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# African Studies Quarterly

## Editorial Staff

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# The Persistence of the Commons: Economic Theory and Community Decision-Making on Land Tenure in Voi, Kenya

ELLEN M. BASSETT

**Abstract:** Projects to secure land rights for the urban poor have been implemented in Sub-Saharan Africa for thirty years. A recurrent issue is providing sustainable land tenure for settlement residents/project beneficiaries. Commonly, individual titles have been used. Often recipients sell their land rights to more affluent city dwellers, exacerbating the growth of slums. Policymakers are investigating alternative tenure forms including community-based institutions. This paper presents a project in Kenya in which the Community Land Trust (CLT) model was used to provide tenure security as part of a settlement improvement project. The paper seeks to understand community decision-making on land tenure and why settlement residents selected a group or community-based title option over individual title when one theoretical perspective on property rights in Africa, the Evolutionary Theory of Land Rights, would predict a preference for individual ownership. The case study was constructed from qualitative interviews with settlement residents, coupled with informant interviews and document/archival analysis. The paper argues that Voi residents' decision to hold land together reflected their perception of themselves as a powerless group vulnerable to losing land to outsiders. The community, moreover, had a history of shared action to defend their land holdings that served to establish a level of trust which made the group tenure a possibility. The paper concludes that the decision to hold land together was entirely rational - a collective institution better served to protect their individual self-interest than the individual institution predicted by the ETLR. The Voi case underlines the notion that "history matters" in institutional analysis - to really understand institutional change we must understand the embedded context of decision-makers. The study also supports the perspective that there is no one-size fits all approach to land tenure. Policymakers should strive to provide a range of tenure options that can fit the context of the specific community.

## Introduction

In March 2004, the Government of Kenya issued the terms of reference for a national level committee comprised of governmental officials, NGO representatives, private sector members, university faculty, and civil society groups.<sup>1</sup> The mandate of the committee was to resolve the

**Ellen M. Bassett** is an Assistant Professor in the Urban and Regional Planning Program at Michigan State University. Prior to her appointment at MSU she lived and worked for 10 years in East Africa, including serving as an urban planner with the Small Towns Development Project whose settlement upgrading initiative is the subject of this paper. Her international research interests lie in the area of land tenure, informal settlement upgrading, and environmental management.

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v9/v9i3a1.pdf>

country's land administration and management problems through the drafting of a National Land Policy. Key concerns highlighted for discussion by the National Land Policy group included: insecure land tenure for vulnerable groups such as women, pastoralists and the urban poor; poor land administration; weak dispute resolution mechanisms; and continued land fragmentation.

Kenya's land policy reform, notably, is not an isolated effort. Land policy discussions have been taking place in Sub-Saharan Africa since the 1990s in countries as diverse as South Africa, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, and Namibia.<sup>2</sup> Common to all these discussions is the question of what to do with customary or community-based land tenures, particularly whether to privatize or reform and retain these institutions.

That customary tenures are even a point of discussion in Kenya is in itself striking. In the mid-1960s when the newly independent Government of Kenya was determining its land reform policies, the question of what to do with community-based tenures was not open to debate - all customary rights and interests in land were to be extinguished.<sup>3</sup> Unabashedly market-oriented, the Kenyan government transformed community-based tenures to individual tenures through a protracted process of adjudication, consolidation, survey, registration, and titling. The rationale for the land tenure reform was simple: indigenous, community-based tenure forms were viewed as inhibiting economic growth because they provided insufficient "security of tenure" to allow for substantial investment in land necessary for agricultural production.<sup>4</sup>

By the late 1980s, after decades of governmental effort to convert tenures to leasehold and freehold, individual ownership of land appeared an unchallengeable method for registering ownership rights and providing security of tenure to Kenyans. Hence the decision in 1993 of a group of "squatters" illegally residing upon government land in Voi municipality to hold land together through a group ownership model known as the Community Land Trust (CLT) model came as a surprise both to local and central government officials and the expatriate technical advisors implementing a settlement improvement or upgrading project there. In contemporary Kenya land is a scarce resource and obtaining a title deed is for many Kenyans but a distant dream. Purchasing land on the market is prohibitively expensive, while the probability of obtaining government land under concessionary terms is highly unlikely, particularly given rampant land grabbing in the 1990s.<sup>5</sup> Why then, when given the opportunity for individual ownership, would community members decline this coveted offer?

The decision by residents of the Tanzania-Bondeni settlement in Voi, Kenya to formulate a community-based institution for land ownership based on the Community Land Trust (CLT) model is the subject of this paper. Specifically, this paper examines the decision from the context of economic theory and institutionalism. The paper argues that Voi residents' decision to hold land together reflected their perception of themselves as being a powerless group vulnerable to losing land to outsiders. The community, moreover, had a history of shared action to defend their land holdings that served to establish a threshold level of trust which made the group tenure a possibility. The paper concludes that the decision of the settlement's residents to hold land together was rational - a collective institution better served to protect their individual self-interest than the individual institution predicted by the Evolutionary Theory of Land Rights, ETLR. The paper concludes that "history matters" in institutional analysis - to really understand institutional change we must understand the embedded context of the decision-makers. The

study also supports the policy perspective that there is no one-size fits all approach to land tenure. Policymakers should strive to provide a range of tenure options that can fit the context of the specific community. To achieve this, African land policies must include mechanisms for full community participation in crafting tenure regimes and making decisions that affect the ownership and use of land.

Following this introduction, the paper is split into four sections. The first section reviews an influential theoretical perspective on African customary land tenure and human decision-making embodied in the institutional and development economics literature. Section two presents the Tanzania-Bondeni settlement and the upgrading project. Section three outlines the methodology used for the case study and presents the findings of interviews conducted with residents of the settlement. The final section relates findings from the residents' interviews to economic theory and land tenure policy.

## CUSTOMARY LAND TENURE AND DECISION-MAKING IN ECONOMIC THEORY

The discussion of customary tenures in African land policy reforms reflects one long-standing theoretical debate in the social science literature over the role of property rights in African development.<sup>6</sup> Essentially the debate is over whether customary or community-based tenures represent an obstacle to economic development and if African countries should implement reform programs to transform customary regimes to individual tenures.<sup>7</sup> On one side of the debate are adherents of the ETLR, whose ranks include neo-classical economists, Public Choice theorists, and some Neo-Institutionalists, who believe that property rights in any society evolve due to scarcity.<sup>8</sup> This theory predicts that as population pressure increases and land becomes an increasingly scarce resource, rights to land will individualize until private property exists.<sup>9</sup> This move to individual tenure is economically advantageous for both the land owner and the state since bestowing all property rights and decision-making powers in one person overcomes key economic inefficiencies such as transaction costs and free ridership.<sup>10</sup> For adherents of the ETLR, the move to individual tenures is inevitable since institutions are seen as evolving in order to maximize benefits and minimize costs. Institutions, moreover, have been described as moving toward greater efficiency over time.<sup>11</sup> The policy implications of the ETLR are clear: development-oriented governments should assist this evolutionary process by formulating and implementing individualization reforms.<sup>12</sup>

Those arguing for the retention of customary or community-based tenures, in contrast, represent a more multi-disciplinary group of scholars, including economic sociologists, anthropologists, and mainstream institutional economists. They make two primary arguments for community-based tenures. First, they contend that the function of land in African society is much more complex than granted by Western economic thought.<sup>13</sup> In Africa, they observe, land serves important social and political functions not common in the west. Land is the cultural basis of power and belonging.<sup>14</sup> The granting of land is a primary mechanism for structuring society and gaining political power and allegiance. The holding of land is the primary indicator of societal belonging. Second, these scholars argue that customary tenures have been mischaracterized and misunderstood. Customary tenures are not anachronisms impeding economic progress but instead are dynamic institutional arrangements characterized by a mix



of property rights (some private, some shared) which has adapted over time to meet community needs.<sup>15</sup> Such tenures can be inherently secure and conducive to economic growth - nothing less than "private property for the group."<sup>16</sup> The failure of many African societies to move toward individual tenures is thus an indicator of the inappropriateness of these tenures for the African social context and a challenge to claims of universality for the ETLR. The land policy implications are also clear: forcible reform of land tenure using Western institutional models is not advisable. To improve tenure security governments should clearly define and enforce all property rights regimes, including indigenous institutions.<sup>17</sup>

Behind this debate on land tenure and land policy is an even more fundamental disagreement over human decision-making and rationality. Adherents of the ETLR view decision-making through the dominant theoretical model in economics, that of the "economic man."<sup>18</sup> As every Economics 101 student knows, economic man (and woman) is a self-interested, atomistic actor endowed with a set of preferences whose decision-making is expected to be "rational." Rational behavior is defined as utility-maximizing behavior, that is, behavior that makes the economic man better-off.<sup>19</sup> The evolution of land institutions described by the ETLR assumes the self-interested rationality of the economic man. Faced with scarcity and the difficulties of community-based tenures, a rational decision-maker will choose to hold land under individual tenure in order to maximize his/her utility.

Scholars skeptical of the ETLR, such as mainstream institutional economists and economic sociologists, not surprisingly are also quite critical of the economic man. They question the concept of human nature central to this paradigm. Human beings are cast as rational actors driven by the need to maximize their utility, yet every day one sees evidence in actual behavior that humans can and do act "irrationally" in the economic sense.<sup>20</sup> One also sees instances when people knowingly act against their individual self interest.<sup>21</sup> They argue that there is a range of motives for human behavior and decision-making in addition to self-interest. Humans are motivated by principles such as altruism, cultural constructs such as tradition and nationalism, as well as by ignorance and irrationality.<sup>22</sup> A second critique relates to the under-socialized or atomistic nature of the individual. Economic man is presented as a creature born with a given set of preferences. He is depicted as an individual acting in isolation, deliberating solely upon his own welfare and acting purposively to maximize that welfare.<sup>23</sup> Mainstream institutional economists, most vocally, find this presentation problematic because it does not explain where preferences - the source of purposive action - come from and why they change. In neo-classical economic theory, preferences are "immanently conceived" and fixed.<sup>24</sup> Without an explanation of why people have certain preferences and why preferences may change, mainstream institutionalists assert that economics offers little meaningful explanation for purposeful action.<sup>25</sup>

In contrast, mainstream institutional economists and economic sociologists have clear notions about the source of purpose. They argue that human beings are social animals born into a society endowed with culture, beliefs, and institutions. Human preferences and hence purpose are determined in an interactive process whereby the cultural and social factors that dictate what is considered acceptable or unacceptable behavior interact with individual perspectives and motivations.<sup>26</sup> Granovetter calls this view of human behavior "embeddedness." Embeddedness represents a middle way between the atomized, undersocialized perspective of

neo-classical economics and the oversocialized concept of human nature once characteristic of sociology.<sup>27</sup> "Actors," Granovetter argues,

do not behave or decide as atoms outside a social context, nor do they adhere slavishly to a script written for them by the particular intersection of social categories that they happen to occupy. Their attempts at purposive action are instead embedded in concrete, ongoing systems of social relations.<sup>28</sup>

These on-going systems of social relations or institutions must be integrated into economic analysis in order to really understand purposive human behavior and predict economic outcomes.

These two debates - one over the evolution of property rights in Africa, the other an underlying disagreement on human decision-making - provide an interesting theoretical frame for examining the community decision-making that took place in the settlement upgrading initiative in Voi. Using the insights of ETLR, one would expect that given high levels of population growth, growing land scarcity, and the government's wholehearted embrace of private property and the market, any decision-maker offered the choice between individual or group leasehold would select individual title. The deviance - or irrationality - of the Voi community in selecting community-based property thus is striking. Why did their land tenure choice differ from other communities within Kenyan society? What factors do Voi community members cite as being weighed in their decision? In what terms do they describe their decision? Do they speak of the decision in economic terms? Are factors of community identity and belonging significant? What sort of expectations, moreover, do the residents of Tanzania-Bondeni have of their "common" property? Do these expectations differ from those of individuals opting for individual property rights?

## TANZANIA-BONDENI SETTLEMENT AND THE UPGRADING PROJECT

The settlement of Tanzania-Bondeni is situated approximately 1.5 kilometers from the commercial heart of Voi town, which is located on the main highway running from Mombasa to Nairobi. In 1989 just prior to the start of the upgrading project, the population of Voi town was estimated to be 13,202 people.<sup>29</sup> Using the growth rate of the prior decade (5.79%), in 1999, the time of fieldwork, the town was home to approximately 23,200 persons. Government statistics are not available for the settlement of Tanzania Bondeni, but Asienwa estimated its population at 2,993 persons.<sup>30</sup> Assuming a similar rate of growth, the settlement would have contained approximately 4,971 persons in 1999. The Tanzania Bondeni settlement covers approximately 22 hectares of land and is physically cut into two parts by a railroad track belonging to Kenya Railways. The larger built up area to the south of the track is Tanzania. This part of the settlement is bounded by the Voi river to the south and the Voi Sisal Estate to the west. The smaller built up area to the north of the rail line is Bondeni, which means "in the valley" in Swahili. Wedged between the embankment that supports the current rail line and the embankment for a disused rail line to the north, this neighborhood indeed can be seen as lying in a valley (please see Appendix 1 for a demographic profile of the settlement).

The need to conduct settlement upgrading in the settlement emerged through a local five-year planning process, known as a Local Authority Development Programme. Upgrading

projects, in brief, provide basic urban services to settlements (e.g., water, sanitation, roads, and paths). Such projects also generally seek to provide some level of land tenure security. Formal legalization (i.e., survey, titling, and registration) is one method of conferring security that has been used in these projects (Gulyani and Bassett, forthcoming). In agreeing to assist the local authority with the task, planners at the Ministry of Local Government (MLG) and the GTZ Small Towns Development Project (STDP) had two main objectives.<sup>31</sup> The first objective was to improve the financial health of the local government by broadening its property tax base.<sup>32</sup> So long as settlements remain informal - illegal with land ownership undetermined and unregistered - local authorities are unable to assess these properties and add their values to the property tax rolls.<sup>33</sup> Secondly, planners saw the projects as an opportunity to test an upgrading approach that would be affordable and replicable by a local authority on its own.

Prior to implementation, the planners working with the STDP reviewed the lessons learned in other upgrading projects in Kenya and elsewhere and formulated an approach that would avoid repeating past mistakes.<sup>34</sup> The upgrading approach was organized around certain key principles and guidelines that reflected these lessons learned - a key principle was providing affordable and sustainable tenure security to settlement residents. Tenure security, however, was seen as a challenge. There was a consensus that past upgrading projects had not succeeded in providing sustainable security of tenure.<sup>35</sup> Past Kenyan projects had issued long-term leasehold titles with five-year restrictions on sale, but over the course of time many low-income project beneficiaries eventually sold their leaseholds to other more affluent individuals.<sup>36</sup>

Kenyan planners give two reasons for land sales.<sup>37</sup> The first is that settlement residents are not particularly interested in owning land in the city. They are only there for their working lives and they really want land in their rural home areas. As a result they "cash-out" - treat the project as an unexpected windfall, obtain whatever money they can for their plot, and go to squat elsewhere. The second reason is more forgiving toward the slum resident: sales occur due to financial distress brought about by occurrences like an illness or the death of a family member. Residents want the asset, but as the poorest strata of society, they do not have the means to withstand bad times.

While there was agreement that past attempts to provide security of tenure to the urban poor had failed, there was little sense of how to provide affordable, sustainable land rights in the upgrading initiatives. Sanctioned government options were limited: leasehold or freehold title. The application of restrictions on sale on leasehold titles were intended to prevent squatters from "cashing out" - these restrictions, however, are easily circumvented by informal transactions and have been shown to be ineffective elsewhere.<sup>38</sup> Restrictions on sale, moreover, did nothing to assist those residents wishing to retain land, but with no alternative disposable assets.

While the STDP was formulating its upgrading approach and deliberating upon security of tenure, the Ford Foundation sponsored a study to examine the viability of utilizing the American Community Land Trust Model as a model for delivering affordable shelter to the urban poor.<sup>39</sup> A year later the CLT model was picked up for consideration by the STDP project as a possible tenure form. A Community Land Trust, briefly, is a community-based, democratically controlled organization formed to hold and acquire land for the use of its members.<sup>40</sup> Its most defining characteristic is the splitting of ownership: individuals own houses

while the CLT owns the land upon which the houses sit. CLTs are formed to hold land in perpetuity thereby removing it from the open market. The CLT, moreover, plays a role in the sale of houses - in most cases retaining the first right of refusal. The CLT model splits usufruct for two main reasons. First, the model recognizes that value in property comes from different sources.<sup>41</sup> The value of real estate is largely determined by public investments (e.g., infrastructure, schools) created by society as a whole. The model ensures that any increase in property value attributable to the land (e.g., location coupled with public investment) is captured by the community.<sup>42</sup> Secondly, group ownership of the land is tactical: it helps buffer lower income residents from the effects of gentrification and rising land prices since the CLT removes land from the market, limits equity appreciation, and takes on the task of meeting property taxes. The CLT provides a social safety net to ensure that poor people get and retain better housing.

While the CLT model draws some of its inspiration from customary tenures in Africa, the model is highly formal and replaces or extinguishes other tenure institutions or property rights configurations.<sup>43</sup> CLTs are incorporated entities - in the US they are not-for-profit corporations with an elected Board of Directors. While membership is open to all interested persons, to obtain land trust land an individual (or would be land lessee) must become a member and is expected to participate in community planning and governance. The relationship between the trust and land lessees is outlined in written lease agreements. These agreements detail, for instance, rules regarding the sale of houses, payment of fees, and valuation of assets.<sup>44</sup>

### The Tanzania-Bondeni Tenure Decision

By late 1992 upgrading activities for the Voi settlement had made significant progress. Members of a national level Project Promotion Committee (PPC) had visited the settlement and were ensuring support for upgrading in Nairobi. A local level Technical Task Force (TTF) composed of officers from the ministerial line agencies and representatives of the local authority had been constituted. Social planners had completed a "listening survey" intended to uncover the felt needs of the residents as well as to identify important opinion leaders. Preliminary community mobilization had occurred: residents had indicated interest in participating in the upgrading exercise. Finally, community members had elected a Residents Committee (RC) to represent their interests in the upgrading exercise. This committee had been apprised of its responsibilities and powers and had a good understanding of the upgrading approach, including the issue of land tenure.

