source: City Council of Mbabane: Estimates for The Year, 1994/95.

Finally, the fee collection system is also plagued by great discrepancies between revenue budgeted (i.e., fees anticipated to be collected) and actual collections. The 1994-95 estimates were generally 100-300 percent higher than the actuals collected. While 100 percent cost recovery is not likely in all areas (parks, sports and recreation), deficits in other areas could be reduced or eliminated either by raising fees or reducing personnel (Ernst and Young, 1995).

Personnel systems and practices were perhaps in even worse condition than financial systems in both the leading cities. In a recent report compiled by H.T. Dupuis and Associates and Coopers and Lybrand of Swaziland, personnel system deficiencies were discovered in virtually every area (Dupuis and Coopers and Lybrand, 1995). The current system lacked overall policy guidelines regarding the use of human resources, a medium-or long-term plan to meet human resource needs, a policy on in-service training or development, descriptions of positions or criteria for evaluating performance, industrial (labor) relations policies, and a performance appraisal and salary increase system. Also personnel records were absent or incomplete, discrepancies existed between many employees' grades and pay, and over-staffing was severe. There were no management information systems or internal managerial assessment and analysis (audit) functions. At least in Mbabane, the town clerk is aware of these problems but feels prevented from resolving them by insufficient personnel resources and a non-supportive council.

BOTSWANA

In October of 1994 Botswana marked its sixth open and competitive election since independence, a record unmatched throughout Africa (Danevad, 1995). With an equally impressive economic growth rate, the highest in the developing world from 1965-1989 (World Bank, 1989), Botswana offered an environment which was to prove very supportive for local democratic governance.

While observers debate the nature and extent of "democracy" in Botswana (Picard, 1987; Holm, 1987; Tordoff, 1988; Parson, 1991; Danevad, 1995; Good, 1996), none deny that Botswana has been exceptional in its political openness, competition and adherence to law (Africa Today, 1993). It is particularly notable and unusual in its acceptance of political competition at the local level, and has established a climate where a local political process has been unusually viable. Even given the elite's capture of a disproportionate share of Botswana's growth proceeds, it has offered an equally unusually high flow of resources to local governments.

As Picard (1987) and Tordoff (1988) note, local government has a long history in Botswana. While it suffered in the early post-independence era from many of the same problems local government faced elsewhere in Africa, strategic choices made by the political center avoided the centralization seen in most of Africa. In 1970, with central government confidence in local councils at a low point, and with a bureaucratic battle raging over the future of local government between the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning and the Ministry of Local Government and Lands, the Tordoff Commission recommended that Council staffing and finance be substantially improved. Its recommendations were adopted, and since then local government has been a major component of Botswana's political system (Picard, 1987). However, as this case study will indicate, local government there still faces challenges, and has room for improvement.

Local Resources: While overall resources are higher than found in most of Africa, local revenue sources are currently very limited. Rural districts raise funds primarily through fees for services, small business licenses, and rents for council-owned housing. Urban districts also have these sources, but their primary source of funding is property rates. Urban authorities cover their budgets better than rural districts do, mainly because of their use of property rates. Nonetheless, if Gaborone is typical of Botswana's urban authorities, even urban revenue collection is weak (Peters-Berries, 1995).

A serious problem is the failure to levy service fees comparable to service costs. One of the causes of this failure is the absence of an effective system to determine the actual costs of these services. Another is the limited authority that local government has to set fees, as the Ministry of Local Government Land and Housing (MLGLH) or other central ministries control fee levels for most local services. Another problem is a tendency of local personnel to assume that national government will cover their financial shortfalls (Peters-Berries, 1995). The Local Government Tax, an income tax, was previously in place but was rescinded at the height of the diamond mining boom. A new Local Government Tax and the extension of rate authority to the district councils appear to be the most viable options for new local revenue. For the moment, national revenue transfers are substantial and cover extensive local programs. Botswana's ability to sustain these in the future, through, may be a problem.

The quality of local government staff is quite impressive with regard to diversity of personnel slots authorized and filled at the local level (medical officer, planner, attorney, economist, chief of staff, etc.), their paper qualifications, and their demonstrated competence and professionalism. With the exception of "industrial class" employees (primarily laborers and other unskilled personnel), all local government personnel have been hired and managed by the Unified Local Government Service (ULGS) since 1973. ULGS is managed by an Establishment Secretary and Secretariat, housed in MLGLH. The salaries of these personnel (about 23-35

percent of local government personnel) are also paid by the national ULGS, which eases the local budget burden. Other personnel are the responsibility of local councils (SIDA, 1993; Dahlgren, 1993).

One concern regarding personnel and administrative systems is the breadth of coverage of qualified personnel. Other researchers have noted that less competent personnel are in-place in the remote areas, and that many intermediate posts are vacant throughout the ULGS. If these vacancies are widespread, they will weaken local governance (SIDA, 1993; Dahlgren, 1995).

Local Authority: This case requires more detailed attention than the other two, because the success and challenges of local government in Botswana are relevant to local government in Southern Africa in general. Botswana's unique pattern also offers much enlightenment on the general issue of decentralization and local democratic governance: it shows how apparent "authority" can be illusory, and its consequences.

The Ministry of Local Government, Land and Housing (MLGLH) is the "parent" ministry of all local government in Botswana. As Botswana is a unitary state, local government has no constitutional status and is a purely statutory creation. Within these statutes, MLGLH plays key roles in virtually every aspect of local government. These include controlling or supervising most key decisions regarding local personnel, budgeting, development planning, self-help projects; ensuring conformity with national policies and priorities; providing training; developing new revenue sources; and developing new managerial systems and procedures. Even when local governments seek greater autonomy, their primary spokesperson and advocate (and occasionally, foe) is MLGLH. Thus, this ministry is critical for all aspects of local governance in Botswana.

The ULGS hires, assigns, promotes, disciplines, discharges and transfers all non-industrial personnel. This system is responsible for ensuring that all areas have adequate personnel and discouraging any tendencies toward ethnic concentration of personnel. However, there are numerous criticisms of the system's appropriateness for local governance. Specific problems are the lack of control that local governments believe they have over selecting congenial and committed personnel, and the disruptive impact that the transfer system has on local affairs and on the lives of local personnel, particularly of women.

In interviews at three local government site visits located in different areas, the same complaints were made by legislative and administrative personnel: arbitrary and abrupt transfers of personnel were disruptive to local projects and programs, they hurt smooth administrative functioning, team-building, morale, and the employees' personal lives. Town secretaries and councilors in particular complained about being unable to ensure that they were assigned personnel committed to their goals and familiar with their particular needs and problems. These patterns were also noted by Picard (1987). Since ULGS' control extends to personnel training, development, and performance appraisals, local authorities rely on government training centers that are managed by MLGLH. Supervisors must receive permission from the ULGS to send employees to training workshops. The result is that a request for training must compete against similar requests made by all other local authorities. Limited resources led many requests for training to be denied or delayed.

Recent changes however are gradually expanding local control over junior appointments. By the end of the current national development plan, 85 percent of local government posts will

be filled and administered by local authorities. However, this does not address the most pressing concern of local officials: the senior staff. Some type of national-local civil service system may be needed to give security and homogeneity of service, to help ensure professional competency, and to maintain links between sector ministries (i.e., health and education) and local officials. However, an end to arbitrary and rigid transfers, greater deference to hiring choices of localities and personnel, and improved status vis-à-vis the national civil service are also needed.

From one perspective, local governments already largely control their budgeting. Localities are entirely responsible for preparing their annual estimates. MLGLH reviews budgets primarily for arithmetic accuracy, to ensure that none are in deficit, and for conformity with national policies regarding personnel (that certain posts are filled, certain teacher-pupil ratios are followed, certain health facilities are staffed, etc.). Of course, pay levels must be met along with other benefits. Emergency conditions, like the recent drought, may require certain extra activities and funding by local governments. And, new and existing centrally directed capital investments (schools, bore-holes, sewage systems, clinics, roads) must be staffed and maintained. Still, within these guidelines, local governments prepare their own budgets.

But what does this local government control over their budgets really amount to? At every site visit, local officials (both professional/administrative and political) agreed that MLGLH's oversight actually left them with little autonomy. In fact, recurrent commitments are so high and so driven by policy decisions made in Gaborone, that local officials believed they had virtually no latitude at all to identify and respond to their own unique priorities and problems. Local needs that they deemed to be particularly pressing, like absence of storm drains to solve flooding problems in one area, health initiatives in another, low-cost housing in a third, were ignored because all revenues were already committed elsewhere. Salary and vehicle costs alone were so high that little was left over for any local initiatives (Peters-Berries, 1995). If a problem was not on the agenda of a national ministry with the ability to channel funds to meet the need, it was not addressed. If such ministries felt that something should be done, it was usually accomplished, regardless of local priorities (Briscoe, 1995; Channaux-Repond and Kanengoni, 1995). Local professional personnel felt discouraged by this pressure. Local political leaders felt that their work was futile and that they were unable to respond to their constituents.

In contrast to recurrent budgets, the status of capital budgets was unambiguous. These were clearly determined through a top-down process, with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP) telling the MLGLH how much was available in each sector area (health, education, roads, etc.). for local projects. MLGLH then apportioned it to the local governments. They, in turn, reported that most of these grants were consumed by investments required by national ministry norms. In any case, MLGLH decided which projects would be funded, so that local governments were uninvolved in policy-making, despite the fact that these decisions also had significant implications for local governments' recurrent budgets (Picard 1987).