From the outset, the Tanzania-Bondeni Residents Committee demonstrated a strong ability to mobilize its community and gain support for upgrading. Committee members enthusiastically embraced their role - moving through the settlement daily to update residents on project activities and remind them of their obligations.<sup>45</sup> Payments such as survey fees accrued quickly. Other small projects flourished.<sup>46</sup>

The Residents Committee also responded with great interest to the idea of the Community Land Trust model. The discussion of security of tenure and land loss by squatters resonated with the Voi leadership. In her report, the GTZ Social Planner described the response of the Voi leadership as being to a "large extent influenced by the flux [of] people who went to the project

area with the intention of buying out the beneficiaries."<sup>47</sup> Disturbed by this development, the Tanzania-Bondeni RC indicated its interest in learning more about the land trust option. The RC's interest in turn sparked debate and lobbying within the community. According to Muchene:

once the two types of tenure system [sic] were explained to them at the leaders workshop, they embarked on an awareness campaign to convince the people to accept the community land trust. Some individuals who had bought structures for speculative purposes also campaigned for the individual title.<sup>48</sup>

In November 1992, planners from the MLG and STDP held a final discussion on tenure and the various options for land ownership with the Voi Municipal Council and the members of the Residents Committee. This discussion was framed around a matrix illustrating the options for land ownership and community organization. The three options identified were individual leasehold title, individual title coupled with the formation of housing cooperatives, and group leasehold title with the formation of a community land trust. After this meeting, the RC held a series of six community meetings in which the three options were explained. At the end of each meeting, community members were asked to vote for the tenure form of their choice. Observers from the STDP attended each meeting to ensure that only *bona fide* structure owners were allowed to vote and to see to it that both individual and community tenure were fully explained with sufficient space given for questions and debate. The vote was overwhelmingly in favor of the CLT model: 239 structure owners for the CLT model versus 19 structure owners in favor of individual leasehold title.<sup>49</sup>

## THE LAND TENURE DECISION: RESIDENTS' EXPLANATIONS

### Methodology

To understand the rationale behind the Voi tenure decision two sets of fieldwork plus a brief follow up visit were conducted. The first field work was conducted in 1996 and consisted of interviews with project officers, government of Kenya officials, and members of the Tanzania-Bondeni residents committee as well as a field visit to the settlement.<sup>50</sup> The 1999 field research consisted of in-depth interviews with community residents, additional informant interviews, and archival research at the Kenya National Archives. Finally, the author made a brief visit to Kenya in 2003 to track progress in project implementation and gather documents related to land policy reforms.

The data reported in this paper primarily arises from fieldwork that took place in March-June 1999. During this period, the author (with the assistance of a research assistant) completed 50 in-depth interviews with Voi residents, all of whom were structure owners. Structure owners were interviewed as they were the residents empowered to make the land tenure decision. Interviewees were selected using a modified "snowball" technique.<sup>51</sup> The sampling process began by looking for indicators of long-term residence, namely numbers painted on doors (an indicator that they lived in the settlement when an initial socio-economic survey was conducted by the STDP in 1990) or rusty roofs. After completing an interview, the structure owner was asked if he or she knew another structure owner who might be interested in



speaking with the interviewers. This approach was modified, however, by a mapping process in which the approximate location of each respondent was mapped on the physical development plan for the settlement. Once a certain area was adequately represented, the interview process moved to another section of the settlement and began the process over again. Interviews were conducted in Swahili with notes taken by both the research assistant and the author. Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to two and a half hours. Interview notes were transcribed at the end of each working day and texts were reviewed by the author and research assistant to ensure accuracy. Content analytical procedures and pattern matching were used to identify key themes and narratives arising from the interviews.<sup>52</sup>

Eleven interviews were with structure owners living in Bondeni and the rest conducted with Tanzania owners. The disparity in representation between Bondeni and Tanzania is purposeful. Tanzania is the larger, more populous settlement area. Additionally, two discussions were held with members of the Managing Committee (*nee* Residents Committee) of the Tanzania-Bondeni Settlement Society. The first meeting was a briefing on the planned research; the second meeting focused on the committee's experience implementing the CLT model. Several opportunistic interviews occurred, including one with the former Youth Representative on the RC.

A demographic profile of the respondents is provided as Appendix 2. As it shows, the majority of respondents were women. While a concerted effort was made to tap the views of more men, it was without much success. Several interviewees said that there were few men in the settlement; the former youth leader (a man) described the settlement as being full of "old people and women."<sup>53</sup> Respondents ranged in age from their mid-twenties to into their seventies. The exact age of respondents was not asked, instead it was estimated from their physical appearance and narratives. The majority of respondents were between the ages of 31 to 50. They had lived in the settlement anywhere from 1 to 57 years. Most of the respondents were not community leaders. Four were RC members, four were in leadership positions in the local cooperative housing societies, and two were leaders in other committees, namely a youth and a women's group. Through the interview narrative (e.g., stories of migration) and through observation/listening, ethnic background was also identified.<sup>54</sup> The ethnic make-up of the respondents was quite uniform: of the 50 people interviewed 48 (or 96%) were Taitas. Two were from other areas in Kenya.

### Findings from Residents Interviews

Questions were asked that directly related to the tenure decision. Structure owners were asked whether they could remember the tenure options offered to the community by the government. They were also asked to explain the process they used for choosing between these options and whether they had personally participated in the selection process. Finally, structure owners were asked to explain why they felt the community had selected group title and their opinion of the decision. Respondents were then asked to elucidate what they felt particular advantages and disadvantages were associated with both community-based and individual tenure.

Out of the fifty structure owners interviewed, 16 indicated that the settlement had voted to select its tenure form. They all knew that the selection was between individual title (*kumiliki kibinafsi*) and group ownership (*kumiliki kijamii*). The majority of respondents indicated that they could not recall that there were options in land tenure. Those who indicated that they didn't know there was a choice tended to be either younger settlement residents (who at the time of selection were generally in their teens) or they were newcomers to the settlement who had gotten land after the 1992 decision. The longer-term residents who did not remember the tenure choice indicated that they were away at the time (e.g., seriously ill, working elsewhere). Five respondents contested the idea that there really was a choice. They said that the decision was made by the Residents Committee.<sup>55</sup>

Respondents were also asked about the process used to select tenure for the upgrading project. A greater number of respondents were able to describe the series of community meetings held in November 1992 and the resultant vote than had been able to remember that the community had been given options in land tenure. Presumably, discussion of tenure options triggered something in their memories. Alternatively they may have been told by others, such as the Residents Committee, that the tenure form was selected through a vote by the majority of structure owners in a series of neighborhood meetings. Eighteen persons indicated they had gone to the community meetings and had actually voted (they were not asked how they voted). Of those who participated in the meetings, 15 were women and 3 were men. The participants fell into the following age groups: 20-30 years of age (2 participants), 30-40 (5 participants), 40-50 (3 participants), and older than 50 (8 participants).

When asked to explain why the community voted to hold land together respondents gave answers which roughly fall into four categories. These four categories of answers, each of which will be dealt with in turn, were: (1) I don't know or I refuse to speculate; (2) Because of poverty and a lack of economic ability; (3) In order to prevent loss of land; (4) Because the Residents Committee decided.<sup>56</sup> The term "roughly" is used to characterize responses because although the answers were grouped together reflecting the same central contention, in their narratives residents often forwarded slightly more nuanced explanations that distinguished their views from those of their neighbors.

The first group, indicating that they did not know why group tenure was selected, consisted of 16 people. Of these, six individuals completely refused to speculate on the reason for the selection. I attributed their answers to the politicized atmosphere of the settlement at the time of the research and the fact that the tenure regime was the subject of much debate and acrimony. The remaining respondents indicated that they did not know why group tenure was selected. People who said they did not know why group tenure was selected were generally (1) people who were not present at the tenure decision and therefore refused to hypothesize on the decision; (2) younger members of the settlement who had not participated in the settlement decision and had gotten plots as a result of inheritance or by being a child of a structure owner who was allocated more than one plot in the first allocation exercise; or (3) newcomers to the settlement who had gotten plots after the decision was made.

The most common explanation of the tenure decision dealt with the economic status of settlement residents and the cost of owning land. These respondents emphasized that settlement residents are poor. At the time of the decision, they felt that they did not have the

economic ability to meet the costs associated with individual leasehold. They saw group tenure as being advantageous to their interests since it would enable them to get the land more inexpensively. Since it also entailed sharing the costs of keeping the land, group tenure would assist them to retain the land for themselves and their children. Group ownership also implied additional community help for the less able, a feature that these respondents said appealed to those voting for the tenure form. In short, as the following quotes illustrate, Voi residents felt they had insufficient economic ability to own land individually:

- "It fit our ability. Here in Tanzania-Bondeni we don't have the ability to pay for an individual title deed, therefore we choose group ownership."<sup>57</sup>
- "I think they saw that they would be helped through group ownership, for instance to join together and to build houses collectively for people who lacked ability."<sup>58</sup>
- "It fit and once we were explained {about tenure}, we agreed to choose group ownership. Because we were told that with group ownership we will pay less money than for private ownership. It was because of this that we agreed."<sup>59</sup>

A second explanation for the tenure decision cited by respondents was the Voi residents selected to go with the CLT model in order to prevent community members from losing their land. To many of these respondents the coercive side of the CLT model that limits the rights of community members to dispose of land was paramount. Settlement residents wanted to limit "cashing out" behavior. As one respondent explained, residents feared that this unexpected gift of land would be squandered by their neighbors: "Because there are people who can't be satisfied. They are greedy. And also they are not grateful. Therefore they are able to sell and go somewhere else. Therefore they embraced group ownership so that these people would not sell."<sup>60</sup>

Additionally, some respondents in this grouping emphasized that the CLT model was attractive since in addition to limiting their own rights it also limited the ability of outsiders to buy into the settlement. For these respondents, the defensive nature of the no-sale rule was also important. As informant explained, group tenure was selected: "Because the people of Voi love to sell land. Therefore they saw that group ownership will prevent sales and also it will prevent outsiders from stealing the land of Tanzania-Bondeni."<sup>61</sup>

The final set of explanations for the tenure decision averred that the Residents Committee played the decisive role in selecting group tenure. Answers here break down into roughly three categories. There were some respondents who indicated that the RC selected group tenure itself but did so out of goodwill because they felt was the best tenure form for the community.<sup>62</sup> In this interpretation, the RC was said to have learned from the teachings of the STDP in the various training events which were held as part of the upgrading process. One resident noted: "We did not give our opinions about land ownership. But the committee explained to us. They decided to own land together because of this and that [various reasons]."<sup>63</sup> Secondly, there were three respondents who attributed the decision to the committee but were totally at a loss to explain the committee's rationale. They suggested we talk directly to the committee. Thirdly, a minority of respondents averred that the committee tricked the community into selecting group title for its own purposes. According to this version of the selection, the committee tricked



people by telling them that the STDP would only build houses for settlement residents if they selected group title. As this has not happened, and as the committee members have received more than one plot, some of these respondents are convinced the RC wanted group title in order to remain powerful people in the local community.<sup>64</sup> As one respondent averred: "We were not given an opportunity to choose. They said with community ownership we will have houses built for us, but with individual ownership you will not get a house built."<sup>65</sup> Finally, one respondent in this grouping acknowledged that there was a vote on tenure with wide participation from the settlement residents, but he stressed that the vote was not really free and fair: "Yes I voted. But they used an arm of the government, like the chief [to run the meeting]. They said it was group ownership and it became that."<sup>66</sup>

### Pre-Project Institutions and Security of Tenure

Using these answers to reflect on institutional theory, the information appears inconclusive and somewhat contradictory. These answers appear to uphold the perspective that the decision to form the institution was primarily driven by self-interest: residents banded together in order to achieve something that they felt they could not achieve individually. Responses also give credence to a perspective that group tenures survive due to the machinations of elites who gain power from land allocation, that RC members manipulated the decision to select the community-based tenure regime in order to maintain their positions of power and prestige in the settlement.<sup>67</sup> The answers do not provide much evidence that land had an explicit role in determining community identity and social belonging. Nor do the answers provide an indication that pre-project institutions played a role in the decision.

A series of questions was asked regarding access to land and security of tenure prior to the upgrading initiatives. Responses provide data for understanding the above factors, including the pre-project institutional arrangements in the settlement. These answers also provide information that enables a picture of settlement relations at the time of the tenure decision to be pieced together. Three significant themes emerged in this discussion. These were: (1) the perceived degree of tenure insecurity in the settlement and residents' fear of demolition by the municipal council; (2) the level of economic ability in the settlement and residents' perceptions that their land was vulnerable to more powerful outsiders; and (3) community interdependence and the degree of trust that existed in the community at the time of the land tenure decision.

### Access to Land/Security of Tenure

Respondents were asked to explain to us how they got access to land in the settlement in the first place. All fifty respondents answered these questions. With the exception of one respondent who indicated that he just cleared bush and built, and five others who indicated that they inherited land from their parents, respondents all got permission to settle in the area. There were, in short, procedures for gaining access right from the beginning of the settlement. Two of the older residents obtained permission to settle from the original owners: one woman relocated there with her mother when the District Commissioner outlawed cattle in town. A second woman worked for the sisal estate and erected a house on their land. The most common

way of gaining access to land and permission to build, however, was to ask the *wazee wa mtaa* (neighborhood elders), a committee constituted by the area chief.<sup>68</sup> Two respondents indicated they got land by asking neighbors for a corner of "their" land. In the project period (post-1991), land access remained regulated. One respondent indicated that she was a tenant who got a plot as part of the project; another indicated he had asked the RC for a plot. Four respondents indicated that they bought a house from a departing resident; two of them purchased their house after the project had begun.<sup>69</sup>

After getting access to land, most respondents proceeded to build their own houses. Building houses was not as easy as gaining access to land. To build a house to completion required effort and forward planning. Several respondents indicated that although the *wazee wa mtaa* granted permission to settle often in exchange for a "small token," they also warned residents that the land was not their property  $\frac{3}{4}$  as squatters they could face demolition at any time if the government wanted or needed the land. As one of the respondents described, despite the quasi-sanctioned mode of gaining land, it took determination to get a house built:

We built at night. Chief Ali did not want us [to build]. We begged the village elder for permission to build. But he said if you get in trouble, you have to defend yourself. We paid him a little money, like a token. I was caught by the municipal council. They took me to the chief and the District Officer. But I did not lose heart, I continued to build.<sup>70</sup>

In the face of opposition by municipal council, the chief, and the District Officers, Tanzania-Bondeni residents banded together to help each other out in getting houses completed. As one informant related, the embattled squatters built at night since at that time the municipal *askaris* (enforcement officers) did not work.<sup>71</sup> Another tactic was building over the weekend. One respondent indicated that people would accrue the building materials over the course of the week and then in the weekend with the assistance of their neighbors, they would build.<sup>72</sup> By necessity residents had to build fast  $\frac{3}{4}$  if the council found a house half built in the daytime they would demolish it. As one resident of Bondeni described her experience:

I spoke with colleagues at the market and they told me that there was an elder who was able to give me a plot. I paid this man 270 shillings [c. 1984] and he told me that my house should be built in two days because the municipal council would demolish it [otherwise]. But I built in two days, therefore, they did not demolish my house.<sup>73</sup>

Once a house was built, there were some implicit rules that needed to be followed in order to avoid demolition. First, the municipal council would not destroy a house which was occupied. Settlers adopted a tactic of sitting outside their houses when the municipal *askaris* were passing through. According to one elderly resident, the most effective tactic was to have a woman with a baby and a *suffuria* (cooking pot) in front of the house  $\frac{3}{4}$  in that case the house would not be touched.<sup>74</sup> The second rule related to money. Once a house was built, settlers needed to go to the municipal council and register. If they registered and paid a fee to the council, then they would not be harassed by the *askaris*.<sup>75</sup> According to one RC member, people did not want to pay the fee, but they had no choice.<sup>76</sup> The fee was categorized by the Municipal

Council as a "conservancy fee" (a fee for rubbish collection), although council did not provide the service to the settlement. According to the former Voi Municipal Clerk, this peculiar situation arose as a result of the initial registration of squatters that took place under the Commissioner of Squatters in the 1970s. Although the Commission was disbanded without solving the squatter problem, the council kept up the registration system. Fifteen of 50 respondents indicated that they paid this fee.

A series of questions was asked relating to tenure security. Given the situation above, one might expect that the settlers would feel relatively secure once they had successfully built a house and registered with the council. The perspective that there was relatively good tenure security is also reflected in the social survey conducted by Asienwa and her observations on tenants aspiring to purchase houses in Tanzania-Bondeni.<sup>77</sup> In responding to the questions on tenure security, a majority of the respondents indicated that they knew that they were settled on government land and that their residency was thus technically illegal. Twenty-one said they did not think they were breaking the law. A number of these respondents indicated that they felt that the sanction of the *wazee wa mtaa* and payment to the town council was sufficient. As one protested: "We were shown this opportunity [plot of land to settle] by the chief, and he is the government."<sup>78</sup>

Despite this, half of the respondents did indicate that there was a prevailing sense of tenure insecurity in the settlement prior to the advent of the upgrading project. Out of the people who answered the question, a majority indicated that they felt some level of insecurity. Fifteen said they felt a little or somewhat insecure. The main complaint of these respondents was that they were forced to "live temporary," that is accept a lower standard of living than their wealth would afford.<sup>79</sup> The construction of a temporary house was allowable, but erecting a permanent house would bring trouble. Although many residents had the resources to invest in better quality housing, they were constrained by fear of losing their investment. The main fear was demolition: respondents indicated that they were scared that their houses could be demolished at any time without warning. Despite the implicit rules listed above, the Voi Municipal Council was still seen as a potential threat to the settlement. Among the respondents, these quotes are illustrative of this level of tenure insecurity:

- "We were unable to build permanent houses because we were told that we were able to be driven out at any time."<sup>80</sup>
- "We were really scared to build permanent houses because we knew we were squatters, and at any time we could be moved."<sup>81</sup>
- "This situation disturbed me because I feared they were able to come and demolish at any time. I did not want to build a nice house. Even now [the houses of the] people of Mwakigali are being demolished."<sup>82</sup>

A smaller group of respondents said they felt very insecure. They were the most worried that their houses would be destroyed and that they would be evicted from the land. As a group these respondents tended to be older people and/or those with limited economic ability. One single mother expressed her anxiety over tenure insecurity by saying: "This situation disturbed me a lot. When I heard that I was breaking the law and that this land was not ours. [I feared]

because my children don't have two [parents]. I did not know where I would take them and even if I die where will they go?"<sup>83</sup>

Not surprisingly, people whose homes had been demolished previously also indicated greater tenure insecurity. As one resident explained: "The county council really disturbed us. We built and the council demolished it every time."<sup>84</sup>

Notably, all the RC members interviewed stated that they felt very insecure in their tenure status. As a group these individuals had all faced demolition  $\frac{3}{4}$  three had experienced having their homes destroyed, the one who escaped was a male who as a former employee of a municipal council dared to chastise the *askaris* who threatened his house.<sup>85</sup> According to one RC member, the threat of demolition and displacement was always with Tanzania-Bondeni.<sup>86</sup> Bondeni was particularly at risk as it was dominated by railway's land and the corporation kept threatening to build a warehouse there.<sup>87</sup> The prospect of demolition only receded once the project began and houses were enumerated for legalization.

### Economic Ability

The second theme that arose in the interviews regarding the tenure decision was the perceived level of economic ability of Voi residents. Voi residents tend to perceive themselves as extremely poor people. To make this distinction in degree requires reliance on the use of language in the interviews. Significantly, an unusual Swahili word for describing poor people, *wanyonge*, occurred repeatedly in several of the Voi interviews.<sup>88</sup> For instance, as an explanation for the land tenure decision: "Because we were very poor people. We don't have money and it fit therefore. The tenure forms were explained to us all, we agreed to own together. Because unity is strength."<sup>89</sup> Again, when a resident described how she learned about the group tenure decision and speculating on the reason it was selected: "One day in a meeting we were told that we had agreed to group ownership and that group ownership will be cheaper than individual ownership. Because we, the people of Voi, are very poor, that's why I think we agreed to own land together."<sup>90</sup> And finally, when discussing the possible use of the CLT model elsewhere: "It depends if the people want [to own land] like this. It can succeed in a place where the people are very poor and they are unable (lit: are defeated) to pay the high price required to own individually."<sup>91</sup>

In Swahili, the common term for a poor person is *mtu maskini*, and indeed that word was used in most of the Voi interviews. The word *wanyonge* is not frequently heard and indicates a more severe state of poverty and powerlessness. The *Standard Swahili-English Dictionary* translates the word *mnyonge* (singular of *wanyonge*) as "a humble, abject, low, debased person."<sup>92</sup> Bakhressa's *Kamusi ya Maana na Matumizi* defines the word as *mtu maskini asiyekuwa na kitu*, "a poor person who has nothing".<sup>93</sup> My research assistant translated it as "weakling."

For Voi residents, the implication of extreme poverty was not simply that they lacked the ability to pay for land and housing. Being a *myonge* also meant that you lacked political power and patronage networks. As the allocation of land is one of the most politically manipulated processes in modern day Kenya, Voi residents were understandably concerned that the gift of this project  $\frac{3}{4}$  the land  $\frac{3}{4}$  might be lost to outsiders with greater political power and connections.

In speaking with residents about their opinion of the tenure decision and the respective advantages and disadvantages of the two tenure forms, the fear of land loss was repeatedly emphasized. Respondents stressed that they feared that they or their neighbors could be cheated out of their land by more powerful or savvy people. In discussing this threat, residents used a variety of Swahili verbs, including *kupokonya* (to take away by force, rob, or plunder); *kunyakua*, the causative form of to grab or snatch); *kudhulumu* (to treat unjustly, defraud, oppress); and *kunyang'anya* (to take by force, steal or rob).<sup>94</sup>

Respondents were split, however, on whether group ownership would do a better job protecting their land against predatory outsiders than individual title deeds. Not surprisingly, those who were pleased with the CLT decision felt that protection from political manipulation was one of the main advantages of group title. As one respondent explained her perspective on the two tenure forms: "If you unite you cannot be robbed of the land. The whole family can get land. There are no disadvantages. With private ownership, someone can be given [land] by powerful people and he could rob you of your plot."<sup>95</sup>

The reasoning of some other respondents was the complete reverse. Although he shared the concern for land loss, one respondent felt that group ownership placed him at greater risk for land loss since his individual rights were subordinated to the decisions of the group: "The society can decide to steal this land, or that it should sell [my] place here."<sup>96</sup> A second respondent pointed out that one title deed made them all vulnerable since if the society is cheated by someone, everyone could become landless.<sup>97</sup> "Also if a person wants to defraud us if he uses this single title deed he defrauds us [all]."<sup>98</sup> Finally, echoing the sentiments of many of those who were dissatisfied with the group title decision, a third respondent stressed that the land would only really be protected from predation if she had the title deed herself:

I prefer individual ownership. There is no disadvantage to private ownership. The advantage: I am able to get a loan from someplace and build my house. My children are able to know this plot is my private property and they won't get complications here as was the case previously. No one can rob my children of this land because they have permission [to stay].<sup>99</sup>

### Community Interdependence and Trust

The third theme that arose in the interviews that is crucial to an understanding of the tenure decision was the level of community interdependence and unity that existed in the settlement in late 1991. Prior to legalization, as has been noted above in the discussion on security of tenure, settlement residents had relied upon each other to accomplish their individual goals. They had worked together to build their homes and they had united to defend their homes against threats of demolition from the local administration. They had created a number of self-help institutions, such as youth groups, savings societies, and women's groups to advance their economic status.<sup>100</sup> They had worked together to build a nursery school for their pre-primary age children. Now in the course of the upgrading project residents were being offered the choice between continuing with this unity by holding the land as a group or to stand on their own by selecting individual leasehold. That the residents should choose to hold land together is not exactly surprising since they knew from experience that they could defend their land together, but many were unsure of how they might fare on their own.



This is not to suggest that the decision to hold land together was predestined, that because they had been together they wished to continue together. Rather, the importance of this shared history is that it created a key variable  $\frac{3}{4}$  trust  $\frac{3}{4}$  that made the decision to hold land collectively a possibility. Granovetter reminds us that most decisions are not made in the social void of the Prisoner's Dilemma. Decisions are embedded  $\frac{3}{4}$  they are made in the context of concrete personal relations. Personal relations in turn are an important variable to consider here because these relations provide the basis for trust or distrust in any society. People learn whether they can trust each other by interaction; decisions on how to structure future relations are based upon past interactions.

This insight is particularly important for understanding the Voi decision. In the case of Voi, when dealing with land issues residents had strong expectations of good behavior (or no "malfeasance" to use Granovetter's term) from their fellow residents and their leadership. They had united as a community to protect their land against outsiders. They had established a network of relationships that would assist them in time of need. Voi residents felt they knew and could predict the behavior of their neighbors. In short, they felt they could trust their neighbors.

To return to the evidence of the interviews, the existence of trust in Voi is more implied in the discussions than expressly stated. Part of this is the result of the interviewing approach  $\frac{3}{4}$  questions were open ended so as to allow residents to speak in their own words. There were several places in the interview process where the answers of residents provide insight on community characteristics and evidence of the existence of trust and its relationship to the tenure decision. The most significant evidence was provided in discussions around the replicability of the CLT model in other settings.

In thinking about where the CLT might be successfully tried in the future, respondents not surprisingly tended to reflect back on the experience of the Tanzania-Bondeni project and used what they knew about their settlement to give advice about its future use. Some of the answers were admittedly prosaic: "It can succeed if the residents of the place are able to get along with GTZ."<sup>1</sup> Other answers, however, gave indications of key settlement characteristics that point toward the existence of trust. In addition to being poor, three factors were most frequently mentioned: residents must be united, they must be able to cooperate with each other, and they must care for each other's welfare.<sup>1</sup><sup>2</sup> Some expressions of this include:

- "It depends on the people who live in the place and also it requires a place [in which] people cooperate well."
- "It is able to succeed very well in every place. People who are able to care for each other [lit. love] In a place of love everything is possible."
- "Us here in Tanzania Bondeni we know each other. That is why it is able to succeed. It is necessary that people themselves understand each other."
- "The people should live [together] with unity and cooperation."<sup>1</sup><sup>3</sup>

Although the terms are not the same as Granovetter's, taken together these analyses point toward the existence of trust in the community. The basis of cooperation, unity, and even love is fundamentally trust. To cooperate one must have expectations that your partner will fulfill

his/her side of an agreement (or in economic terms believe that there will be no free-riding). To be unified one must believe, or trust, that all members of your group share the same goal (Which is why being a traitor is so mercilessly punished  $\frac{3}{4}$  one has betrayed the trust of others). Finally "to love" (or in the context of this paper, to care for the social welfare of another) requires a significant level of understanding, empathy, and expectation of reciprocity. This latter factor is only created through on-going interpersonal relations characterized by trust.

## Conclusions

The interviews conducted for this study illuminate conflicting reasons for the selection of the CLT model as the land tenure form for the upgrading project. Most commonly, residents said that the CLT model was selected because it fit their economic ability  $\frac{3}{4}$  the lower cost and shared obligations of the model were decisive. Others indicated that it was selected because it would prevent people from selling the land of Tanzania-Bondeni to outsiders. Its defensive nature, in short, was important. Finally, a number of respondents place the blame  $\frac{3}{4}$  or credit  $\frac{3}{4}$  at the feet of the Residents Committee. In this perspective, the CLT model was not really democratically selected $\frac{3}{4}$ it was the choice of the leadership of the settlement. Some described their leadership as making this selection because it was in the best interests of the settlement, while others saw less benign impulses and felt the RC was attracted to the CLT model because it would maintain their importance within the settlement.

I have argued that the CLT model was selected because Tanzania-Bondeni residents perceived themselves as very poor and powerless. The settlement's history was marked by an adversarial relationship with the town council while the specter of legalization brought with it an influx of outsiders ready to purchase plots from would-be sellers. Selecting the CLT model was a sensible option for keeping land in the community and protecting the least able. Group tenure, however, was not a foregone conclusion. The ability to select group tenure was only an option because of the pre-existing institutional arrangements in the settlement $\frac{3}{4}$ the history of self-help and community cooperation $\frac{3}{4}$ that had fostered a sense of trust which is a necessary precursor to collective action.

At the outset I suggested that an understanding of the decision-making process of the residents of Tanzania-Bondeni would provide data for reflecting on the theoretical debate over land rights and African development, as well as helping to inform theoretical perspectives over the nature of human decision-making. To recap, the Voi land tenure decision appears to fly in the face of the ETLR, which would predict that in the face of increasing land scarcity and population growth, residents would select to hold land individually. By implication the decision also appears irrational-moving the economic decision maker away from, not toward, the most utility maximizing institution, namely individual ownership.

Evidence from the interviews indicates that Tanzania-Bondeni residents were clearly acting rationally. Residents selected to hold land in common because this institution was perceived as best serving their individual self-interest. Group tenure was advantageous: it would enable them to get the land more inexpensively and with the provisions for community control and the prohibition on selling land, the CLT model would defend their land against outsiders and retain the land for themselves and their children. The difficulties of cooperation, which were

acknowledged by many of those who supported group tenure, were offset by the benefits of assured land access, secure tenure, and promised social support. The rationality of the decision holds even if one believes that the Residents Committee manipulated the decision: residents still thought the benefits of cooperation (i.e., land *and* a house) would outweigh the costs of having to cooperate with others.

An understanding of the Voi tenure decision lends credence to the arguments of mainstream institutionalists and economic sociologists that to understand human decision-making we need to understand the embedded context of the decision-maker. In particular, the decision challenges fundamental economic assumptions about human preferences and the nature of costs and benefits. As Bromley has stressed, benefits and costs are not universal - they are socially constructed.<sup>104</sup> They are largely determined by the institutional setting. Tanzania-Bondeni residents were situated in a society characterized by great economic and political inequalities in which they perceived themselves as "at risk" and vulnerable to outside manipulation. They also had a history of cooperation to protect themselves and their possessions from outside threats. Embedded in such a setting, residents saw cooperation as relatively low cost and beneficial, while going it alone - the presumed efficient and more rational decision - was deemed the riskier and more costly option.

Finally, the tenure decision in Voi also appears to undermine a critical dimension of the ETLR, namely the primacy of scarcity as *the* driver of institutional change. Tanzania-Bondeni residents were acutely aware of the scarcity of land in their country; they often expressed their thankfulness for the upgrading project and the opportunity to get land as a "gift from God." But scarcity did not drive them toward individualism. Rather the specter of scarcity and the fear that they might lose this precious resource lent support to a decision to hold land collectively. Using insights from the Voi experience one might conclude that the commons persist even in the face of scarcity because scarcity is a necessary - but not sufficient - condition for the emergence of private property rights.

To apply these insights to the debate on African land tenure institutions and reform processes, the Voi experience supports those who argue for the inclusion of a range of tenure options in land policy reforms. Forcing all communities to adopt individual land tenure is not advisable for such an ecologically, ethnically, and economically diverse continent. Simply providing tenure options, however, is an insufficient approach. Institutional variety should be coupled with procedural approaches for selecting land institutions and overseeing land allocation. Community members know their histories: they understand their internal dynamics, needs, and aspirations. To build on this knowledge, reforms must make provisions for transparent participatory community decision-making processes with sufficient safeguards for the interests of women, minorities, and other marginalized groups. Even with such policy changes, the commons will likely persist and individual tenures will likely expand in Africa - but with this approach they will do so at the behest of communities and not economic theoreticians.



**Notes:**

1. Govt. of Kenya, 2004.
2. Cross and Haines, 1988; Cross, 1991; Joireman, 1996; Coldham, 1995; United Republic of Tanzania, 1992; Ddungu, 1991; Centre for Basic Research, 1992; Adams, 1993; Tripp, 2004; Cousins, Cousins, et al, 2005.
3. Shipton, 1988; Kiamba, 1989; Okoth-Ogendo, 1991.
4. Swynnerton, 1955; Govt. of Kenya, 1972.
5. Klopp, 2000.
6. There is a large body of academic research focused on common property, customary tenure regimes, and the question of why groups take collective action which is not dealt with in this paper (e.g., Berkes, 1992/2002; Bromley, ed., 1992; Ostrom, 1990/1992/2000; Ostrom, et al, eds., 2002.) This research has identified a variety of contextual variables that either facilitate or obstruct collective action, including aspects related to the resource, the size and composition of the group, the level of dependence of the group on the resource, the role of leadership, and levels of trust and social capital (Ostrom 2000). An impressive variety of methods have been used for this work, including historical analysis, empirical field research, game theoretic approaches, and experimental studies. While insights from this research are important and relevant to the Voi experience the ETLR has been selected as the theoretical frame for the paper for two key reasons. First, much of the above mentioned research is focused on common pool resources (CPRs), that is, resources with one key public good characteristic-the inability to physically exclude other users. (The inability to exclude may be a function of the resource itself, e.g., the oceans; it may also be related to inordinately high costs of exclusion, e.g., extensive range lands.) Urban land is not a CPR: it is highly excludable. For Voi, a key question was why the community chose not to obtain exclusive individual rights when in fact they could. Second, the ETLR was selected because it was the frame through which individuals involved in the project (e.g., technical advisors, central and local government officers) thought about the decision. It was assumed that given the intense competition to obtain land in Kenya private ownership was "natural" and that all decision-makers would move that way. When they did not, questions of rationality, manipulation, and community context were actively discussed. But even though urban land is not a CPR, it must be noted that the desire to exclude others was an impulse behind the decision. One insight from the Voi experience for the broader body of work referenced above is that the *perception* of the resource-and not its actual physical characteristics-can also play a role in community cooperation. Voi residents viewed themselves as vulnerable to land loss (mainly through market penetration); collective action was seen as a way of defending the resource even though its physical characteristics did not require it.
7. Feder and Noronha, 1987; Migot-Adholla et al., 1991; Platteau, 1992; Migot-Adholla and Bruce, 1993; Simon, 1993; Platteau, 1996; Cousins, Cousins, et al., 2005.