Central regulation and oversight also impede the timely completion of capital projects. Before starting a project, local authorities must submit a project memorandum to the MLGLH. The ministry then forwards the memorandum to the MFDP for approval. There is no assurance that the project will be funded in a timely manner or in its entirety. For example, in Kweneng,

20 million Pula (approximately 8 million dollars, US) was requested for an approved capital project, but the district received half that amount. Lobatse often experiences a six to seven month delay in the receipt of capital funds after it submits project memoranda. Once a project memorandum has been approved, ceilings are provided for each capital project. The limits are often incompatible with the financial requirements of the proposed project. The central government also requires authorization and appropriation for each certificate of payment to release funds. Thus, projects with multiple contractors often force local authorities to make repeated requests and trips to the center for payment of invoices. The tedious and time-consuming process can be costly to local authorities, since contractors who have not been paid within 21 days of the execution of a contract may assess interest against the amount they are owed. Delays in the receipt of funds or the payment of invoices for contractors often cause problems for development projects. This, of course, follows the "repetitive budgeting" model noted by Caiden and Wildavsky (1974).

Thus, capital projects have remained a cumbersome, centralized process for local governments. A local process ostensibly designed to register, assess, and encourage local development (i.e., each locality has a senior economic development officer and engages in a grassroots development process) has in effect been prevented from fulfilling this promise, making local government appear rather irrelevant to any critical eyes.

In the past, district and urban planning were not at all coordinated with the national development plan. The district and national plans covered different periods and were prepared at different times. The consensus is that district plans rarely affected national plans, which ultimately controlled all investment decisions (Chanaux-Repond and Kanengoni, 1995). Indeed, local planning was mostly ignored (Briscoe, 1995). One highly placed respondent reported that local development projects essentially were approved when they fit into the national ministry plans. However, national and district plans (in 1995) were being prepared simultaneously for the National Development Plan - 8, and it appeared that efforts were being made to incorporate some local priorities via what they are calling "matrix planning." It was too early to predict how well this might work at the time of this research, but strengthened input for localities in the capital investments of sectoral ministries is desirable if local governance and decentralization are to progress in Botswana.

As noted above, the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP) plays a major role in local government. Because of local governments' overwhelming dependence on the central level for subventions to cover recurrent budgets, MFDP's role in determining the amount to be allocated to these grants (subventions) is extremely important. MFDP, of course, determines the amount of the capital development budget. While MLGLH allocates the shares to go to each local government, MFDP retains final authority to approve or deny any specific project (through the project memorandum requirement) and controls disbursement of revenues for each invoice as projects are implemented. In virtually every respect, local governments are subject to decisions made at the central level, through a complex and often cumbersome process. Other ministries with major impact on local government include Health and Education. Unlike most African countries, Botswana's local governments are responsible for elementary education and primary health care. Personnel involved in delivering these services are

employees of the local governments. Day-to-day management is provided by the local authority which appears to discharge it rather competently.

There is, nonetheless, a strong ongoing role for the "parent" ministries in the areas of health and education. They set staffing levels and standards, determine minimum equipment levels, provide ongoing training and professional support, and set conditions of service. In the case of the most professionally qualified service-sector employees (medical doctors), their subordination to the local government "chain of command" is not entirely clear to the parties concerned. Much of the redundancy of this situation is desirable. When primary health care was essentially separated from the national Ministry of Health in Nigeria, standards and morale were severely reduced in the field, and local government support was often inadequate (Olowu and Wunsch, 1995).

Local Political Process: The local political process is far more developed in Botswana than in either Swaziland or South Africa. Botswana has had uninterrupted democracy and civilian rule since independence even though a single party has dominated until recently. Nonetheless, the local political process is unevenly developed.

Municipal (urban) councils are the most developed institutions involved in the local political process. Councilors interviewed at three research sites seemed well-informed and interested in local administration. Nonetheless, they face challenges (as part time officials) in keeping abreast of and contending effectively with full-time, professional administrators whom they do not hire nor fire, nor over whose programs have they really much control. The three councils visited utilize a similar committee structure to conduct business. Committees focusing on education, health care, social services, trades and licenses, and finance exist in Lobatse, Gaborone, and Kweneng. Committee members select the chairperson, and in Lobatse and Gaborone the mayor sits as an ex-officio member of all committees. The frequency of committee meetings varies. In Gaborone council committees meet once per month, while in Kweneng the district council's committees meet in conjunction with the formal council sessions. The position of mayor currently has little authority in Botswana.

In Kweneng District councilors were articulate and clear as to their roles in local government. The district councilors identified the following functions as their primary responsibilities: meeting constituents and seeking feedback, informing the council of the needs of constituents, defending the council's decisions before constituents, advising constituents of council actions, meeting with village committees and village extension teams to determine needs, encouraging self-help among the constituents to avoid dependence on the council, increasing knowledge of government policy, and supporting each other as councilors.

Councilors employed several strategies to keep attuned to constituents. In Lobatse, they sponsored meetings in their wards to exchange information with constituents. Councilors also held membership in civic organizations and reported they used these affiliations to stay informed of the concerns of the community. The Lobatse town council is attempting to develop a newsletter on local government that will be widely circulated in the community. Councilors in Gaborone sponsored forums in their wards. The mayor of Gaborone also toured the city with members of Parliament and visited each ward. In total, the mayor convened 25 meetings and used the occasions as an opportunity to gauge public sentiment on a variety of issues. Kweneng

District councilors met with constituents in conjunction with regular sessions of the council. There is little coordination of effort between district councilors and members of Parliament.

Councilors, however, are not as well prepared as administrators to discharge their duties. The separation of powers is unclear, and councilors do not have a command of pertinent public policy issues. The fact that citizens do not have a direct financial stake in local government may force councilors to develop innovative means by which to engage constituents. Citizens who do not see a direct link to local government may simply discount the importance of local authorities. Councilors must simultaneously seek to solidify their position in local government and increase confidence in their representation among constituents.

Presently a number of civic and voluntary organizations function in Botswana. Civic organizations such as the Lions Club, Rotary Club, Youth Council, and church-affiliated organizations encourage self-help and provide some limited local assistance. In Lobatse, the town council awarded grants up to P 18,000 to these small, community-based organizations. The Gaborone City Council recently received permission from the Ministry of Local Government, Land and Housing also to provide small grants to civic organizations. Some of the larger organizations have offices, but most do not. It is not clear that these organizations, in 1995, were serving as serious linkage mechanisms between citizen, elected official, and administrator. Some were dependent on donor grants to survive. However, a base is there on which such a process might develop.

Political parties were quite active at the local level at the time of this research. Indeed, in each of the two urban sites visited, the majority of the council was composed of the national opposition party. However, it is not clear from our interviews that this was energizing governmental-grass-roots interaction, or leading to any new policy directions. There appear to be few ideological and only nascent class differences between the two major parties (Danevad, 1995). Like civic and voluntary organizations, it appears as more a latent structure that might become vitalized, perhaps if local governments were to have more programmatic and policy discretion.

Local Government Effectiveness: Local governance in Botswana presents a complex and mixed picture of local personnel and institutional capacity. On the positive side, a workable and working administrative structure is in place, and, at least in the more accessible areas, is generally filled with competent personnel. In the governance of city, town, and district council affairs, this structure has been able to prepare and execute budgets dealing with the personnel, supply, and maintenance functions of several large, complex departments and activities. For the most part, they appear to manage these functions well, although often requiring supplemental payments and allocations to complete each year. Several written studies validated these field findings (Peters-Berries, 1995; Picard, 1987; Tordoff, 1988; SIDA, 1993; Dahlgren, 1993).

Local authorities, furthermore, engage in local physical planning, prepare development plans with specific project proposals, and manage the implementation of a large number of capital projects on an annual basis. In doing this they must, among other things, deal with a slow, cumbersome bureaucratic process to obtain funds from MFDP, and balance the requirements of contractors, MLGLH, and MFDP. Achieving this balance in itself reflects substantial institutional and personnel capacity. In general, personnel interviewed were professional, knowledgeable about their responsibilities, and articulate about the problems of

the local governance system. As a result, perhaps, local governments in Botswana have an excellent record of delivering such key services as water, education, and health (Tordoff, 1988; Holm, 1987).

Another area of local activity is implementing relatively small, labor-intensive projects connected with the drought relief effort. According to several interviews and one study (Meyer, 1995), local authorities exhibited some skill in doing this and in resolving personnel, fiscal, managerial, and technical problems in the process.

Consensus exists among written sources (Peters-Berries, 1995; Chanaux-Repond and Kanengoni, 1995; SIDA, 1993) and local respondents that financial administration is the weakest point in local governance. Budget projections are frequently inaccurate, audits often as much as three years behind, and funds sometimes misallocated (i.e., capital funds into recurrent expenditures). In 1989-90, only three of fourteen urban and district councils produced their final accounts on time. Only two received unqualified approval by auditors. Also, district councils have exerted few cost-saving measures, probably in part because of absence of incentives as well as shortfalls in capacity (Briscoe, 1995). Other problems include minimal capacity to collect local revenues and little evidence of ability to analyze expenditure efficiency. The extremely poor cost-recovery system for local services is an example of this. Also, estimates and actuals regarding locally collected revenues often differ by 100-200 percent (Briscoe, 1995).

Local governments regularly apply for supplementary grants. Since these appear to be regularly approved, this may be as much a financial strategy as a problem of competent budgeting and expenditure control. Also, the need for grants often results from unpredictable natural events such as drought (Briscoe, 1995).

The second area of weakness is personnel management. Respondents agreed that local governments were able to accomplish some routine tasks but believed them incapable of the range of personnel functions that complex personnel departments pursue. Personnel development, discipline to resolve difficult personnel problems, efficiency studies, reconfiguration of personnel assignments, and the like exceed present local capacity (SIDA, 1993; Dahlgren, 1993). If there were to be a phased increase in local personnel responsibilities, such capacities would need to be enhanced.

A final concern at the local level is weak management information systems and a lack of programmatic focus at the local level in the various sectors. Local personnel, one key study found, did not conceptualize their areas in a strategic, problem-focused, and systematic sense. This may stem from the habit of expecting direction from the center and the reality of central dominance over planning and capital investment decision. Regardless of the cause (central preemption or local passivity), there is little local strategic or programmatic initiative (Langlo and Molutsi, 1994; SIDA, 1993). These, however, are relatively sophisticated functions, and many local governments in the developed world could be similarly criticized.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper began by positing three variables to explain the performance of local governance. Drawing from the diverse literature which has accumulated on decentralization and local government in Africa, it argued that three factors were necessary for effective local

government: resources, authority, and a working, grassroots-based political process. Greater levels of each of these were expected to be positively associated with improved local government performance, with the latter including internal operations and delivery of services appropriate for local needs.

Local governance in the Republic of South Africa is entering a dynamic era. In applying this paper's analytical framework, one finds it characterized by high levels of resources and authority, but with a political process undergoing rapid change. Historically, the political process was viable, but only for the enfranchised and empowered white minority. That political process is obsolete, though remnants of it are still visible. The current post-apartheid political process is weak at the local level in all respects: civil society, political parties, the legislative arena, information flows, and informed and active publics.

Local government performance in Nelspruit reflects this transitional pattern. It has, for the moment, retained the managerial and organizational capacity of the old resource-rich system, but it has yet to begin redirecting its services and activities to the populations for which it is now responsible. In these regards, our analysis of Nelspruit validates the model offered in this paper. Its performance, at least in delivering services, must be regarded as weak.

Our second case, Swaziland, is at the very beginning of the process of building viable local, democratic governance, and not surprisingly it is a work "in progress." While indicators of performance were, at the time of this research, quite discouraging, it must be remembered that the reforms that established this system were recent, with some (elections) less than a year old. As the model used in this paper would predict, Swaziland does not now have anything like effective local governance.

In our last case, Botswana, local government displays unusually high levels of performance, both in its internal management and its record of delivering services (e.g., schools, water, roads, relief, and health care) throughout most of the country. In each respect, it is unusual for Africa, and indeed for most of the developing world.

Contributing to Botswana's success are several key factors: a substantial and sustained flow of fiscal and personnel resources; a national climate which has remained open to local party politics; an open and critical media; and activity by diverse voluntary and civic organizations; a stable legal environment and a sustained commitment from the center to maintaining real local government; and significant responsibilities though, limited authority, for local governments. The outcome of these factors is that local governments are able to perform many activities and functions, but personnel (both political and professional) are frustrated by the encumbrances which prevent them from doing more. As a result of this last problem, it is not clear that the "time and place" information, which is the relative advantage of local governance units, is being used by the national ministries in their policy pronouncements. Nor is it clear that national ministries are inspiring localities to take initiative. It appears there is little or no flexibility for unique local problems, needs, and priorities, whether in diverging from national guidelines or in shifting resources from health or education into other areas. For example, health or education might be better served in an area by upgrading transportation rather than by building additional facilities or hiring more staff. Under the current system, recurrent budgets are largely prescribed by national policy, and capital budgets are entirely under national control. Nonetheless, while local autonomy is limited, and while there are still personnel and

operational weaknesses in Botswana's local government, it clearly has made vast strides and appears the best of the three cases studies in providing quality local governance which responds to local needs.

With only three case studies, it is of course impossible to test all logically possible combinations of these variables. However, each of the three case studies offered a different pattern, and did allow a preliminary test of the general hypothesis: the higher the levels on these three variables, the better the performance of local government. They also offered a possibility to explore specific configurations of the three variables, how each uniquely affected local government effectiveness, and what their theoretical implications might be. Table 3 summarizes the paper's findings.

TABLE 3

Country	Resource Availability	Authority	Local Political Process	Performance: Management and Operations	Performance: Service Delivery
South Africa	very strong	strong	weak	very strong	weak
Swaziland	very weak	weak	very weak	very weak	very weak
Botswana	Strong	moderate	moderate	moderate	strong

Note: Evaluations range from: very weak, weak, moderate, strong, very strong.

The table clearly supports the paper's working hypothesis.

Beyond the general hypothesis, the three cases offer insight into several sub-patterns. In South Africa, for example, strong resources and authority, in a technocratic and legalistic political community, led to local governments which were highly efficient but de-coupled from the majority of their constituents. At the time of this research, 1995, the city surveyed in South Africa seemed almost robot-like in its continual attention to doing what it had historically done in the way it had historically done it! Professional city personnel seemed aware of the need to change direction, even anxious at times, but no real redirection had occurred. Perhaps the momentum of any large bureaucracy (e.g., habits, policies, standard operating procedures, existing clientele) explained this. It is unclear, however, what, if anything, will emerge to create the new political process for Nelspruit's local government. Without an external "push" from an active, sustained political process its technical and organizational excellence could be destroyed by public frustration and political rancor.

Decentralization in Swaziland is only a few years "old" and lacks resources, authority, and a local political process, and is performing poorly. In terms of the model presented in the introduction to this paper, Swaziland is deficient on all three key variables: authority, resources, and political process. As a result, its local governance performance is currently rather poor. Local management is weak and few services are being delivered. However, local governments are in place and functioning, and if nurtured may be expected over time to improve in their performance. For those who would abandon the policy, it would be well to consider that many similar criticisms were made of local governance in Botswana in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Picard, 1987), and it has traveled a long distance since then. What the Swaziland case should tell us, in conjunction with other cases, is not that decentralization and effective local governance are not possible, but that they are not easily achieved.

Much progress is needed in Swaziland: revenues must be expanded, personnel upgraded, fiscal and personnel management systems strengthened, town councils developed, ties to communities enhanced, services rationalized and upgraded, and the like. But a framework for local governance has been put in place by electing local officials, by outlining some limited local responsibilities, and by establishing at least a basic cadre of professional personnel. This is the minimum framework necessary to build on for future progress. Key investments need to be made now in developing local cadres and administrative systems in order to carry on decentralization. Without these investments, stagnation and regression may ensue.

The proposed national policy on urban government may resolve many questions of the legal status and clarify the role of local government in Swaziland. Key issues addressed by that policy include: (1) authorizing local governments to use revenue sources currently controlled by the central government; (2) releasing HUD and local governments from control over local capital improvements held by the key national ministries (Finance, Planning and Development, and Public Works); (3) clarifying the boundaries and role to be played by the Tikundla system in local governance. Improving the quality of local personnel (already a focus of several donor programs) paired with these expansions in authority and resources should enhance local governance. As local governments currently hire and discharge their own personnel and have control over their recurrent budgets, these are not issues. An eventual fourth issue might be the expansion of local authority to cover additional areas such as housing, primary and intermediate health services, and primary education. National control over these areas necessarily limits the impact that decentralization/localization can have on energizing grassroots involvement in capital development and enhancing service delivery.

Botswana, overall ranks the highest on our three independent variables, and has the strongest overall performance by local government. Nonetheless, its relative weakness in local authority seems closely related to serious discontent expressed by local officials (both professional and political) regarding their ability to fine-tune national programs to local needs. Weaknesses in planning and local initiatives may also be related to this. Also, the still low level of local resources mobilized in Botswana for local government may at least in part be explained by the still incompletely developed local political process. As for continued short-falls in management and operations, they can be explained by the relative youth of Botswana's local government systems, and overall continual weakness of the nation's personnel base. For

Botswana's local government to reach the next plateau of performance, locally raised resources and local authority must be expanded. These might empower local administration at the same time that they energize local political process.

In summary, local governments in Southern Africa present a mixed but not discouraging picture. The variance among them can be explained by their respective environments and policy choices, and tend to confirm the model as hypothesized. At the theoretical level, South Africa must develop a viable political process. Swaziland must continue down the road it recently started, enhancing local resources, sustaining local democracy, and gradually expanding local authority proportionality. Botswana has the "easiest" challenge, gradually to enhance the authority and responsibility its localities already have. Of course, translating theory into policy is often difficult, as it involves such unknowns as political will, good luck, and astute leadership. These are rare in any political system.

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African Cinema in the Nineties

MBYE CHAM

For African cinema, the final decade of this century has been a mixed bag of promises, hopes, achievements, and continued struggle and frustration with the same set of issues and challenges that have always confronted filmmakers throughout the continent. Hopes and projections of political and economic renewal and transformation under the aegis of World Bank-mandated adjustment programs, and other liberalization measures, and the positive fall-out that these were expected to have, especially on the cultural sector, actually turned out to be disastrous. African filmmakers began to experience the painful effects of budget cuts and the gradual loss of both external and internal funding for production. At the same time, the slow but orchestrated disappearance of movie houses, one of the sad occurrences of the 90's, began as privatization made purchase possible by local entrepreneurs who, in time, converted these into warehouses for sugar, rice, cement, and other commodities. These conditions contributed to intensifying the perennial crisis of production, distribution, and exhibition of African cinema on African soil, so that barely three years to the end of the century the lingering shadows of this crisis continue to hover and obscure the few notable achievements of the last decade.

Responses to this crisis on the part of African filmmakers ranged from the usual accusations of ignorance and neglect of culture industries by African states and entrepreneurs, to indictment of the marginalization of African cinema by countries of the North, and to the deployment of various individual as well as collective efforts to reverse this crisis in more durable fashion. Notable in the latter category are the recent efforts to refashion the Panafrican Federation of Filmmakers (FEPACI) into a more active body and voice for African cinema, the establishment of *Union des Créateurs et Entrepreneurs Culturels de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* (UCECAO), on the initiative of veteran Malian filmmaker Souleyemane Cissé and others. Developments in Southern Africa, particularly with the dismantling of formal apartheid in South Africa and the end of the RENAMO insurgency in Mozambique, have opened up new opportunities for production, distribution, exhibition, partnerships including other forms of networking and capacity building. New production houses and other film-related ventures have sprung up in Zimbabwe (The African Script Development Fund, The Film Training School in Harare, Framework International, Media for Development Trust, Zimmedia, Africa Film and TV) and in Mozambique (Ebano Multimedia, under the direction of veteran filmmaker Pedro Pimenta). Some of these have been instrumental in enabling productions by new and young filmmakers such as the first feature by Zimbabwean writer-turned-filmmaker Tsitsi Dangarembga's, *Everyone's Child* (1997), Isaac Mabhikwa's *More Time* (1993), and many others. They have also

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enabled filmmakers from other parts of Africa to film in Southern Africa. The Southern African Film Festival (SAFF), under the direction of Zimbabwean filmmaker Isaac Mabhikwa, is fast emerging as a prominent venue for filmmakers from the region and elsewhere on the continent, as well as for filmmakers from the African Diaspora. SAFF, by holding its fourth festival in October 1998 in Harare, along with the Cape Town Southern African Film and TV Market, now joins Carthage and FESPACO as one of the major film festivals on the continent.