8. Platteau 1992; Platteau, 1996.
9. Ault and Rutman, 1980; Noronha, 1985; Ault and Rutman, 1993.
10. Demsetz, 1967; Hardin, 1968; Ault and Rutman, 1980.
11. Furubotn and Richter, 2005; North and Thomas, 1973.
12. The work of Hernando de Soto, most notably *The Mystery of Capital* (2000), is another iteration of this idea. Although de Soto does not expressly call for private property rights, his argument that informal or extra-legal ownership that represents "dead capital" must be formalized into one unified system supportive of capitalism implies that the framework would be based on individual, privatized rights.
13. E.g., Berry 1984, Brink and Bromley, 1992; Platteau 1992, Cross 1992; Cross, 1987.
14. Berry, 1984; Cross, 1991.
15. Bromley, 1992.
16. Bromley, 1991: 33.
17. Brink, et al., 2006; Bruce, 1988; Migot-Adholla and Bruce, 1993.
18. Becker, 1976; Hodgson, 1988.
19. Becker, 1976.
20. Aaron, 1994.
21. Sen, 1977. Sen (reprint 1979: 95) calls this type of action "commitment." Commitment can be defined "in terms of a person choosing an act that he believes will yield a lower level of personal welfare to him than an alternative that is also available to him." This conscious act of choosing is important distinction since many economists have dismissed the significance of acts motivated out of altruism or sympathy by arguing that such acts, which give pleasure to the person making the sacrifice, are basically egoistic and still maximize one's utility.
22. Hodgson, 1988; Whalen, 1989.
23. Becker, 1976.
24. Becker 1976, Hodgson 1988: 67-68, Biddle 1990.
25. Hodgson, 1988; Aaron, 1994.
26. Biddle, 1990; Granovetter, 1992.
27. Granovetter, 1992.
28. Granovetter, 1992: 58.
29. Government of Kenya 1994: 10.
30. Asienwa, 1991.
31. The Ministry of Local Government is now called the Ministry of Local Authorities.
32. Bassett and Jacobs, 1997.
33. Smoke 1993; Smoke, 1994; Ogero and Bassett, 1992.
34. Bassett, 2005; Ogero et al., 1992.
35. E.g., Makunda, 1993.
36. Jaffer 1997; Malombe 1997.
37. Bassett and Jacobs, 1997.
38. Gulyani and Bassett, forthcoming.
39. Matthei and Hahn, 1991.
40. White and Matthei, 1987.

41. Kirby and Matthei, 1987; Institute for Community Economics, 1982.
42. Land values will appreciate even if the land is "removed" from the market. Some CLTs acquire properties (or get donations) expressly for resale in order to use appreciation to finance additional land purchases.
43. Institute for Community Economics, 1982.
44. For more information on the Kenyan experiment with the CLT model see: Bassett, 2005; Jaffer, 2000; and Bassett and Jacobs, 1997.
45. RE: Interviews 22/4-2, 27/4-7. Interview citations refer to the date of the interview and the sequential number of the interview that day (i.e., 2<sup>nd</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> interview of the day in the citations here.)
46. A youth group received training in low cost building technologies and built a demonstration house. With the help of the National Association of Cooperative Housing Unions (NACHU), community members formed cooperative societies to obtain loans for housing construction.
47. Muchene, 1992b: 28.
48. Muchene, 1992b: 28.
49. Muchene, 1992b: 28.
50. Bassett and Jacobs, 1997.
51. Patton, 1990.
52. Yin, 1994; Patton, 1990.
53. Kijana Interview. The data provided on property ownership by GTZ for the Voi settlement does not allow complete verification or denial of this description. The data only gives the names, identity numbers, old structure numbers and new plot numbers. I attempted to judge gender by names. Accordingly in the 1995 list, 239 structures/plots are owned by women, 291 have male owners and 58 were unable to be classified due to indeterminate names.
54. Data in Appendix 2 do not attempt to differentiate the relative affluence or poverty of the respondents. It was my intention when formulating the interview outline to use the data collected on housing quality, urban services, and assets to create a ranking of relative affluence. Data on assets could not be consistently collected. In some interviews we sat inside houses and could observe assets; in others, we sat in the compounds outside homes. Urban service data did not prove helpful. Tanzania settlement lacks electricity. Standpipes have been set up in regular intervals throughout the settlement as part of the infrastructure assistance provided by STDP. The most reliable indicator of wealth was housing quality. I interpreted permanent houses as an indicator of affluence; conversely temporary housing was interpreted as an indicator of lower incomes. This could, of course, be misleading since residents might have priorities such as investing in the schooling of children.
55. Interviews 21/4-4, 23/4-4, 26/4-6, 28/4-1, 28/4-6.
56. One respondent flatly refused to believe that the settlement was governed by community-based tenure; she emphasized repeatedly that she was waiting for her own title to come (Interview 30/4-3).
57. Interview 21/4-6.

58. Interview 27/4-5.
59. Interview 27/4-5.
60. Interview 27/4-5.
61. Interview 22/4-4.
62. e.g., Interview 28/4-1.
63. Interview 23/4-4.
64. Interviews 27/4-7, 29/4-4.
65. Interview 22/4-3.
66. Interview 26/4-6.
67. Chanock, 1991; Cheater, 1990.
68. This committee is often called the *wazee wa kijiji*, which translates as the elders of the village. This usage is technically more rural, but respondents used them interchangeably.
69. Interview 22/4-2 in 1994; Interview 27/4-2 in 1998.
70. Interview 22/4-1.
71. *Askaris* are municipal enforcement officers often working for a section of the municipal council called the "inspectorate." This section is supposed to ensure that municipal by-laws relating to health and safety are observed. The City Inspectorate of the City of Nairobi is notoriously brutal in its methods of dealing with street peddlers and squatters. The Voi Municipal Council reportedly would take property (such as roofing materials), but no one complained of excess violence.
72. Interview 27/4-6.
73. Interview 21/4-6.
74. Interview 23/4-7.
75. There is some conflict amongst respondents as to whether this fee was paid monthly or annually.
76. Interview 26/4-5.
77. Asienwa, 1991.
78. Interview 28/4-1.
79. Interviews 20/4-3, 29/4-4, and 30/4-1.
80. Interview 28/4-4.
81. Interview 27/4-4.
82. Interview 28/4-2.
83. Interview 21/4-5.
84. Interview 29/4-5.
85. Interview 23/4-7.
86. Interview 23/4-7.
87. Interview 22/4-1.
88. e.g., Interviews 21/4-5; 23/4-1; 26/4-6.
89. Interview 28/4-2.
90. Interview 21/4-5.
91. Interview 21/4-3.
92. Standard Swahili-English Dictionary, 1990: 347.

93. Bakhressa, 1992.
94. A Standard Swahili-English Dictionary, 1990.
95. Interview 28/4-5.
96. Interview 23/4-1.
97. The legal configuration of the CLT model in Kenya is complex. Land is held by an incorporated trust; day to day management activities in the settlement are the responsibility of an organization legally formed as a society in Kenyan law.
98. Interview 23/4-1.
99. Interview 21/4-1.
100. Asienwa 1991, Interviews 27/4-5, 20/4-2, 21/1-1.
101. Interview 21/4-2.
102. e.g., Interviews 21/4-3, 23/4-2, 23/4-3, 23/4-4, 26/4-2.
103. Interviews 22/4-2; 22/4-1; 23/4-1; and 27/4-5.
104. Bromley, 1989.

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# Competing Regionalisms in Africa and the Continent's Emerging Security Architecture

BENEDIKT F. FRANKE

**Abstract:** While the relationship between the United Nations and Africa's various regional and sub-regional organisations has already been the subject of much debate, hardly any attention has been paid to the relationships these African organisations maintain with each other and the way they impact on the continent's emerging security architecture. Consequently, this article aims to shed some light on both the evolution of competing regionalisms in Africa as well as their impact on the prospects and chances of today's security institutions. It thereby argues that the ongoing proliferation of intergovernmental organisations and the resultant competition for national and international resources, political influence and institutional relevance threatens the viability of a continental approach to peace and security by duplicating efforts and fragmenting support. It further contends that the often uneasy coexistence of these organisations is symptomatic of the deep divisions, nationalist tendencies and regional imbalances underlying the multiple processes of regionalisation in Africa. More optimistically, however, the article concludes that, even though some of these divisive factors seem here to stay, the African Union has taken a number of noteworthy steps to harmonise the continent's numerous security initiatives. Both, the creation of regionally based multinational brigades as part of an African Standby Force as well as the decision to limit official cooperation to seven organisations are meant to prevent needless duplication of effort and to ensure that the continent's limited resources are applied to areas of real need. By basing its security architecture on regional pillars and incorporating existing initiatives as building blocs and implementation agencies into its continental policy, the AU has made important steps towards establishing a common front and reversing what Ghana's first president Kwame Nkrumah had so fearfully termed the "balkanisation of Africa".

## Introduction

The inflationary increase in African undertakings to establish peace and security raises a number of important questions about the interrelationships between the various organisations, their place in and contribution to Africa's security architecture, as well as their comparative institutional chances and prospects. Foremost among these questions is whether, and if so how, the continent's current plethora of intergovernmental organisations and institutions can evade the self-destructive rivalries which have characterised Africa's institutional landscape for so long and which have hindered effective sub-regional and regional cooperation ever since the

**Benedikt Franke** is a PhD student at the Center for International Studies at the University of Cambridge. Previously he gained a MA in International and Strategic Studies from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS).

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beginning of decolonisation. In order to answer these questions, this article is structured into four parts. The first part traces the historical evolution of Africa's competing regionalisms, that is, the occurrences of competition between intergovernmental institutions with virtually the same official *raison d'être* but different underlying motives and/or conceptions of cooperation, from decolonisation to the establishment of the African Union in 2002. This retrospective journey is followed by an attempt to distil the commonalities of that period into a theoretical framework and identify the root causes of Africa's proneness for inter-institutional competition. Drawing occasionally on theories such as Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) as formulated by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, the third part then discusses the status quo in light of the identified root causes. The remaining part of this article assesses the prospects for further rationalisation and harmonisation of Africa's various peace and security initiatives and briefly elaborates on the challenges ahead. The article concludes by arguing that even though many of the identified root causes have lost relevance in the continent's emerging institutional landscape, not all of the structural, political, and cultural tensions underlying inter-institutional cooperation in Africa have yet been convincingly resolved. Africa's leaders must thus continue to promote and institutionalise deeper coordination and collaboration among themselves, the continent's sub-regional and regional organisations, as well as civil society actors. They must strive to consolidate past gains whilst not losing momentum in continuing to rationalise the multitude of existing organisations and to establish a clear division of labour among them. If they fail, so may their dream of African unity.

### The History of Competing Regionalisms in Africa

Africa has experienced at least two great waves of regionalisation.<sup>1</sup> While the first one is associated with colonisation, de-colonisation, and Pan-Africanism, the second was released in the late 1980s with the loosening of the shackles which the Cold War had imposed on the continent. The phenomenon of competing regionalisms is certainly not confined to the later wave. On the contrary, it has been a defining feature of Africa's regionalisations ever since the decolonisation process started and the newly independent states made their first attempts at regional, cooperation and integration. As today, the interactions of the resultant groupings, whether on a local, sub-regional or continental level, were soon to be characterised by thinly veiled competition for the benefits of political prominence and institutional relevance. The following section aims to trace the evolution and effects of this competition through the various waves of regionalisation and subsequently distil the commonalities into a theoretical framework. In doing so, it hopes to set the stage for a fruitful discussion of the current *status quo* and the prospects for effective continental security cooperation.

During the decolonisation period, Africa experienced the establishment of a whole range of regional schemes for political and economic cooperation. This wave of regionalisation occurred for several reasons, some practical, others ideological. Firstly, independence and the concomitant break-up of the colonial federations such as the *Afrique Occidentale Française* (AOF), the *Afrique Equatoriale Française* (AEF), and the Central African Federation had suddenly highlighted the negative consequences of the extreme segmentation and the intrinsically problematic viability of the political divisions and economic circuits inherited from the colonial period.<sup>2</sup> Without the binding structures of the colonial administrations, Africa's newly

independent states were quickly confronted by economic and political disunity as the colonial powers had concentrated on forging vertical links between their metropolises and their dependencies rather than horizontal links among the colonies.<sup>3</sup> In fact, they had not only consistently discouraged the latter (unless it served an imperial purpose), but also amplified the resultant difficulties through what Nkrumah called “by far the greatest wrong which the departing colonialists had ever inflicted on Africa, namely, to leave us divided into economically unviable states which bear no possibility of real development.”<sup>4</sup> Quite naturally, the desire to mitigate this wrong, to combat the ongoing exploitation of the continent’s resources and to achieve some sort of economic and political viability was one of the main motivations for the African states to begin regional cooperation.

Secondly, any such practical considerations were deeply embedded in the ideological framework of Pan-Africanism which, ever since the first Pan-African Congress in 1900, advocated African integration and unity as the only means of bringing about true self-rule and self-determination on the continent.<sup>5</sup> With the “long, long night of colonial rule” finally coming to an end in the late 1950s, this framework thus held the promise of mutual support and assistance in the face of obvious vulnerability and the fear of (neo)colonial interference.<sup>6</sup> Although not all governments (and resistance movements) of the continent necessarily subscribed to the underlying idea of African oneness, the ideologically charged rhetoric of Pan-Africanism served well to carry the anti-colonial message and finally create a feeling of self-assertion and thus the political basis for inter-African cooperation.

Given the aforementioned incentives for such cooperation, it is hardly surprising that Africa’s decolonisation was accompanied by a proliferation of intergovernmental organisations, federations, unions, and communities some of which were virtually moribund from the beginning while others quickly gained membership and political influence. In fact, regional initiatives sprung up in such numbers that this article will have to concentrate on a select few in order to demonstrate that the competing regionalisms of the present found their beginning in the way the organisations, states, and leaders of the past came to interact with one another. For the period before 1963, the conflict and competition between the so-called Monrovia and Casablanca groups of states, as well as Nkrumah’s controversial Union of African States (UAS), can serve as illuminating examples. The uneasy relationship between the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the continent’s sub-regional organisations, as well as the ongoing rivalry between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its various francophone shadows such as the *Communauté Economique de l’Afrique de l’Ouest* (CEAO) or the *Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine* (UEMOA), are equally instructive for the period thereafter.

#### The road to the Organisation of African Unity (1958 to 1963)

Undoubtedly the most visible aspect of regionalisation after decolonisation was the attempt to create an African supra-national institution which was officially launched by the First Conference of Independent African States (CIAS) in 1958.<sup>7</sup> As more African states achieved independence, further interpretations of Pan-Africanism emerged, including the Pan-African Freedom Movement of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (1958), the *Conseil de l’Entente*



(1959), the Union of African States (1960), the African States of the Casablanca Charter (1961), the African and Malagasy Union (1961), and the Organization of Inter-African and Malagasy States (1962).

Although unity may have been their aim, these various institutional constructs soon began to clash as Africa's new states tried to exalt national independence *and* continental unity at the same time. The most fundamental point of disagreement concerned the questions of why unity should be sought in the first place, which objectives and interests inter-African-cooperation should serve, and how it should be institutionalised.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the type of relationship Africa should maintain with its former colonial masters divided the continent's states and movements. Some wanted to retain collaborative structures and thus the flow of assistance, others strove passionately for total independence and African autarky. Given the already thick walls between the Francophone, Anglophone, Lusophone, and Arabic blocs of states, these differences in political outlook did not exactly help the continent on its march to unity.<sup>9</sup> On the contrary, as the first crisis in inter-African relations erupted in form of the Congolese civil war in 1960, the underlying rifts threatened to pull Africa apart.

What burst upon Africa and the world as the "Congo crisis" did so for many reasons, among them the attempted secessions of various break-away regions (Katanga and Luba-Kasai), an army mutiny seeking the Africanisation of the officer cadre, and a political power clash between Prime Minister Lumumba and President Kasavubu. The ensuing conflict, along with the continuing Algerian war of independence, was to reveal and intensify the fissures beneath the apparent solidarity of Africa's independent states. As the latter's divergent positions on the Congo's legitimate government, the deployment of a UN mission (ONUC) to the crisis zone, as well as the level of support that should be accorded to Algeria's rebel *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN), clashed, deeper differences in perspective and objective became painfully obvious and eventually led to a crystallisation of Africa's states into several opposing groups.

While the so-called Casablanca group (the "revolutionaries") consisted of countries who proposed the immediate creation of a political union for Africa in which economic, cultural, and military activities would be coordinated centrally, the states in the rival Brazzaville group (the "moderates") considered themselves more conservative and gradualist.<sup>10</sup> Far from condemning regionalism as a distraction from, or even an obstacle to, African unity, these initially exclusively Francophone states saw themselves as a counterweight to Nkrumah's aggressive Pan-Africanism and its omnipresent advocacy of immediate and absolute integration. Instead of a close organic identification within a constitutionally unified Africa, the moderates thus argued for a unity that was not "political integration of sovereign states, but unity of aspirations and of action considered from the point of view of African social solidarity and political identity."<sup>11</sup>

Contrary to the Casablanca group, which was never really able to institutionalise its cooperation, the Brazzaville group, which by May 1961 had merged into the larger Monrovia group of states, went on to create various institutions and adopt a charter in order to assert its claim to speak for the continent.<sup>12</sup> It founded the *Organisation Africaine et Malgache de Coopération Economique* (OAMCE), the *Union Africaine et Malgache* (UAM), as well as a defence organisation, the *Union Africaine et Malgache de Defense* (UAMD). The two latter were eventually amalgamated into the *Union Africaine et Malgache de Cooperation Economique* (UAMCE).

As the conflict in and for Congo raged on, the rift between the two opposing groups and their leaders continued to grow. In fact, each group, by considering the establishment of an institutionalised continental cooperation to be a zero-sum game and itself to be the only legitimate beginning thereof, did its part to turn the initially stable coexistence into a state of competition and rivalry.<sup>13</sup> A characterisation of the latter was the constant struggle of the two groups to increase their individual memberships, preferably by converting members of the opposing group. This led to situations where the UAM would appeal to all states to cooperate with it “*sur la base des principes définis à Brazzaville*,” while, at the same time, the Casablanca powers, emphasising their “responsibilities towards the African Continent,” would be asking all countries to associate themselves with their common action instead.<sup>14</sup>

Naturally, such competition neither enhanced the continent’s perception of security nor lessened the chaos on the organisational scene which had prevailed since the eve of independence. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that Africa’s states formed even more sub-regional bodies in response. One such body that was created in the heat and rivalry of those days was Nkrumah’s Ghana-Guinea-Mali Union, later to be named the Union of African States (UAS). Although it claimed to be a nucleus for broader unity, it was in practice as parochial as any and hardly a worthy implementation of Nkrumah’s vision of a United States of Africa. Based on the union Ghana and Guinea had announced on 1 May 1959 (with a common national flag and anthem, common citizenship and an open invitation to other African states to join), the UAS failed to draw its members together or have any practical activities besides the issuing of several declarations and charters. As Jon Woronoff so rightly observed, its main purpose, so it would seem, was as a battering ram against the neighbouring members of the Brazzaville/Monrovia groups first, and then also against the Pan-African Freedom Movement of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (PAFMESCA) which it saw as yet another rival in the quest for continental unity.<sup>15</sup> Considering itself a “higher and healthier conception of African unity,” the UAS condemned other attempts at regional association (or as it is sometimes called functional cooperation) as “just another form of balkanisation” and encouraged all African states to follow its example instead.<sup>16</sup>

Originally meant as a means to undermine and destroy regionalism in order to attain continental unity, the creation of the UAS and its subsequent conduct in inter-African politics had exactly the opposite effect. By heightening tensions and thereby seemingly convincing the less radical states that they themselves would need similar bodies for their protection, the Casablanca group, and within it the UAS, contributed to the further fragmentation of Africa’s institutional sphere rather than to its consolidation.