South Africa holds a great deal of promise for African cinema. This past year has witnessed what, perhaps, is a sign of things to come. The first major feature film directed by a black South African was released this year. Titled *Fools* (1998), the film is directed by Ramadan Suleman, who was associated with Souleyemane Cissé. Produced by the South African production house, Natives At Large, Ebano Multi-Media from Mozambique, and others, the film is an adaptation of a short story by South African writer Njabulo Ndebele.

Furthermore, South Africa film industry's leader, Interleisure (recently acquired by Primedia, owner of the Ster-Kinekor theater chain in the sub-region) has recently entered into partnership with the Black South African investment group, Thebe Investment Trust. This alliance will create the Ster-Moribo chain to operate cinema theaters primarily in the black townships. Will African films eventually wind their way into this giant empire whose mainstay at the moment is primarily Hollywood films? Will this be the start of more investment in African film production? This is the challenge for African cinema in the "New" South Africa.

Co-productions and other forms of production partnerships between African filmmakers and film companies from different parts of the continent have registered some encouraging developments in the 90's. One witnesses an increasing turn toward South Africa. There is a gradual trend for filmmakers to cross various kinds of borders to shoot their films in locations and languages outside of their countries of origin and, at the same time, use technicians, actors, actresses, and other resources and facilities available in these countries. This has been the case with Souleyemane Cissé, who ventured from Mali into Zimbabwe to film his epic *Waati*, a story set in Southern and West Africa with a multi-lingual set of characters. Similarly, Cameroonian Jean-Pierre Bekolo's film, *Aristotle's Plot* (1995), benefited from co-production arrangements with the Zimbabwe-based Framework International, and the film, which is in English, also features South African actors. More recently, Idrissa Ouedraogo of Burkina Faso, shot his latest feature, *Kini And Adams* (1997), on location in Domboshawa, Zimbabwe, again with the collaboration of Framework International, and a Zimbabwean and South African crew and cast. The fact that this film was done entirely in English hints of a more pronounced and interesting shift toward a polyglot African film practice, evidence of the readiness or resolve of filmmakers to make full use of the available languages of the continent over and beyond their own, no matter what their level of competence or performance.

In opting for a narrative marked by a pronounced geo-cultural indeterminacy and using English instead of More or French, the language of his previous films, is Ouedraogo positing new and different imperatives for African cinema enabling it to break out of its present crisis of perennial struggle and marginalization in the industry? Is it a turn toward or a desire for greater "diversality" (some would say universality) make African films more appealing and marketable to broader audiences? If, so what are the costs and benefit of this presumed "diversality"?

For Merzak Allouache of Algeria, director of *Omar Gatlato* (1976), *Bab El-Owed City* (1994), and *Salut Cousin* (1996), the issue is one of integrity. He asks his fellow African filmmakers: "...are we losing a sense of our own reality, are we compromising cinematic content for 'northern' funding?" This sentiment has been echoed by many other filmmakers who voice concern about the sometimes blatant tendency of funders to dictate the content and form of African films. Cheik Oumar Cissoko, the Malian filmmaker whose film *Gumba* (1995) won the Grand Prize at FESPACO in 1995, and who is currently finishing his latest film, *La Genese* (*Genesis*), suggests: "Universal themes are the compulsory path that our cinema has to take to make a name for itself."

These issues and many others about the narrative content, form, style, technique and execution will continue to fuel much of the debate and commentary on the future of African cinema and, surely, more informed analyses will emerge in the years to come. In the meantime, a cursory glance at some of the recent productions in African cinema reveals a trend toward greater diversity and plurality of stories, styles, techniques, themes, and ideologies. Some filmmakers are attracted or pushed toward stories presumed to be universal either in content, reference, inference, or implication, while others opt for the local and the particular. In a way, these trends are not mutually exclusive, for few things are universal that are not anchored in some specificity, so that many who claim the universal label still find themselves departing from defined geo-cultural, political, and historical contexts. For example, the film *Guimba* (1995) is about tyranny, the abuse of power and privilege, and the resistance to such excesses. These are themes and experiences that are shared by all societies around the world. Similarly, Gaston Kabore's 1997 FESPACO Grand Prize winning film, *Buud Yam*, is about universal features such as love, duty, obligation, struggle, pain, and attachment to family and community. However, it is only through the specificities of their narrative modes, inscriptions of their cultures, the gestures, the languages, the costumes, the music, etc., that any such universal features emerge. So obvious is this fact that it becomes nonproductive most of the time to speak in terms of universal this or universal that!

Many filmmakers are increasingly showing interest in subjects hitherto relatively undeveloped in the past. The muffled allusions to romance, sexuality, and desire characteristic of quite a sizable segment of earlier African cinema have become more pronounced and developed in a few of the recent productions, to the point of even constituting the narrative vehicle of some. Interpersonal relations, romance, bold assertions of sexual and other identities and desires, and the cultural, religious, and other impediments and sanctions to these, the myriad exigencies of a problematic modernity and the formidable challenges of a restless young population now in the tentacles of "devaluation" (*devaluation*), MTV, and a poorly digested African American hip-hop popular culture--these constitute the focus, in one way or another, of films such as *Dakan* (1997) by Mohamed Camara of Guinea, *Essaida* (1996) by Tunisian filmmaker Mohamed Zran, the elegant and somewhat tragic *Machaho* (1996) by Algerian Belcachem Hadjaj, *Mossane* (1996) by Senegalese Safi Faye, *The Blue Eyes of Yonta* (1995) by Flora Gomes of Guinea-Bissau, and *Bab El-Owed City* (1994) and *Salut Cousin* (1996) by Algerian Merzak Allouache, to name just a few. The latter film is a remarkable achievement in its skillful blend of comedy, spectacle, and romance to project a poignant commentary on African immigration to France as well as offer a new vision of African Arab romance and solidarity in

the persons of the Algerian fellow and the Senegalese woman. Another equally compelling achievement is the new film of Jilali Ferhati from Morocco, *Chevaux De Fortune*, a refreshing retake of the perennial theme of the pull and push factors of emigration.

Recent productions also feature a number of works that in some ways continue and build on trends and orientations that were the hallmarks of the 70's and 80's. The socio-political commentary, the interrogations of cultural practices and customs, especially their exploitation and abuse for individual profit, and the indictment of inequity and repression are themes that resurface in some of the new films. *Tableau Feraille* (1996) by Senegalese Moussa Sene Absa looks at the question of culture, politics, and gender in the context of contemporary post-devaluation urban Senegal, while Adama Drabo of Mali uses reversal as a narrative and structuring device in his new film *Taafé Fanga* (1997) to interrogate the issue of gender in a highly amusing and effective fashion. Drabo's film provokes a rethinking of gender roles as natural, and instead teases us to consider them as social constructs. The film immerses us in certain aspects of Dogon culture in similar ways that Gaston Kabore's latest film, *Buud Yam*, deploys a quest motif as a structuring device to chronicle the eco-cultural diversity of Burkina Faso within the framework of Wend Kuuni's search for the medical practitioner to cure her adopted sister, Pognere. This "sequel" to Kabore's first film is evidence of a certain continuity in African film subjects and styles. In fact, one can draw parallels between *Buud Yam*, Safi Faye's *Mossane*, and Flora Gomes' *Po Di Sangio* (1996) to the extent to which all three mine their respective societies' repertoire of myths and narrative styles to inform their films.

The subject of African history continues to command the attention of African filmmakers as they continue the task of making sense of the distant and recent past in ways that speak to the present and the future in significant ways. In addition to Tunisian filmmaker Moufida Tlatl's elegant *Les Silences Du Palais*, set in the time of the last Tunisian monarchs, and Haile Gerima's record-setting film *Sankofa* on slavery, two young Ethiopian filmmakers have recently contributed two technically refined and analytically sophisticated reappraisals of the last two decades of the Ethiopian experience with a dying feudal monarchy and a repressive military dictatorship. Yemane Demissie's *Tumult* (1996) and Salem Mekuria's *Deluge* (1996) engage these aspects of the Ethiopian experience with a great deal of invention, imagination, and nuance. Also worth noting is the recent "re-vision" of the Algerian war of independence by Rachida Krim in her acclaimed film *Sous Les Pieds Des Femmes* (*Where Women Tread*).

Like Demissie, Mekuria, and Krim, Cameroonian Jean-Marie Teno and Balutu Kanyinda from the Democratic Republic of Congo (ex-Zaire) also detail their perspectives on dictatorship, violence, repression, and struggle in their countries in the post-independence moment. Teno's first long feature, *Clando* (1996), builds on the foundation of his impressive documentary work on various aspects of life in Cameroon under former President Ahmadou Ahidjo and current president Paul Biya. In *Clando*, Teno delves further into the geography and operations of repression and the strategies deployed by people to resist and negotiate such forces both in Cameroon and among Cameroonian immigrants in Germany. BaluLu's *Le Damier* (1997) is, without doubt, one of the most inventive films to come out of African cinema in recent years. A fine blend of play, power, and politics, the film ingeniously exploits the liberating aspect of the popular game of draught (a version of chess), a leveling device, and a space where boundaries crumble, as a vehicle through which the oppressed talk back, insult, and humiliate the

oppressor. The defeat of the head of state (figured as Mobutu Sese Seko) at the hands of the lowly champion from the ghetto is somewhat prophetic of what was in store for Mobutu.