While many other instances of rivalling regionalisms existed in the period between 1958 and 1963, the open clash between the statist Monrovia and unionist Casablanca groups, as well as the competition for institutional primacy as materialised in the UAS, are certainly instructive examples. Offering a valuable glimpse of inter-African relations in their formative stages, they serve well to demonstrate how by 1963 the initial euphoria about independence had in many cases turned into thinly veiled rivalry across four levels: institutional, international, intranational, and personal. Organisations such as the UAM or the African States of the Casablanca Charter contended for recognition and political influence across the continent. States such as Ghana or Nigeria competed for hegemony within these organisations or regions.



Within these and other states, parties and trade unions competed for attention to their particular conceptions of regional cooperation and African unity. Side by side with the squabbles among these various organisations, states, and groupings went personal disputes between the leaders of these entities. As the following sections, beginning with a short discussion of the inter-relationships of the continent's many organisations with the OAU, will attempt to show, these mutually reinforcing levels of competition were to remain characteristic of Africa's processes of regionalisation over the following decades.

#### From the OAU to the African Union (1963-2002)

The increasing realisation among members of the Casablanca group (especially Guinea) that African countries were unlikely to move as far or as rapidly towards complete political integration as their leaders had hoped soon led to attempts to compromise. These resulted in a general *rapprochement* which in May 1963 culminated in the establishment of the OAU. Though based on the lowest common denominator of unity acceptable to the more than thirty heads of states who participated in the Addis Ababa meeting, the OAU nonetheless represented an unprecedented chance for continental cooperation. For Casablanca heads of state like Sékou Touré, the new organisation held the eventual promise of much wider inter-African cooperation than would have been possible through their own politically isolated projects such as the UAS.<sup>17</sup> The Monrovia bloc, on the other hand, not only saw its gradual approach to political integration enshrined in the OAU's charter, but also the national sovereignty of all African states clearly safeguarded from further interference by the likes of Nkrumah and Touré (of the seven principles of the OAU charter, five were in defense of the sovereign rights of member states). Thus, the Monrovia-Casablanca split seemed finally subsumed in the OAU which, in the words of Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Selassie, was now ready "to rouse the slumbering giant of Africa, not to the nationalism of Europe of the nineteenth century, not to regional consciousness, but to the vision of a single brotherhood bending its united efforts towards the achievement of a greater and nobler goal."<sup>18</sup>

Although established as the one All-African organisation, the OAU never was to be the only such organisation on the continent. Given the vast geographical extent of Africa there was always bound to be any number of smaller, more compact groupings which would make it necessary to define the relationship between the fledgling organisation and such groupings in order to prevent duplication or even rivalry. It was generally thought that since one of the driving motives for creating the OAU had been to end the political divisions that split the continent into feuding blocs, the OAU should be the supreme political authority with the power to coordinate the continent's many cooperative activities and ensure their compatibility and unity of effort. However, in the end the OAU charter did not contain any specific provision clarifying the continental hierarchy of institutions and organisations, nor did the first Council of Ministers of the OAU meeting in Dakar determine the actual relationship between the OAU and the sub-regional groupings. Moreover, since some member states' feared possible infringements on their hard-won sovereignty, the OAU was given no supervisory power nor were other organisations required to consult with it or even inform it of their decisions.<sup>19</sup>

Quite naturally, the resultant lack of coordination and oversight soon led to increasing tensions between the OAU and the remaining web of sub-regional organisations. For while many of the continent's political organisations (such as the UAS) had been dissolved with the conception of the OAU in order to "promote the unity and solidarity of the African States," the OAU's first decade actually witnessed a renewed growth of rivalling regionalism rather than its desired (and predicted) disappearance.<sup>20</sup> Existent institutions expanded and new ones sprung up in all parts of the continent and in the most varied specialisations. According to Jon Woronoff, there were at least three principle reasons for this revival of regionalism.<sup>21</sup>

Firstly, Africa's sheer immensity and the nature of its countries' political, economic, and social relations seemed to favour regional over continental cooperation as ties did generally not extend much beyond neighbouring states. Consequently, the cohesion needed to ensure effective and meaningful cooperation was more likely to be found on a regional level and most initiatives promised greater chances of success if undertaken in smaller groupings.<sup>22</sup>

Secondly, far from being a clean sheet or an inchoate mass on which a simple organisational structure could be imposed, Africa is one of the most varied regions in the world in which layers of strong and underlying unity cross or intertwine with other layers of diversity and disunity.<sup>23</sup> As these differing lines of force are known to constantly pull the continent in several directions at the same time, it should have come as no surprise that, once the phase of *rapprochement* had ended and contentious issues had reappeared on the political scene, blocs should form again and that some of the blocs might again become sub-regional organisations. Renewed differences in opinion about the ongoing Congolese affair, for example, led to the creation of the *Organisation Commune Africaine et Malgache* (OCAM) in February 1965.

The third reason for the growth of regionalism was the failure of the OAU to provide a true continental framework for cooperative ventures. Although Article XX of the 1963 OAU Charter had established several Specialised Commissions (Economic and Social; Educational and Cultural; Health, Sanitation, and Nutrition; Defence; as well as Scientific, Technical and Research), these never really materialised.<sup>24</sup> Instead, the OAU's merely lukewarm attitude to its commitment "to coordinate and intensify [member states'] cooperation and efforts to achieve a better life for the people of Africa" left a sizeable vacuum in the continent's perceived potential which the states themselves ventured to fill.<sup>25</sup> They did so by expanding and intensifying sub-regional cooperation.

The resulting disorderly growth of formations not only significantly reduced the momentum of the continental integration aspect of Pan-Africanism throughout the second half of the 1960s, but also further complicated the relations between the OAU and the supposedly tamed world of sub-regionalism.<sup>26</sup> Instead of a clear hierarchy with an established division of labour, the OAU faced increasing competition for political influence and resources, as well as occasional challenges to its institutional primacy from organisations like the aforementioned OCAM which was open to all African states and thus also potentially continental. As a result, relations between the OAU and many of the continent's other organisations and groupings like the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) soured to such an extent that often only formal agreements could overcome the substantial unease between them.<sup>27</sup> Rather than seeing a disappearance of institutional competition, the post-Casablanca/Monrovia period was thus characterised by the resurgence of rivalling regionalism(s) which flourished on the expense of

the OAU and the effective conduct of Pan-African cooperative affairs, or in the words of Jon Woronoff:

It would be nice to think of the continent as a solar system in which the Organisation of African Unity was the sun and the others dutifully revolved around it. But this is not the case, and the sub-regional bodies follow no fixed path as compared with the OAU; there have been many collisions and eclipses, and the force of gravity is frequently defied.<sup>28</sup>

Such collisions and eclipses, however, have not merely been confined to the OAU's relations with sub-regional bodies, but have also been a close trait of these bodies' associations with each other. In fact, given the aforementioned increase in organisations, the intensification of the Cold War's divisive grip on Africa, as well as the destructive logics of nationalism and neo-colonialism, it was almost to be expected that some of these organisations would end up as rivals. Nonetheless, the extent to which they actually did compete with each other for everything from money to members deserves attention, not only because it will be helpful in formulating some parameters of competing subsystems in Africa, but also in order to understand many of the concerns harboured against today's regional security initiatives.

#### The example of West Africa's competing regionalisms and Anglo-French rivalry

While every African region has had its fair share of institutional competition, the example of the Western sub-region is especially instructive.<sup>29</sup> The area comprising 16 states has been a particularly fertile ground for regional (mostly economic) cooperation experiments since the early 1960s. Besides the aforementioned Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the *Communauté Economique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* (CEAO) and the *Union Monétaire Ouest Africaine* (UMOA), nearly 30 other intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) with the same basic objectives had sprung up by 1979.<sup>30</sup> By June 1990, this number had risen to more than 40 IGOs.<sup>31</sup> As it is neither possible nor appropriate in an article of this scope to wend a way through every instance of competition resulting from this multiplicity, the relationship between ECOWAS and its Francophone rivals must suffice as a telling example.

ECOWAS was originally chartered as a regional integration and cooperation grouping in May 1975 in order to unite all West African states into a collective political and economic bargaining bloc. Going back to an initiative President William Tubman of Liberia started in 1964, the creation of ECOWAS was also supposed to heal the rift between the region's Anglo- and Francophone countries by crossing the language barrier and incorporating previous initiatives such as UMOA and CEAO into one overarching organisation. However, far from having such a unifying effect, the emergence of ECOWAS soon began to complicate the course of West Africa's integration process. Although all Francophone states had signed the Treaty of Lagos which established ECOWAS, their (perceived) shared frame of mind, including their common fear and suspicion of Nigeria's hegemonic potential and the historically ambitious Ghana, as well as strong pressure from France, quickly curbed any enthusiasm for the project. As an unmistakable reaction and barrier to the ECOWAS idea of loosening colonial ties, the Francophone states increasingly concentrated their cooperative efforts in more exclusive and smaller groupings such as the UMOA or CEAO.<sup>32</sup> By nonetheless remaining members of ECOWAS (and in fact commanding 63 percent of the organisation's total membership), they not

only effectively check-mated the Anglophone members in a pernicious chess game, but also dimmed all hopes that the artificial divisions in the region might finally be overcome.<sup>33</sup>

The role of external actors in furthering this division and reinforcing the rivalry between the non-Francophone and the Francophone ECOWAS members must not be underestimated. Whereas ECOWAS was inspired mainly by African political leaders and was created and administered by African technocrats and bureaucrats, the reverse is true of the CEAO and UMOA.<sup>34</sup> Not only was their creation instigated by France (and later supported by the European Economic Community), but their functioning would have been impossible without the continuing backing from the former colonial master. As the latter retained an obvious economic interest in West Africa and could not afford to lose its influence, it hardly surprises that many saw the CEAO and UMOA as France's "Trojan horses" within ECOWAS.<sup>35</sup>

These Trojan horses were to ensure that Francophone Africa maintained strong relations with Paris and would not begin to cooperate with its neighbours against, for example, French exploitation of the region's strategic raw materials. Naturally, the resultant division of West Africa into competing alliances formed along the lines of common colonial heritage rather than economic or political rationale made it virtually impossible to achieve the unifying ideals enshrined in the Treaty of Lagos. Nonetheless, ECOWAS survived. It thus fared substantially better than many other sub-regional organisations which did not withstand the pressures of constant institutional rivalry. The Maghreb Permanent Consultative Council formed in November 1965, the *Union Douanière et Economique de l'Afrique Centrale* (UDEAC) set up in January 1966, the *Union Douanière et Economique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* (UDEAO) established in June 1966, or the *Organisation des États Riverains du Sénégal* (OERS), for example, all failed soon after their conception. Yet another case in point is the East African Community (EAC) which died in 1977 before it could even celebrate its tenth birthday.<sup>36</sup>

However, even though ECOWAS endured, its troubled history confirms Adebayo Adedeji's sentiment that a "study of integration efforts in West Africa is inevitably a study in frustration."<sup>37</sup> This frustration has remained until the present day, for even though all leading West African politicians seem to have recognised the need to rationalise the sub-region's profusion of competing intergovernmental organisations, very little progress has been achieved in this area. If anything, the situation has become worse.

Both the 1991 treaty establishing the African Economic Community (the Abuja Treaty) and the adoption of the 1993 revision of the original ECOWAS treaty (the Cotonou Treaty) had initially raised the hopes that the region's divisions could finally be overcome. The former stipulated that "member states undertake, through their respective regional economic communities, to coordinate and harmonise their sub-regional organisations, with a view to rationalising the integration process at the level of each region."<sup>38</sup> The latter was prepared by the ECOWAS Eminent Person Committee and aimed at making ECOWAS the only intergovernmental economic body in West Africa, thus absorbing the CEAO and the Mano River Union. Merely fifteen months after these treaties had been signed, however, the rivalry between Anglo- and Francophone ventures returned to the forefront of West African politics when the Francophone states used the occasion of the bankruptcy of CEAO to establish yet another organisation, the *Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine* (UEMOA) in order to paralyse ECOWAS. According to Adedeji,

So successfully has UEMOA check-mated and undermined ECOWAS that all that the latter now spends a great deal of its time doing is to harmonise its programmes with those of the former, hold joint ministerial meetings, seek the convergence of the economic and financial policies and the harmonisation of the legal framework, accounting procedure and statistics of both ECOWAS and UEMOA. In any case, such convergence will for long remain a pipedream since UEMOA countries constitute a majority of ECOWAS member countries and as such can play both judge and jury. In spite of the apparent unity that exists, ECOWAS is a house divided against itself.<sup>39</sup>

While this instance of institutional rivalry may seem particularly severe, it certainly is not the only case of such consequential competition in Africa today.<sup>40</sup> In Central Africa, for example, a similar quarrel between the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the *Communauté Économique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale* (CEMAC) continues to complicate the region's process of integration. To a lesser extent, competition also still takes place between the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the re-born East African Community (EAC) as well as amongst several of the other 130 remaining regional groupings established to promote cooperation and unity. The year-long parallel existence of the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA) with all its friction and duplication of effort, moreover, clearly showed that the continental level is equally prone to the troubles described in this section.<sup>41</sup> With this having been meant as an introduction to the web of competition and rivalry in Africa's organisational and institutional landscape, the following section attempts to distil the commonalities of nearly four decades of competing sub-systems into a theoretical framework. This framework will then underlie the discussion of the prospects of today's regional and continental security initiatives in Africa in the third section of this article.

## THE ROOT CAUSES OF INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COMPETITION IN AFRICA

First of all, it is important to understand that the mixture of competing regionalisms and resulting inter-institutional rivalry described above is not restricted to Africa. Europe, for instance, has had its own share of this phenomenon.<sup>42</sup> Divided into unionists and statistes (akin to the division between the Monrovia and Casablanca groups), social integrationists and liberal expansionists as well as several other tiers of enthusiasts and sceptics, the members of the European Union have long had to deal with contending regional agendas. As recently as 2003, the fierce debate between *old* and *new* Europe over the war in Iraq showed that the divisions of Europe, created by the big powers after 1945, are still not overcome. Nonetheless, Europe's multiplicity of regional and institutional rivalries is contained within a stable democratic framework and channelled through an elaborative organisational construct such as the Committee of the Regions, which gives hundreds of regional organisations a voice in the running of the EU. Africa, on the contrary, is still lacking such a framework and organisational construct. Regional rivalries are thus more likely to be pronounced and have serious political and economic repercussions. It is for this difference in possible impact that a discussion of



potential root causes is so essential to a meaningful assessment of the challenges to and chances of its emerging security architecture.

If what the previous section has argued is an accurate representation of the history of inter-institutional competition up to the creation of the AU, the basic factors responsible for the emergence of conflict, rifts, and cleavages are not specific to one span of time, but common to the nature of regional cooperation in Africa. In fact, as the considerable body of literature on today's regional groupings shows, such groups are beset by problems similar to those encountered by the various organisations covered in this article thus far, namely intra-institutional rivalries and inter-institutional competition. It seems that the root causes to these problems as well as the key to the overarching issue of competing regionalisms can be found in five mutually reinforcing determinants of regional cooperation in Africa: (1) the politico-ideological rifts permeating the continent; (2) the prevalence of external dependence and influence; (3) the lure of nationalism; (4) institutional weakness resulting from the absence of political will and regional identities; and (5) personal power policies.

### Politico-ideological rifts

Naturally among the prime reasons complicating effective regional cooperation in Africa are the deep divisions that permeate the continent. These divisions can be grouped into (1) traditional divisions preceding the colonial conquest such as historical allegiance and culture; (2) divisions arising from different colonial heritages like language, mode of administration, or level of external support; and (3) divisions resulting from Cold War ideology and politics. Decisions to engage in regional cooperation (and competition) are often made on the basis of these divisions, as the creation of southern African organisations like the Front Line States (FLS) as regional bulwarks against apartheid South Africa attest to. Correspondingly, decisions to disengage from regional cooperation are frequently based on the feeling that politico-ideological rifts between the parties have increased either because previously existing splits have resurfaced or new divisions have appeared. Here the obvious example is the failure of the first version of the East African Community (EAC) in 1977, which is commonly ascribed to the fact that Tanzania opted for a socialist ideology while Kenya decided to follow the capitalist pattern.