Aristotle's Plot

(1996) by Cameroonian filmmaker Jean-Pierre Bekolo deals with the subject of cinema itself, more particularly, cinema in Africa and cinema by Africans. A meta-discourse on cinema, this film also uses play to deploy a cast of characters with names like Van Danune, Schwartznegger, Bruce Lee, cinema, cineaste and references to specific African filmmakers such as Safi Faye, Ousmane Sembene, and Souleyemane Cissé. The film interrogates the state and direction of cinema in Africa, the prevalence of non-African films on African screens, and the absence and presumed unpopularity of African films with African audiences. Underneath the playful surface of this film, which uses English and a South African cast of actors, is a compelling set of challenges and provocations from a young filmmaker to African filmmakers and observers, and it is done using an approach and style generally associated with avant-gardist and post-modernist tendencies.

Recent activity in the "New" South Africa will no doubt bring new dimensions to the already complex situation and questions of race and belonging, in particular. The work by white, anglo and Afrikaaner filmmakers from South Africa, such as Michael Harmon's *noire Wheels and Deal* (1991), the late Manie van Rensburg's comedy *Taxi To Soweto* (1995), Ian Kerkoff's bold and explicitly gay *Nice To Meet You, Please Don't Rape Me* (formerly titled *Confessions of A Yeoville Rapist* (1995), David Lister's comedy *Soweto Green* (1963), and *Jump The Gun* (1997) by Les Blair of Britain, the M-NET supported productions like *Letting Go* (1997) and *The Sexy Girls* (1997) will most likely rekindle debates on the place of white filmmakers in African cinema.

No doubt, as we draw closer to the *fin de siècle*, many of the seminal questions and themes raised in Bekolo's film and similar ones in the numerous other fore and outlets dedicated to African cinema will be debated and discussed with more urgency and purpose. For many are the voices that are sincerely and persistently calling for imaginative and sustainable responses to the multi-faceted challenges to African cinema in a coming age of technological hegemony and an increasingly savage global competition. The mixed bag that has been the lot of African cinema in the 90's could very well turn out to be a catalyst for different and more productive paths.

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Contemporary African Film at the 13th Annual Carter Lectures on Africa: Interviews with Filmmaker Salem Mekuria and Film Critic Sheila Petty

REBECCA GEARHART

The University of Florida's Center for African Studies hosted its thirteenth annual Gwendolen M. Carter Lectures on Africa from March 22-25 on the Florida campus. This year's conference, "Africa on Film and Video", was organized by Mark Reid, Associate Professor of English, and featured presentations by film scholars Mbye Cham (Howard University), Samba Gadjigo (Mount Holyoke College), Jennifer Machiorlatti (University of Michigan, Flint), Sheila Petty (University of Regina), Nokwenza Plaatjies (Howard University and Friends World College), and Frank Ukadike (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor). Cham's overview of contemporary trends in African cinema appears in this issue.

Salem Mekuria was present both as a critic and a filmmaker. In addition to her films *Ye Wonz Maibel* (*Deluge*) and *As I Remember It: A Portrait of Dorothy West*, other films screened during the conference included *Taafe Fanga* (Adama Drabo, Mali, 1997), *Dakan* (Mohamed Camara, Guinea, 1997), *Flame* (Ingrid Sinclair, Zimbabwe, 1996), *Clando* (Jean-Marie Teno, Cameroon, 1996), *Everyone's Child* (Tsitsi Dangarembga, Zimbabwe, 1996), *Daughters of the Dust* (Julie Dash, USA, 1991), and *Camp de Thiaroye* (Ousmane Sembene, Senegal, 1989).

Among the new African films screened at the conference, *Deluge*, written and directed by Salem Mekuria stands out as the only one that does not use fictionalized characters to carry the narrative. Mekuria appears as herself to recount the story of Ethiopia's "Red Terror" through personal interviews with her immediate family and close friends. She presents an outpouring of sorrow and confusion that extends beyond personal or familial grief to encompass a national sense of remorse.

I interviewed Salem Mekuria and film critic Sheila Petty. Excerpts from these interviews are reprinted below. Salem Mekuria agreed to discuss her film with me even as she mourned the death of her father, who passed away shortly after her arrival in Gainesville. The interview is presented in his memory.

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<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v2/v2i1a5.pdf>

RG: Your daughter's interest in Ethiopian history and in your brother Selomon's death pushed you to deal with the painful experiences that your family went through in Ethiopia during the 1970's and 1980's. How did making *Deluge* help you to work out some of your sorrow and confusion about the Ethiopian Revolution?

SM: Well, it made me look very closely at what happened, at what we were responsible for, at what we thought we were doing in those days when we felt like we were at the helm of a revolution, although we didn't really know what the revolution was. It made me look back at all those things. It made me look back at a lot of assumptions about what we were capable of doing. It also made me look at what it meant to lose my brother, because I had not really confronted that issue. Deep down it was always there but there was this fear that if I named it, if I said I lost my brother, then I really would lose him by acknowledging his death. I knew he wasn't going to walk into my living room one day and say, "You know I just came out of someplace." It also made me understand the tragedies--the extent of the tragedies--that Ethiopians suffered. In many different ways it made me face a lot of things that all of us, I think, collectively are trying not to face because it is so horrible.

RG: I recently watched *Deluge* with a Kenyan, who was impressed with your film because it offered a personal entre into a very confusing political situation. He was surprised that you were given permission to make such a film, which so openly opposes the Ethiopian government. Are you able to publicly screen *Deluge* in Ethiopia? If so, how have Ethiopians reacted to the film?

SM: Well, its ... lets see.... Its explicitly opposing the previous government. See we had a nice thing that the Kenyans had, we had the fall of the military regime. So I went home right after the fall of the military regime and was given access to a lot of things by the new transitional government. So it doesn't explicitly oppose the present government. Although, implicitly, any government that is narrow-minded and bent on maintaining a single party system that's sort of very much interested in confining power to a small group of people, would feel a message from this film.

Yes, I did have an opportunity to screen *Deluge* at home. I have a version that is in Amharic, the official language at home, and the reception was unbelievable. Of course, its not being shown on television, which means that the government does understand that it has a certain amount of power in bringing people together. But, people have the tapes; people see them; and every opportunity I get I show it to whatever small groups I can find. So, in that sense, yes, I do have access to showing it.

RG: Do you believe *Deluge* provides people who do not know much about Ethiopian political history with a "fair" assessment of how the revolution affected most Ethiopians?

SM: Well, it's hard to claim such authority. But, I believe I give a very sort of considerate view. It's my view. It's my story, and I chose to say the things I said in the film. But there is a lot of shared knowledge in there. So, in fact, this is one film for which I have not yet had any criticism

about either point of view, or what's in it. In terms of facts or other content, it does give an overview. It's not an in-depth view. It's not really history. It does give an overview from a personal standpoint of what happened. So for people who have really not seen what the human impact of the big story was, it provides an entre into it. And it also makes people more curious about what happened and about the history of Ethiopians. You can't tell the history of anything in an hour or in a series. You can't. So I'm aware of that. But I tried to give a fairly rounded overview of that particular period, and I hope people get that sense and want more and get more curious.

RG: What would you like viewers to come away with from this film? And what do you wish for in American versus Ethiopian responses?

SM: That's very hard. I mean, I want people to understand that every disaster, every tragedy has gone through a process. That is really also what I was working with. That we didn't just one day get up and say, "Bye Haile Selassie!" and then start killing each other. We went through a process that all political changes go through. A process. And that doesn't necessarily make it any easier. But we were not mad people; we are not deranged people that just go around killing each other. There is a background to it and I hope people will come away sensing that everybody is entitled to a process. That there are differences within us, that there are various issues that divide us. But people think about these issues and people act basically, some people, but most people, particularly in this case, I think most of the young people are genuinely interested in the kind of changes that they wished socialism would bring us and they gave their lives for that. So there is ideology. There is political process, and also there is idealism. I want people to see that.

And of course I also want people to share that the tragedy was *not* just this group of people or that group of people. Everybody was involved. I also want people to see that the responsibility was shared. That we can't just blame one person or another person. Everybody owns that responsibility. So these are some of the things that I want. It's also a human story. It's not just a political story. It's not just a mass tragedy. It's very human and those individuals who died touched everyone, my own family included. So those are the things I hope people will take away from it.

RG: In the film your close friends and immediate family members and you yourself all appear as yourselves, without fictionalization of any kind. Most African filmmakers do not take this approach and prefer to deal with complex social and political issues by creating fictional characters to tell their stories for them. Please talk a bit about how you decided to put you and your family's real life experiences at the center of your film.

SM: That's the story I know best, basically. I didn't start out with this film, actually. I started out with a grand documentary history of what happened. And history is very unyielding. You can't really put history on film. I also wasn't a historian, or in any way an authority on what happened. I wasn't there. For me, eventually, after a couple of years of trying to mold this big

giant into a documentary, I had to abandon it and go to the story that I knew best, that is a part of the big history, part of what happened. It's illuminated for me that big mass, huge non-human story and transformed it into a human story. So, for me, fictionalizing it would be removing it one step further. This story was as much a personal story as a big political and official story. So it worked better. I knew the story better. I could say "Hey this is my view; you can go do your own." So it liberated me from having to answer that this happened and not this. For me it was more a sense of writing the story and not having to answer everybody. As I know our people are very conscientious. Everybody has their own take on the story. So, I decided I'll do my own take. That's why I did it.

Fictionalizing? I think about that a lot. I hope to do that because it does give you a lot more room to provide vision, which is not really possible to do in documentary story telling. So, yes; I think it would work as fiction too. And boy do I have great characters for that!

RG: How did you convince your friends and family that your approach was the best way to unveil the horrors of Ethiopia's "Red Terror"?