### The prevalence of external dependence and influence

One look at the past four decades suffices to see that political decolonisation and formal independence in Africa have not meant the end to external forces shaping the continent's affairs. Instead, as the Nigerian writer Chinweizu has so rightly pointed out, they have only meant a change in the guise of these forces as former colonial powers for a number of reasons, ranging from the wish to preserve a high international profile and secure access to strategic resources to the desired continuation of the highly favourable economic relationships, decided to remain deeply engaged in Africa's affairs.<sup>43</sup> Foremost among these neo-colonialists was Gaullist France, which by the early 1960s had perfected a system of organised exertion of influence over its former African colonies. Through this so-called *coopération* France was able to continue playing a leading role in large parts of the African continent which it had long ago come to regard as its "private backyard" (*arrière-cours*) and "exclusive hunting ground" (*chasse-*



*gardée*).<sup>44</sup> Paris' ability to influence its former West African empire thereby rested on three steadfast pillars, namely (1) its monetary control over the emerging economies via its leadership role in the Franc Zone; (2) its financial leverage through the selective and conditional provision of development aid; and (3) its military power stationed inside and outside the region.<sup>45</sup>

Given such powerful means of leverage, and France's proven willingness to use them, it is hardly surprising that a "special relationship" developed between Paris and its former colonies. Up to the present day, this relationship is fostered through close personal contacts between the elites (current French president Jacques Chirac, for example, is the godfather to a daughter of former Senegalese president Abdou Diouf) and ensures that many African states continue to accommodate French demands.<sup>46</sup> Naturally, this has also had an effect on the strategic choices African countries have made regarding regional cooperation. While the aforementioned "Trojan horses" are the most obvious examples of French intrusion in that respect, many other cases of direct interference speak to the extent to which the prevalence of external dependence and influence have hampered effective regional cooperation in West Africa.

Although France is surely the most extreme case, other non-African countries have also greatly influenced the continent's cooperative and institutional affairs, most notably former colonial powers Britain and Portugal as well as the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. The latter and the concomitant break-up of large parts of the continent into spheres of superpower influence were often as obstructive to the consolidation of regional cooperation in the East of Africa (especially the greater Horn of Africa) as France's *la coopération* had been in the West. Combined with the occasional meddling of the EU and other international bodies, it thus seems safe to say that Africa's various processes of regionalisation and the resultant regionalisms were characterised by considerable external interference which was shaped by the colonial experience, but reinforced during the post-colonial period.<sup>47</sup>

## Nationalism

As argued at the beginning of this article, the idea of regional cooperation on a continental or sub-regional scale easily took root in the fertile soil of pan-Africanism and soon became a notable feature of inter-African relations. Confronted with the overwhelming power of their colonial masters, many African nationalists drew great comfort from it and used it to establish contact with each other and gain mutual political and economic support. The majority of African states thus became independent in an era of regionalist euphoria. However, once independence was achieved, the meaning and objectives of pan-Africanism were generally domesticated as national integration and development took precedence over the concern for inter-African cooperation. Understandably, the newly-independent leaders quickly became preoccupied with more immediate problems such as the unification of ethnic and religious groups, the consolidation of their own parties and power over the masses, the fight against poverty and disease as well as the defence of their nations against internal *coups d'état*.<sup>48</sup>

The promotion of nationalism, according to Jeffrey Herbst, presented one particularly attractive option for solving these problems. It not only offered an enormous potential for the development of political bonds of loyalty, but also another way for the state to extend and consolidate its power over distance, not, as with for example taxes, through the agencies of

coercion but through the norm of legitimacy.<sup>49</sup> The success of this option, however, was naturally based on the leader's ability to instil and foster a feeling among the populace that the nation and the state were somehow bound together and rightly so. While the iconic symbols of nationalism such as a common flag and anthem were seen as necessary to the formation of such a national identity, the frequent attempts at the creation of supranational entities and even regional or continental political unions were considered by many African leaders a grave danger to their domestic nation-building efforts.<sup>50</sup> Their resultant reluctance to engage in ever deeper cooperation and integration must therefore be seen not as a decision against the principle of inter-African cooperation per se, but as a result of clear political prioritisation: consolidation of the state before consolidation of the region or continent. This top-down prioritising was compounded by the general sentiment among many Africans that they had fought too hard and too long for independence and national sovereignty to give these up again at the first sight of a cooperative opportunity, especially when the regional organisations originally established as the logical institutional response to the inadequacies of colonial rule were seemingly not up to the high expectations put into them.

While this prioritising and the popular support for it may partly explain why so many of Africa's early attempts at supranational arrangements such as the Mali Federation, the East African Federation, the aborted Ghana-Guinea-Mali Union or "Senegambia" either did not get off the ground or rather quickly crashed, it is for an assessment of the later attempts at inter-African cooperation that the lenses of nationalism are most instructive.<sup>51</sup> One reason why regional organisations were often not able to deliver tangible national benefits to African states was due to a decreasing willingness on part of these states to subordinate national to regional interests. While it seems perfectly normal that regional and national interests do not always coincide and that states only enter into economic or defence agreements when these often integrative objectives are not in conflict with considerations of national security, prestige, or economic advantage, African states displayed particularly little willingness to sacrifice perceived national interests on the regional altar. One reason for this was that the bitter fruits of nationalism had slowly led to defensive state positionalism, an over-sensitivity concerning national sovereignty as well as the constant fear of falling victim to a maldistribution of costs and benefits.<sup>52</sup> All of the latter have quite naturally generated severe restraints on effective inter-African cooperation and thus impaired the working of Africa's many supranational institutions and integrationist ventures.

### Institutional weakness

Another factor hampering such institutions is their inherent weakness. Foremost among the reasons for this weakness are: (1) the member states' frequent lack of political will; (2) the intergovernmental structure of most institutions; (3) the absence of regional identities; and (4) the low level of development among the African states.

The absence of political will, and even more importantly, united political will, is directly related to the aforementioned tendency of many states to prioritise nationalism over regionalism in order to prevent their populaces' fragmentation along ethnic or other lines. These states believed that they had more to lose than to gain from increasing integration and

consequently did not put in any more effort than was absolutely necessary in order to maintain influence and credibility on the African stage. Although the influence of Pan-Africanist sentiment is such that no African leader wants to leave him- or herself open to the charge of balkanisation, supranational regionalism has thus been supported only insofar as it posed no threat to the existing state system.<sup>53</sup>

The detrimental effect of this lack of political will was further compounded by the intergovernmental structure of most institutions. Contrary to the European model which provided from the outset for the creation of institutions capable of representing the community as a whole (mostly through specific institutional formulas that guaranteed the existence of guardians of the common interest such as the Commission of the European Communities or decision-making by qualified majority vote within the Council of Ministers, as opposed to rule by consensus), African institutions are characterised by the way in which national interests hold sway over all decision-making bodies. Most obvious is the pre-eminence of the authority of Heads of State and Government in decision-making, the national representation in the councils and the technical committees, and also the limited resources and responsibilities of the various secretariats. The intergovernmental approach, and with it the inevitable clash between national and regional interests, seems to permeate Africa's entire institutional landscape.

The third reason for the weakness of Africa's institutions is the notable absence of regional identities on the African continent. The building of an effective community requires the sense of solidarity and trust among the people concerned.<sup>54</sup> Given the strong nationalist tendencies of the continent's states, however, regional identities including a sense of belonging are still cruelly lacking. This absence of regional identities has been accentuated by the heterogeneity existing between the different members of the various sub-regional organisations, by the effect of overlapping and exclusionary memberships in other competing groups, and by the large number of actors in most regional organisations.

Lastly, any attempt at institution-building is inevitably complicated by the low level of economic and political development within many African states. Given the desolate state of Africa's public finances and governmental structures, its organisational deficits and inexperienced leaders as well as wide-spread corruption and clientelism, it is hardly surprising that its institutions did not develop as clearly, strongly or professionally as they did elsewhere.<sup>55</sup>

### Personal power policies

This low level of development is also at the root of another problem for effective regional cooperation, namely, the fact that regionalism in Africa is driven largely by personalised governments, and is often held hostage to the political will of African leaders. The continent's low level of economic development and a lack of societal pluralism have abetted the personalisation of power to an extent hardly seen anywhere else in the world. Since the early 1970s most African states have, at one time or another, been dominated by so-called "Big Men" like Zaire's Mobutu Sésé Seko, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Idi Amin of Uganda, Liberia's Charles Taylor or Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya who have built their power on the politics of patronage and kleptocratic self-aggrandisement. As former UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali liked to point out, this syndrome of an "Africa of Heads of States" has found its

institutionalisation in the telling difference between the opening sentences of the UN and OAU Charters. While the former begins with “We, the Peoples of the United Nations” the latter starts with “We the Heads of African and Malagasy States and Governments.”

The centralisation of power in a few individuals has hampered effective regional cooperation in at least two ways. First, having tasted and grown accustomed to the sweet benefits of power, Africa’s autocratic leaders have only seldomly relinquished any of their direct power to supranational organisations and even when they have done so it is seemingly only to hijack these organisations as vehicles for their personal ambitions. Consequently, Africa is littered with the carcasses of planned unions and organisations most of which failed, because the hopeful architects could not offer leaders significant enough incentives to abdicate even small bits of power. As Sylvanus Olympio, Togo’s first leader, noted in a moment of bitter insight, “political unification is only desired by those political leaders who believe they could come out on top in such unions.”<sup>56</sup>

Second, the personal character of and emotional decision-making in regional negotiations inevitably resulting from the omnipresence of the Big Men have removed political bargaining from the realms of rationality and both national as well as regional needs. Instead, personal enmities, for example between Idi Amin and Julius Nyerere or Yoweri Museveni and Laurent Kabila, have repeatedly paralysed regional organisations. Any positive decisions regarding regional cooperation are more likely to reflect the amalgamated personal opinions or friendship of a few leaders than popularly established and supported national choices.<sup>57</sup>

The personalisation of power, however, is not only at the root of many of the difficulties faced by regional cooperation in Africa, but together with the points made thus far can also serve as an explanation for the proliferation of organisations and their proneness to competition. Given the aforementioned amount of external interference, it is hardly surprising that African strongmen soon became divided horizontally into pro-East and pro-West blocs and vertically into revolutionaries, progressives, reactionaries, capitalists, socialists, traditionalists, and middle-of-the-roaders.<sup>58</sup> Mindful of the indisputable benefits of cooperation, these leaders soon looked for like-minded allies as they scrambled for influence in their respective regions, the inevitable result being the establishment of as many organisations as there were competing ideologies and polarisations. In this respect, it is important to understand that the phenomenon of competing regionalisms is not necessarily constrained to inter-regional competition, but equally often arises from differing conceptions of cooperation or politics within the same region, the best example again being the inter-institutional competition in West Africa.

On the basis of the above five root causes of inter-institutional competition, one could pursue two lines of thought: rejecting the whole idea of effective regional cooperation as irrelevant to the African continent or trying to identify whether the last few years have seen changes to the above parameters which may allow Africa’s regional and continental organisations to move forward with increasing cooperation and integration. The penultimate part of this paper will pursue the second line of thought and assess the recent efforts of the African Union to integrate the continent’s various regional security initiatives into a common framework.

## REGIONALISM AND AFRICA'S CURRENT SECURITY INITIATIVES

It is impossible to miss that Africa's regional organisations have made substantial strides over the past decade in assuming primary responsibility for promoting peace and security.<sup>59</sup> Acting on the rationale that the increasingly regional nature of conflict in Africa necessitates an increasingly regional response, many of the continent's regional organisations have added security and conflict management initiatives to their original (mostly economic) purpose. The best-known and probably best-developed are those of ECOWAS and SADC, but IGAD, ECCAS, the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), COMESA, the Arab-Maghreb Union (AMU), and the East African Community (EAC) have also begun to establish peace and security structures. Given the history of competing regionalisms discussed in the first section of this paper as well as the subsequent elaboration on their root causes, the question arises whether, and if so how, today's Africa can overcome the problems associated with this proliferation of initiatives and the resultant competition for foreign support, political influence, and institutional relevance. Is there any chance that the African Union can coordinate and harmonise the various regional undertakings in such a way that they will serve as building rather than stumbling blocs to continent-wide cooperation and integration? The following section will argue that the African continent is on the best way to overcoming the underlying dynamic of competing regionalisms by having formulated a common purpose, having accepted the leadership role of the AU as a credible clearinghouse and framework for all initiatives, and most importantly, having realised that cooperation offers tangible benefits to all participating actors.

### The renaissance of Pan-Africanism and a changing conception of security

Among the most significant reasons for this optimism regarding inter-African security cooperation is a twofold change in the continental self-conception. First, following what Uganda's President Museveni had called a "decade of awakening" in the face of an increasingly-felt impact of globalisation on Africa's desolate economies, waning superpower interest, and the prevalence of horrific humanitarian catastrophes on the continent, Africa has recently been experiencing a new wave of Pan-Africanism.<sup>60</sup> Beginning with the 1991 landmark all-African conference on "Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation" in Kampala, the continent has appeared increasingly willing to overcome many of the aforementioned hindrances to effective regional and continental cooperation. This new-found willingness had sprung from the realisation that if Africa wanted to break the cycle of violence, poverty, and underdevelopment that has caused so much suffering and kept it persistently at the bottom of all international indicators, it finally had to take charge of its own destiny.

Second, the resultant wave of Pan-Africanism differed markedly from the preceding ones. Previous attempts at continental cooperation were dominated by the Westphalian notion of sovereignty so entrenched in the OAU's Charter since Africa's Heads of State had pledged non-interference in each other's internal affairs at the organisation's founding conference in 1963. The current wave, however, has been pitting the values of unity and solidarity against those of democracy, accountability, democratic governance, and transparent politics all of which are considered vital correlates to continental security.<sup>61</sup> As a result, Africa now seems ready to make



some qualifications to the principle of the sovereign rights of nations. This readiness culminated in the formulation of the AU's Constitutive Act, which by defining sovereignty in the conditional terms of a state's capacity and willingness to protect its citizens had shifted the focus from regime security to human security and which even goes so far as to recognise the AU's right to militarily intervene in its member states' affairs.<sup>62</sup> Together with the aforementioned heightened political will to act and further institutional innovations such as the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), this changed conception of sovereignty and security has led many to agree with South Africa's Thabo Mbeki on the coming of an "African Renaissance." Although the latter still has to prove its worth, the first signs are encouraging.

Most relevantly, the past few years have seen important changes to the five inhibiting factors identified in the previous section. Regarding the divisions permeating the continent, for example, it must be noted that (besides the obvious end to the divisive powers of apartheid) the increasing sense of urgency arising from the developmental failures and humanitarian catastrophes of the recent past seems to have had a muting effect on many of the traditional intra-regional rivalries such as the long-running Anglo-French stand-off in West Africa. This sense of urgency is also increasingly felt by outside actors and has led to a more constructive approach by many donor countries and international institutions such as the European Union or the G8. The aforementioned wave of Pan-Africanism and its idealistic undercurrent compound this new spirit and have led to the emergence of a new generation of politically responsible leaders who are one by one replacing the venal despots and Big Men of the continent. As a result, more than two-thirds of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa have had multi-party elections in the past five years – some admittedly freer and fairer than others – and there have been a number of peaceful democratic changes of government. All these developments have substantially increased the chances for effective inter-African cooperation.

The African Union, the regional organisations and an emergent division of labour

The ambitious dream of a continental security architecture is taking shape at a remarkable pace. Ever since the Kampala conference, the world has seen Africans not only develop a genuine desire to take on greater responsibility for their continent's troubles, but also foster the institutional clout to match this desire. Building on the OAU's Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution as well as on the continental integration agenda enshrined in the 1991 Abuja Treaty, the African Union has created an impressively dynamic peace and security architecture. Today, this architecture rests on a Common African Defence and Security Policy (CADSP) adopted in 2004 and is coordinated by the AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC). The latter is supported by the Commission of the AU modelled after the European archetype, a Panel of the Wise, a Continental Early Warning System, the Military Staff Committee, a Special Fund, and the emerging African Standby Force.<sup>63</sup>

One truly new development that clearly distinguishes the AU's architecture from that of its feeble predecessor is the intensive cooperation between the African Union and regional organisations. Whereas the OAU's security efforts were plagued by its often uneasy coexistence with the continent's various Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the AU does not see the RECs as competitors in a zero-sum game, but as essential building blocks and implementation



agencies for its many programs.<sup>64</sup> By basing its security architecture on regional pillars and incorporating existing initiatives into its continental policy, the AU does not only profit from the regions' comparative advantage in military and security matters, their experience with peace operations and – in the case of western, eastern and southern Africa – their established frameworks and mechanisms for conflict prevention, management, and resolution, but also grants them a significant stake and a central role in all processes.<sup>65</sup> Under this approach, the primary responsibility for peace and security remains squarely with the RECs, while the AU serves as authoritative clearinghouse and framework for all initiatives. In this way, the AU conceptually fills the institutional gap between the UN with its higher moral authority for ensuring international peace and security on the one hand, and the regional organisations with their perceived greater political will and executive power on the other hand.

The experiences of the last five years have already revealed a functioning division of labour between the regional organisations and the AU that roughly corresponds to this pyramidal conflict management structure based on the RECs' regional specificity, the AU's continental comprehensiveness, and the UN's global capacities.<sup>66</sup> In a way it was the latter's overstretch following the proliferation of devastating internal conflicts that had led to the idea of a layered approach whereby the initial response to a crisis would come from local and national organisations, followed by responses at the regional and continental levels, and finally by those of the UN and the broader international community. It was thought that this would lessen the burden at the UN level and enable more rapid and appropriate responses at much lower levels of the international security framework. As a consequence, regional organisations such as ECOWAS, IGAD, and SADC became deeply involved in dealing with Africa's conflicts reaching from IGAD's successful mediation efforts in Sudan and Somalia to the ECOWAS interventions in Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. Occasionally, the AU has, with the active support of the RECs, also conducted its own peace operations such as the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB) and the still ongoing African Mission in Sudan (AMIS).

Despite the obvious functionality and success of this relationship between the AU and regional and sub-regional conflict management actors, the AU has learned from the mistakes of its institutional predecessor and recognised the dangers that can arise from an unchecked proliferation of organisations and initiatives. Consequently, the AU's decision to limit its official collaboration to seven RECs (ECOWAS, SADC, IGAD, AMU, ECCAS, COMESA, and EAC) and to dedicate last year's summit in Banjul mainly to the rationalisation of RECs must also be seen in light of the continental organisation's desire to lessen the likelihood of competing rather than complementary security efforts. This desire for rationalisation, harmonisation, and integration is enshrined in every major AU document, be it the Constitutive Act, the Protocol on the Establishment of the PSC, or the Draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the African Union and the RECs. The appointment of an AU delegate to interface with the RECs, the establishment of an AU liaison office at the headquarters of ECOWAS in Abuja as well as the institutionalisation of regular meetings and exchange of notes between the AU and the RECs are only some of the steps that have been taken to ensure the various organisations' effective partnership.<sup>67</sup> Another such step, namely the creation of regionally-based multinational brigades as building blocs for the envisioned African Standby Force deserves

closer attention.

### The African Standby Force as an example of the AU's continental integration effort

In line with President Mbeki's call for "Africans to do everything [they] can to rely on their own capacities to secure their continent's renaissance," African leaders have placed the establishment of an African Stand-by Force at the heart of the AU's peace and security agenda.<sup>68</sup> According to the *Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council*, adopted in July 2002, the ASF is to enable the PSC to fulfil its objective of promoting peace, security, and stability in Africa.<sup>69</sup> The conceptual ASF will consist of five regionally based brigades of about 3,000-5,000 troops providing the AU with a combined standby capacity of about 15,000-25,000 troops trained in peace operations, ranging from low intensity observer missions to full-blown military interventions. As currently foreseen, the ASF will be operationalised in two incremental phases, both of which are to be completed by 2010. So far, the progress has been encouraging. For example, AU officials have recently announced that all Planning Elements (PLANELM) have been established, that the RECs' ASF harmonisation and coordination workshops have yielded tangible and very promising results. Both the SADC Standby Brigade and the East African Standby Brigade (EASBRIG) have already completed the first phase of their operationalisation.<sup>70</sup>

Besides its obvious benefit of strengthening African capacity for regional peace operations in the long-run, the creation of the ASF also aids the consolidation of inter-African security cooperation in two important ways. First, it epitomises a much needed common objective which may finally channel the multiplicity of resources, initiatives, and ambitions devoted to African capacity-building into one direction, or as Cedric de Coning put it:

The development of an African standby system is a significant achievement because it provides Africa with a common policy framework for [...] capacity building. This means that the various [...] capacity building initiatives underway, and any new programmes, can be directed to support this common objective, regardless of whether such initiatives are taking place at the regional, sub-regional or national level.<sup>71</sup>

Second, the regional character of the ASF ensures that the RECs feel ownership in the process of establishing a continental security architecture, but at the same time continue to strengthen their institutional links with the AU. The ASF allows the latter to incorporate the RECs into a common framework under its coordination without infringing on their regional authority or responsibilities. This mutually beneficial symbiosis not only reduces the risk of competition between the continental and regional levels of inter-African cooperation, but also increases the stakes all actors have in the process and thereby reduces the chances of failure.

### THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

Despite the above reasons for optimism, several specific challenges and obstacles to effective inter-African security cooperation can be identified. These fall broadly into four inter-related categories: (1) the continuing existence of a "cacophony" of regional groupings and the resultant problems of coordination and competition; (2) the overlapping memberships within these groupings; (3) the internal problems of the AU impacting on continental cooperation such

as possible implementation crises and the issue of funding; and (4) the problems arising from regionalism as formalism, regionalism without common values, and asymmetrical regionalisation. Overcoming these challenges will be the key to a successful African security regime and a huge step towards ending the continent's history of competing regionalisms.

#### Bloated institutional landscapes, continuing competition, and duplication of effort

Despite the AU's aforementioned rationalisation efforts, the African continent is still overcrowded with organisations and initiatives which share the same purpose but operate independently of each other. Encouraged by the post-Cold War policy preferences of Western powers – most notably the US, Britain and, to some extent, France – for “African solutions to African problems,” a multiplicity of these players have also established peace and security structures.<sup>72</sup> The absence of clear lines of communications or a hierarchical structure amongst the latter not only complicates the increasing willingness of sub-regional, regional, and continental organisations to take a more proactive role in protecting human security, but also breeds the danger of confusion, duplication of effort, and a dissipation of energies and resources.

Consequently, it is essential that the AU continues to strengthen its role as authoritative clearinghouse for all cooperative initiatives and clarifies its relations with these initiatives in order to avoid the impression that the various levels of cooperation (sub-regional, regional, and continental) are competing for pre-eminence in promoting peace and stability in Africa. For if such perceptions of inter-organisational competition were to arise it might not only undermine all initiatives, but could also lead to a division of Africa's institutional landscape into separate regional blocs as seen in the 1960s.

There are currently at least 42 organisations and institutions on the continent that would need to be integrated into the AU's structure. This task is compounded by the fact that despite the similarities, there exist distinct differences in institutional structures, financial patrons as well as ideologies and strategies between these organisations and the AU from which only the former benefit.<sup>73</sup> Fearing a substantial reduction in independence and direct support, these organisations have proven difficult to integrate into the continental framework. While events like the merger of the Accord on Non-Aggression and Defence (ANAD) with ECOWAS raise the hopes for a lasting harmonisation of Africa's many confusing and duplicating mechanisms, there thus remains much need for further rationalisation and integration of the continent's plethora of peace and security initiatives.

#### Overlapping memberships

The institutional chaos is further complicated by the fact that many African states simultaneously belong to more than one intergovernmental body that aspires to a role in security maintenance and conflict management. While this problem of overlapping memberships is, of course, not unique to Africa, its extent and effects may prove particularly detrimental to the continent's infant security architecture.<sup>74</sup>

Of the 53 African countries, 26 are members of two regional organisations, and 19 are members of three. Two countries (DRC and Swaziland) even belong to four. Only 6 countries

maintain membership in just one regional community.<sup>75</sup> Even though the AU has limited its official collaboration to five RECs, there are at least 14 economic communities within the geographical space of Africa which have established some sort of peace and security mechanism. In West Africa, ECOWAS cohabits with UEMOA, MRU, and the Community of Sahel and Saharan States (CENSAD). In Central Africa, ECCAS covers the CEMAC and Economic Community of Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL) spaces. In Southern Africa, SADC, the South African Customs Union (SACU), and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) share the essential part of their integration spaces among themselves and with COMESA which, in turn, extends over the whole of Eastern Africa, some states of Northern Africa, and Central Africa.<sup>76</sup>

This overlap among Africa's organisations not only leads to wasteful duplications of effort and counterproductive competition among countries and institutions, but also tends to dissipate collective efforts towards the common goals of the African Union and muddy the goal of integration. It also adds to the burdens of member states as a country belonging to two or more organisations not only faces multiple financial obligations, but must cope with different meetings, policy decisions, instruments, procedures, and schedules.<sup>77</sup>

Given these negative aspects, the AU must strengthen its efforts to disentangle Africa's confusing web of institutional overlaps.<sup>78</sup> However, this may not prove easy as countries often benefit politically from multiple memberships which are seen to justify the extra expenses by increasing a country's regional influence and donor attractiveness. Nonetheless, the AU should, at the very least, clarify the many procedural questions arising from the resultant overlaps. For example, there needs to be a better understanding of priorities and procedures when troops, pre-identified for use by both a sub-regional and regional body, are simultaneously needed in two places at once. Without a well-defined understanding of which organization or crisis area has primacy in these situations, problems with force projection and force generation will continue to be a major hurdle.<sup>79</sup>

### Challenges facing the African Union

As argued earlier in this paper, the functionality of Africa's emerging peace and security architecture is heavily dependent on an efficient and credible African Union as an embodiment of a renewed Pan-Africanism and a catalyst for continental integration. However, as an organisation with a huge and diverse membership representing a poor and conflict-ridden continent, the AU is bound to face a number of challenges to its unifying efforts such as managing the impending "implementation crisis" from within or fulfilling the world's high expectations despite its meagre funding.

The legacy of the OAU is one of repeated implementation crises, in which the high-reaching goals of the organisation's initiatives regularly failed to attain sufficient commitment from the continent's leaders and the international community. Many fear that a similar fate may await the AU's current security initiatives, a concern based significantly on recent events such as the financial bankruptcy and operational failures of AMIS, the recurrence of conflict in Somalia, the organisation's lenient attitude towards Mugabe's regime as well as the near success of Sudan's dictator Omar Bashir in his quest for the AU's leadership, all of which were widely seen as signs of the AU's dysfunction. With these failures adding up to the trenchant memories

of past misdeeds and antagonistic interactions, it is hardly surprising that the level of trust African countries currently put in the AU is insufficient for building a durable and truly collaborative security architecture.

The effect of this lack of trust is compounded by the AU's inability to restore confidence in its leadership role through financial means. Despite the fact that almost half of the AU's 2005 budget was spent on peace and security initiatives (\$62 million out of a total of \$158 million), member states felt very little direct impact.<sup>80</sup> Instead, there is a growing feeling among regional lead states that the meagre benefits of membership do not justify an increasing submission to the AU's authority in the delicate field of security. While the calls for the AU to finally earn the right to be the senior authoritative structure on the continent are thus growing louder, the AU is simply lacking the resources to fulfil this demand. Despite substantial outside support through, for example, the EU's African Peace Facility (worth €250 million) or the G8's Africa Action Plan, the AU is suffering from an enormous resource and capacity constraint which has impacted and will continue to impact on the extent to which the organisation is able to commit meaningfully to continental security through both the support of regional and sub-regional efforts as well as its own initiatives. Without increasing commitment by its member states and the international community, the African Union's peace and security architecture may thus soon meet the same fate as the organisation's erstwhile flagship operation in Darfur.

#### Regionalism without common values / as formalism and asymmetrical regionalisation

While the challenges to continental cooperation arising from Africa's institutional chaos and overlap as well as the AU's fading authority and financial resources are relatively straightforward, the difficulties arising from regionalism without common values, regionalism as formalism, and asymmetrical regionalisation are less well known though equally serious.

The challenge of regionalism without common values is based on the trend among many African states to forge regional ties without any serious attempts to create building blocs for a shared regional or sub-regional identity. Instead, it has become increasingly clear that only in very few cases are a state's development at a regional level, and the ideas it espouses at that level, shared by all the countries in its respective region or sub-region. In essence, what this means is that most regions and sub-regions will have a rather skewed way of evolving their common security architecture because the individual states do not share common values or an overarching identity, which, quite obviously, would make it easier to engage in meaningful cooperation. Senzo Ngubane and Hussein Solomon have listed several examples of such regionalisms without common values reaching from the SADC region where it would appear that individual member countries are pulling in different directions (absolute monarchy in Swaziland or dictatorship in Zimbabwe on the one side, movements of democratisation in other countries on the other side) to the situation in West Africa where rogue states exist side by side with functioning democracies.<sup>81</sup>

Regionalism as formalism denotes the related problem that Africa seems to have slithered into, a situation whereby the process of regional development is measured by the number of institutions created and protocols passed without necessarily paying any particular attention to the political will or capacity that exists to make sure that these institutions function or that the



protocols are implemented.<sup>82</sup> This dichotomy between appearance and capacity has already undercut many a cooperative venture and will continue to do so until the AU's ongoing rationalisation effort and the concomitant separation of the continent's organisations into viable partners and mere Potemkin villages finally bears fruit.

Another challenge to forging a Pan-African security architecture arises from the continent's asymmetrical regionalisations, that is, the uneven development of regional and sub-regional organisations and initiatives due to their differing colonial heritages, political and security agendas, incompatible visions, uneven political and economic development of member states, and widely varying levels of outside support. While there is hardly anyone to blame for these differences, they inevitably hamper the AU's integrationist efforts and undermine the consensus required to pursue a collective security mandate and execute effective responses to conflict through regional and continental initiatives.<sup>83</sup> The resultant tensions are potentially further aggravated by donor-driven peace and security capacity-building initiatives, which are not always well coordinated and tend to favour some regions and member states over others. Consequently, one of the priorities for African regionalism must be to create a synergy between the existing institutions, enabling them to complement and support one another.

These are just some of the thorny issues that Africa will have to face on its way to overcoming its history of inter-institutional competition and finally unite all actors in a common continental framework to their mutual benefit. There are countless other difficulties such as the inherent weakness of many African states, the still insufficient involvement of civil society, and the prevalence of divisive conflict and rivalry on every corner of the continent. Nonetheless, a notable first step has been taken.

## Conclusion

This article's purpose was to shed some light on the concept of inter-institutional competition and its effect on Africa's emerging security architecture. It did so by first tracing its evolution through the four decades preceding the birth of the African Union and then distilling the commonalities into five root causes that so far have impeded effective sub-regional, regional, and continental security cooperation. It went on to assess the AU's efforts at establishing a continental peace and security architecture in light of these root causes and deduced that several changes that have taken place over the last decade have significantly increased the institutional prospects and chances of this new construct. Lastly, the paper presented some of the remaining challenges and suggested ways to overcome them. The article's conclusions are thereby consistent with the widely-applied theories of regional security complexes and security communities. While these theories deal with the formation of cooperative security ventures across the globe, this article expanded on one of the reasons why such ventures have only just begun to evolve effectively on the African continent.

Although the many tensions and rivalries that have characterised Africa's institutional landscape thus far have cast a penumbra of cynicism and doubt over the ability of the continent to deal with the numerous problems that persist for inter-African security cooperation, the last decade has seen several important developments. The parameters have clearly shifted in the direction of greater visibility and a heightened political will to act and the various organisations



have slowly forged ahead with the process of establishing a viable continental peace and security architecture. A new wave of Pan-Africanism promoting unity, solidarity, cohesion, and cooperation among the peoples of Africa and their states has swept across the continent and has helped the AU to create a “common vision of a united and strong Africa.”<sup>84</sup>

This vision has arisen out of the realisation that the continent cannot afford another half-century of constant strife and bloodshed and has provided many cooperative ventures with a new *raison d'être* based on what Garth Le Pere called “a different kind of Lockean social contract” in which African states secure their own interests by maximising the continent’s peace and security.<sup>85</sup> The AU has successfully facilitated this new will for cooperation by incorporating existing initiatives into a robust continental system and establishing itself as a more credible institutional clearinghouse than its predecessor organisation. Having taken charge of Africa’s institutional chaos, the AU has begun to accelerate the so desperately needed process of rationalising, harmonising, coordinating, and integrating Africa’s plethora of organisations and initiatives into one coherent approach.

Fortunately, Africa will pursue this process at a time when similar projects have already been undertaken in other regions of the world. The EU, OSCE, NATO as well as the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), for example, can provide some useful ideas for overcoming of institutional competition and the subsequent development of a comprehensive security framework in Africa. The answer to whether Africa will decide to learn from its history of inter-institutional competition, however, may still be some time away.

*“United we stand, divided we fall”*

(Kwame Nkrumah)

## Notes:

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20. OAU 1963. *Charter of the OAU*, Article II, 1a.
21. Woronoff, Jon 1975: 62-75.
22. Buzan, Barry and Waever, Ole, *Regions and Powers* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003).
23. Woronoff, Jon 1975: 63.
24. OAU 1963. *Charter of the OAU*, Article XX, 1-5.
25. OAU 1963. *Charter of the OAU*, Article II, 1b.
26. Assante, S., *Pan-Africanism and Regional Integration* in Mazrui, Ali (ed.), *General History of Africa – Africa since 1935*, Volume VIII (Heinemann, California, 1993), 728.
27. Gruhn, Isebill, *The ECA/OAU: Conflict and Collaboration* in Onwuka, R. and Sesay, A. (eds), *The Future of Regionalism in Africa* (Macmillan Press, Basingstoke, 1985), 27; See also Cervenka, Zdenek, *The Unfinished Quest for Unity: Africa and the OAU* (Africana Press, New York, 1977).
28. Woronoff, Jon 1975: 62.
29. For information on competition in other regions see, for example, Sidaway, James and Gibb, Richard, *SADC, COMESA, SACU: Contradictory Formats for Regional Integration in Southern Africa?* in Simon, David (ed.), *South Africa in Southern Africa: Reconfiguring the*

- Region* (James Currey, Oxford, 1998) or Takirambudde, Peter (1999), *The Rival Strategies of SADC & PTA/COMESA in Southern Africa* in Bach, Daniel (ed.), *Regionalisation in Africa – Integration & Disintegration* (James Currey, Oxford, 1999).
30. Asante, S., *ECOWAS/CEAO: Conflict and Cooperation in West Africa* in Onwuka, R. and Sesay, A. (eds.), *The Future of Regionalism in Africa* (Macmillan Press, Basingstoke, 1985), 74.
  31. Esedebe, Olisanwuche, *Pan-Africanism – The Idea and the Movement, 1776-1991*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Howard University Press, Washington DC, 1994), 217.
  32. One of the best sources for developments involving international cooperation among Francophone states is *Marchés Tropicaux*. See also Sophie Bessis, “CEAO: Ils Rechignent, mais Ils Payent”, *Jeune Afrique* No. 1086 (October 28, 1981), 36-37.
  33. Adedeji, Adebayo, *ECOWAS: A Retrospective Journey* in Adebajo, Adekeye and Rashid, Ismail (eds), *West Africa’s Security Challenges* (Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 2004), 40-1; Esedebe, Olisanwuche 1994: 220-221.
  34. Adedeji, Adebayo, 2004: 58-59.
  35. Adebajo, Adekeye, *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau* (Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 2004), 31.
  36. Hazlewood, Arthur, *The End of the East African Community: What are the lessons for regional integration schemes?* in Onwuka, R. and Sesay, A. (eds), *The Future of Regionalism in Africa* (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1985), 172-189.
  37. Adedeji, Adebayo, *Problems and Prospects of Regional Cooperation in West Africa* in African Association for Public Administration and Management, *Problems and Prospects of Regional Cooperation in Africa* (English Press, Nairobi, 1969), 67.
  38. OAU, *Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community*, Abuja, 3 June 1991, 52.
  39. Adedeji, Adebayo, *The role of the private sector in the economic integration of the West Africa Sub-region*, Keynote Address at the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture, 16 August 2000 as quoted in Adedeji, Adebayo, 2004: 45.
  40. See Assante, S., *The Travails of Integration* in Adebajo, Adekeye and Rashid, Ismail (eds), *West Africa’s Security Challenges – Building Peace in a Troubled Region* (Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 2004).
  41. See Vdombana, N., *A Harmony or a Cacophony? The Music of Integration in the African Union Treaty and the New Partnership for Africa’s Development*, *Indiana International and Comparative Law Review*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2002), 185-236.
  42. See, for example, Newhouse, John, *Europe’s Rising Regionalism*, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 1 (1997).
  43. Chinweizu, *Africa and the Capitalist Countries* in Mazrui, Ali (ed.), *The General History of Africa – Vol. VIII Africa since 1935* (James Currey, Oxford, 1999), 769.
  44. Renou, Xavier, *A New French Policy for Africa*, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (2002), 6.
  45. Composed of 13 former French colonies and Equatorial Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, the zone is a financial system established in 1947 in which a common currency, the Franc CFA (*Communauté Financière Africaine*) is tied to the French Franc and guaranteed by the

French treasury. This enabled France to control francophone countries' money supply, their monetary and financial regulations, their banking activities, their credit allocation and ultimately their budgetary and economic policies (see Renou, Xavier 2002: 11). Through the existence of French military bases in the region and the *Force d'Intervention* on standby in mainland France as well as the provision of military equipment and training assistance through various defence agreements, Paris maintained a strong military leverage over its former colonies. African leaders and governments were well aware of both France's ability and willingness to intervene on their behalf or possibly that of their opponents (there were at least 34 French military interventions in Africa during the period 1963-1997, the two most notable being "Operation Barracuda" which overthrew the self-declared Emperor Bokassa I from his Central African throne in 1979 and "Operation Manta" which involved the dispatching of over 3000 French troops to Chad to support the crumbling regime in its fight against Libyan-backed rebels). Naturally, this awareness helped to ensure compliance with France's occasional political demands.