SM: I don't think they thought about the approach. I think they were just ready to tell their story. I think that they had been silent for so long. First of all they know me. I grew up in their eyes, under their eyes. I was their daughter's best friend, and it was easy for them to sit down and share with me what happened. But more than that I think they were ready to tell their story to anybody, anybody who would listen and value and use it in the way that they feel is justified.

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In an interview with critic Sheila Petty, I asked her to reflect on Salem Mekuria's new film.

RG: The paper you are presenting this week at the Carter Lectures discusses African film as a "borderless cinema" because it seems to articulate identity issues for Africans living in and out of Africa. Does Salem Mekuria's film *Deluge* typify this characteristic, or defy it?

SP: It probably does both at the same time. This is an interesting case because of her decided position as an Ethiopian film maker living and working in the U.S. So, what she's done is use distance as a factor of identity, and she's questioning this in terms of nation and identity at the same time, and how change can be effective in African cinema. So definitely, you can argue that it falls into the category of borderless cinema in terms of Africa because she is making an African film but living in the U.S. What's interesting about this is that it gives her a different perspective, you could say, on the issues that she is dealing with because she is both inside and outside of the issues. Inside because she is Ethiopian, outside because of the distance that she has to the geographical location she is dealing with.

RG: In *Deluge* Salem Mekuria appears as herself, an Ethiopian filmmaker who uses the medium to explore her own family's struggle to survive during the Ethiopian revolution. We see her at

the editing table literally fitting her personal narrative into the history of her country. Why are these shots important to this film? Does Mekuria break new ground, as an African filmmaker, by inserting herself into her work in this way?

SP: I think that what she is doing actually is creating a performative documentary that's very self-reflexive. So she is putting herself literally into the film, and she is questioning her own role in the issues she is dealing with and the role of responsibility, as well. That's what is important. And, as a performative documentary, it is self-reflexive, while history is not; historical fact is not more important in performative documentaries than an evocation of history, which is what she does in the film.

RG: Why do you think that so many different African filmmakers choose to tell their history through fictionalized characters?

SP: I think that fiction film making is one of the first things that got going on the Continent. You look at the so-called forefathers of African cinema (now they are called the grandfathers of African cinema) and they chose to work in fiction film making. It transpired that more and more film makers became interested in working in kind of the same genre, so to speak. It's almost like a tradition. Some are doing documentaries, but I would have to say the emphasis has to be on fiction film making; whether there is more of a market for that could be a plausible reason. People are going to watch fiction films especially if they have relevance to their everyday living, or if people think they are going to see their friends in the film or whatever.

RG: What direction do you think contemporary African filmmakers are taking? Do you think African filmmakers are making films that have the potential of serving as a kind of bridge between Africa and the Diaspora?

SP: Yes, I believe so. Especially now given this kind of important question, "What makes an African film African?" Is it the fact that it's a person from Africa that makes the film, or is it because it's made on the continent, or is it African financing that makes it African film? What about Africans living outside of Africa? There are a lot of Africans living in France who go back to Africa to make their films and then go back to France to distribute them there, and exhibit them worldwide. And what about African Americans who claim sometimes to be making African films or films with African content because there is an evocation of Africa? I think we saw that quite well in Jennifer Machiorlatti's paper on *Daughters of the Dust*. There is a constant reference to Africa through oral tradition, through memories, even through the aesthetics that Julie Dash uses in the film; they are constantly referring to Africa and the ancestors.

RG: Are African films currently being watched in African American community fora? What has to happen for them to reach wider, less specialized audiences?

SP: It certainly is my impression that in the States African Americans definitely want to see African films. When these films come to Canada there is definitely an audience for them. One of the problems I believe is distribution. Certainly in Canada we've got a pretty specific situation,

where Quebec has its own system and Anglophone Canada has its own system of distribution and exhibition. So you can have Francophone films that would not get distributed in English Canada and that would include a lot of African films. If you want to see a lot of African films, the place to go is Montreal for the *View d'Afrique* African film festival. The Toronto International Film Festival has some work in it, but again, it can be subtitled. So there are lots of barriers; there are lots of things that need to be done. And the filmmaker has to agree to have a distributor in North America and it's not always the case that they will accept the terms of distribution.

BOOK REVIEWS

Development for Health: Selected Articles from Development in Practice. Deborah Eade, ed. Published by Oxfam Publications (UK and Ireland), and Humanities Press International, 1997, 111 pp., paper \$15.

Health related behavior is defined broadly to encompass all activities that have a significant effect on health care utilization and health care delivery (including culture, social behavior, expenditures, and health policies). This Oxfam publication is based on material originally published in *Development and Health*, a journal devoted to health and developmental issues.

Practitioners and policy makers involved in health promotion or interested in the study of health behavior will find this book very helpful as it provides useful information about the pitfalls and constraints to be taken into account in health promotion policies, especially in developing societies. At the same time, the book offers the reader sufficient information about the social, cultural, and behavioral determinants of the health of women in developing societies. Most importantly, the book presents several aspects of health as seen through the lens of the social and health worker.

The book begins with a survey of the methodological issues relevant to the study of women's health and moves to a discussion of the factors that constrain or inhibit health utilization. Throughout the book, the articles draw the reader's attention to how macro level issues (such as Structural Adjustment Policies) can affect the cost of care as well as the utilization of health care services among poor women.

Another interesting aspect of the book is its concern with mental and psychosocial health issues, a subject infrequently discussed in the discourse about health care in developing societies. For instance, in the article "The Psychosocial Effects of Conflict in the Third World", Derek Summerfield asks a few interesting questions about the relationship between population processes such as migration (forced or voluntary) and mental health. What are the health consequences of post-traumatic stress syndrome on people from the third world? How have the various wars and conflicts prevalent in the developing world for the past three decades affected the lives of these people? Similar issues are articulated by Patel et al. who argue that mental health issues are genuine areas for research, and for intervention programs.

Sundari Ravindran's chapter on "Methodological Issues in Women's Health Research" provides a framework that considers the interaction between social, economic, political, and cultural factors in applied health status research, and in health utilization.

Anne LaFond's piece, "Deterrents to Immunization in Somalia: A Mother's Attitudes", is an important contribution to the literature on child survivorship. The question asked here revolves

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v2/v2i1reviews.pdf>

around the best way to provide intervention strategies aimed at the health needs of young children. In this regard, LaFond draws on her experience in Somalia to alert program administrators in the developing world of the need to consider the structural and social constraints in existence in these societies since they can impede the acceptance of new ideas/innovations.

One of the interesting chapters in the book is Betsy Hartman's "Population Control in the New World Order." Hartman examines the population control movement and how its activities can affect basic human rights, especially the rights of women. She argues interestingly that with the end of the Cold War, there has been a shift in ideology from military expenditures to population control. The latter, she argues, has been refurbished and polished with feminist and environmental themes and marketed with the latest means of communication. In the North, the current emphasis is on immigration control, while in the South, efforts are geared to using what she refers to as "double-speak" (choice, female empowerment, environmental concerns, etc.) in discussing the population question in the developing world. Yet, in their attempts to reduce high birth rates in the developing world, Hartman argues that the advocates of population control have failed to consider the factors that determine the demand for children in the first place: increased infant mortality levels, the labor needs of agrarian societies, as well as the limited economic opportunities in these societies. While Hartman does not negate the need for contraception, she argues that the way planning is implemented undermines the health systems and targets women unfairly. Thus, to her, blaming poverty and environmental degradation, a typical Malthusian conception of population vis-à-vis development, obscures the real cause of the global population crisis--the inequities inherent in the socio-economic systems whereby resources are concentrated in the hands of a few.

The impact of AIDS is considered from the perspectives of changing gender and social relations. In "Widowhood and Orphans: Property Disputes in Rakai District, Uganda", Chris Roys informs the reader of some of the consequences of Africa's AIDS epidemic in relation to property and inheritance rights. While the issue of property rights and succession is one of the social problems facing many African societies, Roys argues that in the case of Rakai, the problems have been accentuated by the AIDS virus in that region of Uganda. In part, the problems derive from the early morbidity and mortality linked to the AIDS epidemic. Yet Roys suggests that there is the need to look at the main cause of the conflict between family members on property rights. The clan system, which is patrilineal and makes it difficult for women to inherit property, is seen as at the root of the "inheritance debacle" in Rakai. The empowerment of women, especially economic self sufficiency and changes in the laws of inheritance, are expected to help women in this regard.

Hillary Hughes's article on "Evaluating HIV/AIDS Programs" examines ways to assess a successful intervention program. She argues that a successful program often depends on the level of organization already in existence in the community as well as the involvement of the community. In this way, not only would knowledge of the existence of the disease be beneficial, but it would encourage "local content" and participation.

The list of references and the annotated bibliography is extensive and should be useful for a wide range of people--absolute beginners, health care workers involved in capacity building, and people with experience but little formal training in health promotion planning or

evaluation. I would not hesitate in recommending this book to anybody with an interest in health evaluation and program planning in the developing world.

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Encyclopedia of Pre-colonial Africa: Archeology, History, Languages, Culture, and Environments. Joseph o. Vogel, ed. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, A Division of Sage Publication, 1997, 605 pp., cloth \$124.95.

Joseph Vogel's edited volume is a welcome compendium of topics on pre-colonial Africa. It brings together an impressive array of authors, topics, and ideas that will allow the book to serve as a reference for those needing to venture outside their specializations on Africa. African history can suffer from the same problem that other colonized areas experience in the minds of many, that is the assumption that its history starts with colonialism because a comparative abundance of records from that era exists. This volume, then, serves the wider purpose of bringing, in an easily accessible way, some balance to this problem. The encyclopedia format is useful, not so much for ease of reference, but for the shorter pieces contained in the volume, allowing a much more amplified breadth than would otherwise be possible.

After a fairly comprehensive introduction, the book is organized into five sections dealing with African environments, histories of research, technology, people and agriculture, and the prehistory of Africa. Regrettably, the shortest section is on African environments. It covers an enormous range of time and space in too few pages. Given the large interest in various disciplinary communities with the type and extent of vegetation zones existing prior to recorded history, it is surprising that this topic is given such short treatment.

The section on histories of research contains, among others, pieces on the history of archeology in several regions, historiography in Africa, and a history of the search for human origins. It is largely about the individuals, institutions, and trends involved in African archeology, and seems a bit out of place with the other largely descriptive sections. Apart from those specifically interested in the discipline of archeology and the popular ramifications of archeological finds, this section may be of limited interest to the general reader. The subsequent sections on archeology itself, however, are the real meat and utility of the volume. With extremely limited existing documentation on pre-colonial Africa, it is archeology that must locate and interpret the available evidence on a wide range of topics--and this appears to be the driving idea behind the book.

The section on technology is quite good and is a very informative introduction to the ways in which human groups come to utilize aspects of the environment to make a living. The presentation style in a number of the pieces of mixing specific information regarding place, dates, and finds together with interpretations is especially appealing. Figure 14 in the section on

copper metallurgy could have been done with a little more care, however, as some of the political boundaries appear problematic, e.g., Somali-land, Western Sahara, Eritrea, Namibia.

The section on people and culture is longer than the previous sections and contains sub-sections on languages, forager lifeways, pastoral lifeways, farming lifeways, and ethno-archeology. While these topics are spatially distinct, both between and within lifeways, the only two maps in this section pertain to West African languages. Nevertheless, this section provides the reader with an important glimpse into the use of the environment by different groups in different regions.

The final section on the prehistory of Africa is the largest, comprising almost half of the book. It contains sub-sections on the emergence of humanity, first footsteps in Africa, advanced foragers, rock art, the ceramic late stone age, beginnings of food production, iron age, social complexity, trade and commerce, and historical archeology. The detail here is quite good, descriptive, and explanatory without being overly technical. In fact, the introductory, explanatory tone of the book is one of its hallmarks, and reveals a well thought-out-project. With a book of this breadth, it would be the rare reader who would be able to wade through technical language on so many fronts. The utility of this section is twofold: (1) as a treatment of humans in pre-colonial Africa; and (2) as a treatment of the early evolution of humans in general. In this regard, this final section will make the volume of interest to classes and scholars of human evolution, in addition to Africanists.

Graphically, there is a good selection of maps and charts, but most impressive is the large array of "rock art" reproductions. The analysis and interpretation of this art, in various sub-sections, is quite intriguing, with effective linkages made between culture and environment. This is a vast part of the book, virtually a volume on its own; its treatment of land use, political, economic, and cultural aspects of African development will be of wide interest.

Each of the ninety-four entries in the book (by almost as many authors) includes a short bibliography to get the interested reader started. The index is large and well done, enhancing the reference function of the volume. While the volume will be a significant addition to the shelves of Africanists, ecologists, and anthropologists, the price is fairly intimidating for the undergraduate, which clearly many, if not most, of the pieces were written for.

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Sol Plaatje: Selected Writings. Brian Willan, ed. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1997, 483pp., paper \$29.95.

Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje (1876-1932) was one of the foremost African leaders of his generation in South Africa. As the first general secretary of the African National Congress (ANC), founded in 1912, Plaatje was a prominent political spokesperson, interacting regularly with government officials and other leading whites in both South Africa and Great Britain.

Plaatje was much more than a political figure, however. Prior to the formation of the ANC, he was a court interpreter at Mafeking, where he became caught up in the famous siege during the Anglo-Boer War (1). After the war he became editor of two successive newspapers, *Koranta ea Bechoana* (Bechuana Gazette) and *Tsala ea Bechoana* (The Friend of the Bechuana), both published in Setswana and English. As one of the band of pioneering African newspaper editors, he viewed his role as that of a "mouthpiece" for his people. It was this role that brought him to prominence and led to his selection as ANC general secretary.

Plaatje was a significant writer. His political tract, *Native Life in South Africa* (2), was an angry denunciation of the 1913 Natives' Land Act. The first sentence is perhaps one of the hardest hitting political statements in South African history: "Awaking on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African Native found himself, not actually a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth" (Document 52, p. 186). His writing was not limited to political developments, however, for in the same year he published *Native Life*, he also published a book of Tswana proverbs in both the original language and in translation (3). Later in life, Plaatje increasingly turned his attention to literary pursuits, translating Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Much Ado about Nothing* into Tswana (4). Plaatje also wrote the first novel in English by a black South African, *Mhudi: An Epic of South African Native Life a Hundred Years Ago* (5). It is not surprising, then, that such a wealth of written material by such an important early political and literary figure in the history of African nationalism in South Africa would lead to an edition of his *Selected Writings* within three years of the electoral triumph of the party which he helped found.

Brian Willan is the natural editor for Plaatje's work, since he has not only written the authoritative biography of Plaatje (6), but also assisted in editing Plaatje's *Mafeking Diary*. The organization of *Selected Writings* is very much along the lines of the biography. Indeed, Willan utilized most of the material in the *Selected Writings* in preparing the biography. Part One deals with the Mafeking siege and Plaatje's editorship up to the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, which is covered in Chapters Four through Six of the biography. As the title for Part One implies ("All we claim is our just dues"), this was an era when African political leaders were seeking, in the words of a Plaatje editorial in the 20 April 1904 issue of the *Bechuana Gazette*, "equal rights for all civilized men" (Document 27, pp. 86-87).

Part Two, 1910-1923, covers the same ground as Chapters Seven through Twelve of the biography. Here the emphasis is on Plaatje as a political leader, as suggested by the section's title, "Champion for the cause of our peoples." Among the key themes are the fight against the 1913 Natives' Land Act, Plaatje's representation of African interests in England during the First World War, and his 1920-22 trip to Canada and the United States to foster ties with African-Americans. The third and final part of the book covers the period 1924-32 (Chapters Thirteen through Sixteen in the biography) and focuses on Plaatje's career as "A pioneer in literature." While documents relating to the Sechuana Proverbs (Document 54) and to his *A Sechuana Reader in International Phonetic Orthography* (7) (Document 55) appear in part Two, Part Three is where the bulk of the material for this facet of Plaatje's life is to be found.

As one would expect, *Selected Writings* contains excerpts from Plaatje's major published works, including the *Mafeking Diary* (Document One), *Native Life in South Africa* (Document 52), *Mhudi* (Document 98), *Diphosho-posho* (Comedy of Errors) (Document 95), and others, including

publications noted above, for a total of nine documents. Since these excerpts are readily available elsewhere, they are not as unique and useful as are the remaining ninety-five selections. The most numerous of these are forty-eight articles and editorials from the newspapers Plaatje edited and articles published principally in the English-language press over the course of his life. That newspapers such as the *Cape Argus*, the *Cape Times*, and the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* regularly published pieces by Plaatje suggests the respect accorded to his views by at least some leading English-speaking white South Africans. There are also thirty-three letters in the collection written to white officials and politicians, business leaders, personal contacts, fellow Africans, and others. Four manuscripts are also part of this collection, including a 1908/09 piece entitled "The Essential Interpreter" (Document 10). Willan drew heavily on this document in his biography (8) to illustrate the critical role of African court interpreters to the functioning of colonial administration and also to show Plaatje's implicit belief in the fairness of the Cape Colony's judicial system. Rounding off the collection are two pamphlets, two transcripts of interviews, three speeches/addresses, and three documents categorized as "other." All of these documents are English-language originals. If there is a significant shortcoming to the book, it is that Willan does not provide translations of any documents that originally appeared in Setswana, although the columns of Plaatje's newspapers contain plenty of this type of material.

Sol Plaatje today is the best known member of the founding generation of the African National Congress. In large part this is due to his prolific writing. John L. Dube, the first president of the ANC, was also a newspaper editor, but the range, scope, and diversity of his writing was far more limited than that of Plaatje. Plaatje had an original and fertile mind, and was able to express himself extremely well in both English and Setswana, as his highly capable translations of Shakespeare demonstrate. The appearance of his *Selected Writings* serves further to enhance his well-deserved reputation as one of the foremost South Africans of his era.

1. He kept a diary during the siege, which was published more than seven decades later. Sol T. Plaatje, *Mafeking Diary: A Black Man's View of a White Man's War*, edited by John Comoroff (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1973).
2. London: P.S. King and Co., 1916; new edition, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1995)
3. Sol T. Plaatje, *Sechuana Proverbs with Literal Translations and their European Equivalents* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trubner, 1916).
4. Two of the translated plays were published: *Diposho-phoso* (Comedy of Errors) (Moriya: Morija Printing Works, 1930), and *Dintshontsho tsa bo-Juliuse Kesara* (Julius Caesar) (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1937).
5. Lovedale: Lovedale Press, 1930; new edition, with an Introduction by T.J. Couzens, London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1978; new edition, with an Introduction by Tony Voss, Johannesburg: Ad. Donder, 1989).
6. Brian Willan, Sol Plaatje: *South African Nationalist, 1876-1932* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).
7. D. Jones and S.T. Plaatje, *A Sechuana Reader in International Phonetic Orthography* (with English translations) (London: University of London Press, 1916; repub. Farnborough, Hants: Gregg International Publishers, 1970).

8. Willan, Sol Plaatje, pp. 68-70.

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Physicians, Colonial Racism, and Diaspora in West Africa. Adell Patton, Jr. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996. 343pp., cloth \$49.95.

The author is a medical doctor with Pan-Africanist concerns for the development of medical science and practice in Africa. He decided to write a social history of medicine in West Africa during the 19th and early 20th centuries. It appears that his initial aim was to employ the theory of professionalization--training and certification, corporate patronage, inter- and intra-professional conflicts, code of ethics, unionization--to analyze the growth of the profession. The bulk of the material that came his way, however, was biographical, and the dominant issue was colonial racism as a factor in the training and professional careers of generations of modern scientific doctors in West Africa. Patton has documented examples rather than analyze the history and nature of colonial racism. Moreover, he has not dealt with the history, let alone the social history, of the profession as such. As a result, many interesting issues have been raised but not followed up in-depth which would be too formidable a task within the scope of a single monograph.

After an overview of "African Physicians in Time Perspective", Patton has a chapter entitled "The Medical Profession in Africa from Ancient Times to 1800" touching on medical practice in Ancient Egypt and in Islamic West Africa (Timbuktu and Songhai), but no material on medical practice in non-Islamic West Africa. For example, in a later chapter he points out without explanation that while some Europeans claimed they could not allow African doctors (all male at the time) to examine their wives, African women initiated into Poro Society in the Sierra Leone hinterland also refused to allow African doctors to examine them unless they also had been initiated. Patton touches once or twice on the role of "the scientific public" in the advancement of science. He concludes that "Traditional institutions whose authority rested on claims of a privileged access to secret knowledge lost their stature in the judgement of an enlightened public informed by the rise of professionalism" (p. 253), but this is an issue he cannot explore without going into the practice of medicine in non-Islamic West Africa.

Thus, the volume has the flavor of an amateur, with a love for anecdotal history, attempting to include every bit of available information. The copy-editing and proof-reading leave a lot to be desired, but this should not be allowed to obscure the serious intention and achievement of the book. Patton's book achieves some focus on the African physicians "who pioneered the constantly changing frontiers in the modern medical profession", at least in Sierra Leone. In particular, he assembled information on the remarkable Easmon family: their Nova Scotian origins; their partial descent from the McCormacks of Ireland and the Smiths of Yorkshire; their Creole network of intermarriages with "the Smiths, the Spilsburys, the Hebrons,

the Awooner-Renners, Coleridge-Taylors, the Lumpkins, the Wrights, the Hunters, the Randalls and Casely-Hayfords--in Sierra Leone, Gambia, the Gold Coast and Nigeria" (p.162), not to mention their "common-law relatives in the Sierra Leone hinterland" (p193). Training doctors involved a diaspora in itself as they had to go abroad, seeking opportunities wherever the prevalent racism would allow--in England, Scotland, the US, Canada, Germany and, later, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. It is the diaspora of the Easmons, however, that receives systematic attention.

Patton attempt to categorize the contribution of the different schools of medicine to the evolving pattern of medical education in West Africa. In particular, the medical schools at Ibadan and Accra followed the British pattern of general medicine and surgery, with specialization, controlled by professional groups outside the universities, coming at the post-graduate level. It was the impact of the products of the Soviet system that encouraged specialization as part of the basic training.

The racism that dominated the professional careers and struggles of the physicians was not a colonial invention. It was there at the beginning when William Ferguson arrived in Freetown from the West Indies. The high rate of European mortality, however, made it possible for him--in spite of the racism--to rise to the top and become Governor of the colony. Racism also encouraged the development of the Freetown Grammar School and Fourah Bay College, in addition to the training of medical students at government expense. It made possible such careers as that of John Farrell Easmon who qualified MRCS in 1879, went to practice medicine in the Gold Coast in 1880, and became Chief Medical Officer in 1896 at the age of 40. That was why, when the more general use of quinine had reduced the mortality rate, racism became institutionalized in the West African Medical Staff which specifically excluded those of African descent, even the Easmons who claimed to be partially of European descent. The experience was traumatic. John Farrell Easmon was removed in 1897 and ordered out of his residence, which probably contributed to his early death in 1900 at the age of 44.

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Picturing Bushmen: The Denver African Expedition of 1925. Robert J. Gordon. Athens OH, Ohio University Press, 1997, 325pp., cloth \$44.95, paper \$24.95.

With clear, readable prose, Robert Gordon pierces the smug detachment of academics who hold themselves blameless in perpetuating harmful stereotypes. He maintains that anthropologists, environmentalists, and other academics have a vested interest in perpetuating images of bushmen that play to middle class fantasies. Underlining that academics are as much products of their "environment" as any charter flight pleasure seeker, he notes that much research arises from the preconceived theories and needs of the researcher. Moreover, to remain viable, most academics define their results in ways that hold the interest of a larger audience.

Breaking down the division between traveler and tourist, consumer and scientist, Gordon demonstrates that many commonly held conceptions of bushmen grew out of the needs of the highly industrialized populations of the United States and Europe. He does this by analyzing the success of the Denver African expedition of 1925. Hoping to bring renown and fame to their city, Denver businessmen financed the expedition in the midst of a public fascination with human origins. In addition, then, as now, the American public had a particular fascination with technology. For the Denver expedition, one of the most important components of this new technology was the camera.

The photographs, films, articles, and well placed academic road shows of the Denver African Expedition helped to transform the European image of bushmen from "the lowest type of human being" to noble savage (p.61). At the heart of the creation of the new wild bushmen were questions of technology, knowledge, and power. Photographs and films made it possible to "picture bushmen" and sell the image to the more affluent. Through them, bushmen became a focus for the fantasies of the more mechanized and urbanized parts of the world. Gordon emphasizes the link between bushmen and nature for both the white South African soldiers of the 1990's and the white men of the 1920's. As these groups felt more and more ensnared by machines and unsure of their role in a rapidly changing society, bushman fantasies allowed them to dream of a time of freedom in which hunter/warriors had the power to take action and reshape their own relatively simple world (p.131).

While aesthetically appealing photos and films allowed the audience to consider their fantasies fact rather than fiction, burgeoning consumerism created a market for "exotic" people and their products. This, in turn, caught the attention of the colonial authorities within Namibia. Besides the income generated by the sale of curios to foreigners, interest in bushmen also attracted tourists and potential settlers from nearby South Africa. Furthermore, the new image of bushmen served to pacify the local settler population. According to Gordon, the new "tamer" image of the wild bushman "halted the imaginations of the rather unsettled settlers--those who believed that bushmen were cannibals and other nightmarish ghouls; it contributed to the self-pacification of the settlers by visually claiming a potentially troublesome environment" (p. 116). Ultimately, the image of the peaceful simple bushman became so entrenched that apartheid authorities of the 1950's and 1960's used it to receive good international publicity even as they forcibly removed the Hei/omn bushmen from their land.

In Namibia, control of technology allowed those in positions of economic dominance to perpetuate interpretations of reality that helped them maintain their position. Within this context, it is not the photos and films themselves that are troublesome. In fact, the Denver expedition could not have taken these photographs without the collaboration of the Hei/omn bushmen who, in exchange, often used them to gain access to international assistance (p.138). It is the inability of those who posed for the photographs to shape their interpretation in the larger world that poses an important ethical question for Gordon. He states, "Fairy tales almost always have happy endings, but the Denver expedition case demonstrates how we can impose our fairy tales upon people and force them, for their survival to conform to our story line. . . . My concern is to question the ethicality of the spectator having the power to define the structure of remembrance and the voyeuristic quality of much of what is defined as 'knowledge of the past'" (p.134).

During the 1920's, efforts to popularize knowledge brought "scientific" information to the masses and carried them away to far off places. At the same time, improved transport and greater affluence made pleasure travel more possible for Europeans and Americans. The Denver African Expedition took place at a moment in time when western consumer society had acquired the technological power to visualize and place demands on the "others" that they have imagined. In *Picturing Bushmen*, Robert Gordon asks what that means for them and for us.

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Transculturation and Resistance in Lusophone African Narrative. Phyllis Peres. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1997, 168pp., cloth \$39.95.

As a result of the turmoil that has engulfed the former Portuguese territories of Angola and Mozambique, both prior to and following independence, and the recent efforts to forge a major bond that would include Portugal and Brazil among them, scholarly interest in Lusophone Africa has heightened over the last decade. Phyllis Peres's work underscores this recent trend and adds to the emerging literature of the area.

Centered primarily on four Angolan literary giants of the 1960's-1990's--Luandino Vieira, Uanhenga Xitu, Pepetela (Artur Mauricio Carlos Pestana dos Santos), and Manuel Rui--this work brings into focus the tradition of resistance to colonialism among the most distinguished Angolan humanists, and their ideas (or "imaginings") regarding what liberated and independent Angola ought to have been socially, culturally, and politically. The underlying theme shared by the four was their hope that Angola would emerge democratic, free of strife, and capable of creating a unique identity. Peres states, "Writers ... who emerged from the nationalist struggle in Angola produced both poetry and fiction that did indeed negate colonial identity, but more relevant to this study, they also participated in the textualization of an Angolan nation, or perhaps more aptly phrased, Angolan nationness" (p.vii).

As such, therefore, this work is a political and social history of Angola during the last three decades as viewed and expressed by some of the most important Angolan writers. Yet, the enthusiastic "imagining" of a peaceful, proud, democratic, and culturally unique Angola was flawed with ethnic misunderstandings, poisoned by contradictory theoretical underpinnings and practical realities (e.g., Marxism versus capitalism), and retarded by the personal ambitions of the country's leaders. As a result, this uneven national panorama led to dispute and civil war, undemocratic governance, and despair--the nemesis of the nationalistic hope of most Angolan poets and fiction writers.

In spite of its clearly market-driven deceiving title (which gives the impression that the focus is Lusophone Africa when, in fact, it is narrowly Angolan--comparable to a drop of water in the sea of Lusophone African literary creation), Peres's work nonetheless is outstanding as it attests to the author's penetrating insights and her superb analytical skills regarding the

Angolan literary movement. Indeed, Peres succeeds in placing the four Angolan writers squarely in the context of the Angolan nationalist movement.

I hope Professor Peres will continue her work along these lines and venture into comparative studies of Lusophone African literature to discern either a common or a diverse but unique thread within the textualized aspirations of the pre- and post-nationalist independence movements in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, and Sao Tome e Principe. As it stands, the work at hand is of great importance to those scholars interested in understanding the nature of the former Portuguese colonies and the obstacles they faced during their journey toward liberation and nationhood.

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