46. Renou, Xavier 2002: 9.
47. Nkiwane, Tandeka, *Contested Regionalism: Southern and Central Africa in the post-Apartheid era*, African Journal of Political Science, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1999), 126.
48. Assante, S., 1993: 728.
49. Herbst, Jeffrey, *States and Power in Africa— Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2000), 126-7.
50. For instance, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Belewa, the first Nigerian prime minister said, during the 1959 debate over the motion to ask for independence, that "I am confident that when we have our citizenship, our own national flag, our own national anthem, we shall find the flame of national unity will burn bright and strong"; See Belewa, Alhaji Tafawa, *Mr. Prime Minister* (Nigerian National Press, Apapa, 1964), 37.
51. Welch, Claude, *Dream of Unity: Pan-Africanism and Political Unification in West Africa* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1966), 356.
52. Many of Africa's cooperative schemes almost inevitably had a differential impact on their members, which worked to the advantage of the largest, most developed and most centrally placed among them. The Central African Federation established under British colonial rule, for example, favoured Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) over the present Zambia and Malawi; See Hazlewood, A., *The Economics of Federation and Dissolution in Central Africa* in Hazlewood, Arthur, 1967. The East African Community favoured Kenya over Uganda and Tanzania.
53. Carter, G., *National Unity and Regionalism in Eight African States* (Cornell University Press, New York, 1966), 553.
54. See for example Adler, Emanuel and Barnett, Michael (eds), *Security Communities* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998) or Cronin, Bruce, *Community under Anarchy: Transnational Identity and the Evolution of Cooperation* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1999).
55. Buzan, Barry and Waever, Ole 2003: 222-223.

56. Olympio, Sylvanus, *Reflections on Togolese and African Problems* in Duffy, James and Manners, Robert (eds), *Africa Speaks* (D. Van Nostrand, Princeton, 1961), 75.
57. For example, since engineering the miraculous revival of the developmentalist state in Uganda in the early 1990s, President Yoweri Museveni had set his eyes on rejuvenating the defunct East African Community to serve “Uganda’s economic interests”. From all indications Museveni was well on his way to realising this dream, but ran into seemingly insurmountable obstacle in Congo’s Laurent Kabila who in 1998 took his country into the SADC regional trade bloc, a much stronger rival to the EAC. The effect of Kabila’s decision was to make Congo rather than Uganda “the object of South African capital” and, for that reason, Kabila had committed an “unforgivable sin” against Museveni. See Clark, John, *Explaining Ugandan Intervention in Congo: Evidence and Interpretations*, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 39, no. 2 (2001), 261-187.
58. Assante, S. 1993: 726.
59. Berman, Eric and Sams, Katie, *Peacekeeping in Africa: Capabilities and Culpabilities* (United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, Geneva, 2000), 380.
60. Museveni, Yoweri, *Address to the South African Parliament*, Cape Town, 27 May 1997.
61. Landsberg, Christopher, *The Fifth Wave of Pan-Africanism* in Adebajo, Adekeye and Rashid, Ismail (eds), *West Africa’s Security Challenges – Building Peace in a Troubled Region* (Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 2004), 117.
62. Powell, Kristiana, *The African Union’s emerging peace and security regime – opportunities and challenges for delivering on the responsibility to protect*, ISS Monograph Series, No. 119 (2005), 1.
63. African Union 2002. *Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union*. Addis Ababa, Article 2, Paragraph 2.
64. Article 16 of the PSC Protocol and the CADSP stress that the regional mechanisms will form the ‘building blocks’ of the AU’s peace and security architecture; Also see African Union 2001. *The Constitutive Act*. Addis Ababa, Article 3c, j and k; African Union 2003. *Amendment to the Constitutive Act*. Addis Ababa, Article 3p. For a detailed discussion of this multilayered approach to collective security see Franke, Benedikt, *Enabling a Continent to Help Itself: US Military Capacity Building and Africa’s Emerging Security Architecture*, *Strategic Insights*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2007).
65. See Franke, Benedikt, *In Defence of Regional Peace Operations in Africa*, *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, Article 185 (2006); Powell, Kristiana, 2005: 55.
66. For a discussion of pyramidal conflict management structures see Malan, Mark, *The OAU and African Sub-regional Organisations – A Closer Look at the Peace Pyramid*, Occasional Paper No. 36 (Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, 1999).
67. Olonisakin, Funmi, *African Peacekeeping at the Crossroads: An Assessment of the Continent’s Evolving Peace and Security Architecture* (United Nations Peacekeeping Best Practices, New York, 2004), 8.
68. Mbeki, Thabo as quoted in Neethling, Theo, *Realising the African Standby Force as a Pan-African Deal: Progress, Prospects and Challenges*, *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, Vol. 8, Issue 1 (2005), 10-11. For more information on the conceptual evolution of the ASF see Franke, Benedikt, *A Pan-African Army: The Evolution of an Idea and Its Eventual*



- Realisation in the African Standby Force*, African Security Review, Vol. 15, No. 4 (2006), 2-16.
69. African Union 2002. *Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union*. Addis Ababa, Article 3.
  70. See AU Technical Workshop Reports.
  71. De Coning, Cedric, *Towards a Common Southern African Peacekeeping System*, Electronic Briefing Paper No. 16 (Center for International Political Studies, University of Pretoria, 2004), 4.
  72. Berdal, Mats (1998), *Peacekeeping in Africa, 1990-1996: The Role of the United States, France and Britain* in Furley, Oliver and May, Roy (eds.), *Peacekeeping in Africa*, Ashgate Publishing, Aldershot, 50.
  73. For example, Francis Cupri only recently argued in the US Army War College Quarterly (Parameters) that the United States should support sub-regional organisations such as ECOWAS rather than the AU as they offer “a greater return on US investment”. See Cupri, Francis, *Why the United States Should Robustly Support Pan-African Organisations*, Parameters, Winter 2005, 106-23.
  74. Europe also has a highly complex regional security architecture that includes the UN, the EU and its various institutions, the 55-member Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the 26-member NATO and the 28-member West European Union (WEU). Contrary to Africa, these arrangements can draw on the support of wealthy industrialised states which adds to the viability of such arrangements, even though it may not relieve the confusion.
  75. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa* (UNECA, Addis Ababa, 2004), 39-40.
  76. African Union Commission/Economic Commission for Africa, *Report on Meeting of Experts on the Rationalisation of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs)*, EX.CC/220(VIII), 2005, 3.
  77. UNECA 2004: 41.
  78. For ongoing efforts to rationalise these overlaps see African Union 2006. *Report of the Consultative Meeting on the Rationalization of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) for Eastern and Southern Africa*. Addis Ababa, 5-6.
  79. Taft, Patricia with Ladnier, Jason, *Realising “Never Again” – Regional Capacities to Protect Civilians in Violent Conflicts* (The Fund for Peace, Washington DC, 2006), 6.
  80. See, for example, Aboagye, Festus, *The ECOWAS Security Regime and Its Utility for Africa* in Field, Shannon (ed.), *Peace in Africa – Towards a Collaborative Security Regime* (Institute for Global Dialogue, Johannesburg, 2004), 175.
  81. Ngubane, Senzo and Solomon, Hussein, *Projects gone too far: Sub-regional Security Efforts in Africa* (Centre for International Political Studies, Pretoria, 2001), 5.
  82. Ngubane and Solomon 2001: 6.
  83. Powell, Kristina 2005: 21.
  84. African Union 2002. *Constitutive Act*. Addis Ababa: 1.
  85. Le Pere, Garth, *Foreword* to Field, Shannon (ed.), *Peace in Africa – Towards a Collaborative Security Regime* (Institute for Global Dialogue, Johannesburg, 2004), 17.



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# Tradition and Educational Reconstruction in Africa in Postcolonial and Global Times: The Case for Sierra Leone

YATTA KANU

**Abstract:** Critique of colonial and postcolonial education in Africa as perpetuating cultural and intellectual servitude and devaluation of traditional African cultures has led some African intellectuals to call for a re-appropriation of pre-colonial forms of education to rediscover the roots of African identity. But precisely how can African traditional forms of education be re-appropriated for this purpose while at the same time responding to the requirements of living successfully in postcolonial and global times? The author of this article posits that re-appropriation of African traditions should not be an appeal to an allegedly "better" past to which we nostalgically return instead of responding to the world as it comes to us. Tradition, it is argued, exists only in constant alteration; tradition can be rethought, transmuted, and recreated in novel ways in response to the meanings and demands of emergent situations. Drawing on the Akan concept of *Sankofa* (meaning "return to the past to move forward") and the postcolonial notion of hybridity, the author creatively re-appropriates some indigenous educational traditions of her ethnic group, the Mende of Sierra Leone, to theorize curriculum and pedagogy for Sierra Leone in postcolonial, post-war, and global times.

## Introduction

Since the decade of independence in the 1960s, much has been written about how best to facilitate nation-building in Africa after European colonization. As education is generally regarded as the key to national development, proposals for nation building have included the reform of inherited educational systems which were erected to maintain the colonial social order and which continue to function to foster neo-colonial dependency, promote elitism, and inadequately prepare individuals for living successfully in their communities and in a rapidly changing world. Paramount among these reform proposals has been the call to re-appropriate African indigenous educational traditions that were marginalized or dismantled during colonial rule in Africa. Proponents of this call over the last forty years have included: Kofi Busia, who criticized colonial schooling in Ghana for separating students from the life and needs of their community; Ali Mazrui, who links contemporary education in Africa with a rural-urban divide; and more recently Ellen Tedla and Apollo Rhomire who describe both colonial and postcolonial education as perpetuating cultural and intellectual servitude and the devaluation of traditional African cultures.<sup>1</sup> But precisely how can African traditions be re-appropriated for education that is grounded in the continent's past while at the same time meeting the demands of living successfully in postcolonial and global contexts today?

**Yatta Kanu** is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada. Her recent scholarly work focuses on curriculum, culture and student learning, and education in postcolonial contexts.

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In this article I attempt to address this question in the case of Sierra Leone. I draw creatively on the Akan concept of *Sankofa* (meaning "return to the past to move forward") and examples from the Mende ethnic group to re-think and re-appropriate some traditional African educational values and social organizations that were neglected or dismantled during the height of British colonial administration in Sierra Leone. This period is generally understood as spanning the late nineteenth century until the late 1950s when, for reasons of military and economic exploitation, British imperial grip on her African colonies tightened and education (curriculum and pedagogy) assumed greater significance as an arsenal in this exploitation. Sierra Leone and the Mende are the very country and ethnic group that comprised the cornerstone of British educational experimentation in Africa.

Sierra Leone was founded as a settlement for freed slaves in 1787 after the demise of legal slave trading. It was taken over as a British crown colony in 1808 but British control did not extend into the hinterland of the country until the closing years of the nineteenth century when a Protectorate was declared in Sierra Leone in 1896. Thereafter formal education, which had been left largely to Christian mission societies, was taken over by the colonial civil government and used as a systematic and measurable tool for economic exploitation, reduction of local resistance to white rule, transformation of indigenous outlooks, and meeting the limited needs of the colonial civil service. Unlike French colonial education in West Africa, total assimilation of the African "natives" does not stand out in the historical literature as an active goal of British colonial education in West Africa.<sup>2</sup> However, British effort to transform native outlook through "the provision of gradual means of developing a higher form of civilization," meant that many indigenous forms of education in the West African colonies were dismantled or allowed to lapse through neglect and marginalization.<sup>3</sup> This was the case among the Mende who comprised the largest indigenous group in Sierra Leone. According to Caroline Bledsoe, the proximity of Mende speakers to the coast as well as their distance from the Islamic influences of the North made them logical targets of educational and missioning efforts.<sup>4</sup> Bledsoe writes that these efforts sometimes involved the physical removal of Mende children from their families and placing them in boarding schools to increase geographical access to school but also to decrease the 'contaminating' influence of parents and elders on the children. Education, whether for the 'altruistic purposes' of the missionaries or the naked exploitative strategies of the colonial administration, was used to engineer the production of the minds and souls upon which to erect a new society in Sierra Leone. In the process, Mende indigenous educational traditions were rendered meaningless.

Sierra Leone gained political independence in 1961 after one hundred and fifty years of British rule. Historical research by Donald Stark reveals that politically the country inherited a divided population mainly because colonial strategies, such as 'indirect rule' through local chiefs or pitting the Creole freed slave communities against indigenous ethnic groups, accentuated differences among the various ethnic groups, making it difficult for the people to see themselves as Sierra Leoneans first and foremost.<sup>5</sup> The economy was poor and undeveloped as colonial economic efforts had concentrated mainly on the extraction and exportation of Sierra Leone's raw materials for the benefit of British companies. Colonial social programs such as education (schooling) had been made available to only one-third of the population even though Sierra Leone had a proud history of higher education in Fourah Bay College which had been

founded by the Church Missionary Society in 1827 as the only degree granting college in British --governed West Africa. In the forty-five years since independence, Sierra Leone has suffered from political instability, economic stagnation, and social upheaval, leading to much borrowing of money from international financial institutions to survive. In return, these institutions have imposed their own economic conditions which successive governments in Sierra Leone have had to fulfill in order to secure the financial loans.

In this environment, a brutal civil war developed in Sierra Leone in 1991 and lasted eleven years, killing an estimated 75,000 Sierra Leoneans, injuring well over 200,000 people, and forcing half a million others to flee to other countries as refugees. This war formally ended in 2002, and since then the country has experienced an influx of foreign agencies and organizations with ideas about educational reconstruction in post-war situations. Concurrently, there is much talk among the international financial community about how low-income countries like Sierra Leone can tap the gains of globalization by investing in their human capital through educational reconstruction. Discourses about educational renewal not only in Sierra Leone but in post-independence Africa as a whole have recently rekindled the argument among African intellectuals that for education to be meaningful in Africa today, it has to be based in the wisdom, teachings, and traditions of the continent's ancestors, particularly in light of the irrelevance of colonial education to the lives and needs of Africans.<sup>6</sup> It is in this context that I attempt to creatively re-appropriate some Mende indigenous educational traditions, in the spirit of *Sankofa*, to theorize curriculum and pedagogy that realistically respond to the ambiguous cultural contexts that characterize postcolonial, post-war, and global times in Sierra Leone. Before doing so, however, I provide some note guides to help the reader to understand some of the terms that undergird my discussions in the paper. After that, I briefly describe the concept of *Sankofa*, positioning it as a critical lens for examining the present and for recovering tradition creatively.

### Definition of terms

*Colonial:* This term is used here in reference to colonialism defined as both the physical conquest and control of African territories by the Europeans, and as the domination and control of the minds of those conquered. From the perspective of the colonizer, the colonial imperative is to 'civilize' the conquered and keep them in a perpetual state of psychological subordination. In other words, although the physical occupation and control of territories may end, the processes of colonial cultural production and psychologization persist.

*Postcolonial:* 'Postcolonial' is conceived here in reference to three conditions: as the period after independence which marked the physical departure of the European powers from their former African colonies; as the political and cultural movement which seeks to challenge the received histories and ideologies of former colonial nations to allow insurgent knowledge to emerge; and as a position that calls for a major rethinking of pre-given categories, histories, and traditions in order to be able to live successfully within the cultural ambiguity that characterizes many African societies in the wake of European colonization.<sup>7</sup>

*Identity:* Historically, this construct has direct connections with how individuals think of themselves and others. The concept has its roots in the nineteenth century conception of the human being as a unified individual whose 'centre' consisted of an inner core that remained the same throughout that individual's existence. The essential centre of the self, in this equation, was the person's identity.<sup>8</sup> In postmodern analysis, however, identity is not as fixed, unified or centred as nineteenth century rationalists had conceived of it. In the postmodern sense, identity is continually being made and remade, just as cultures are, and individuals may see themselves in a variety of ways that are not always consistent.<sup>9</sup> Also inherent in the concept is a view of the past and how the past shapes us, a feature that has direct relevance for postcolonial analysis. This postmodern orientation to identity is what undergirds my discussions in this paper.

*Hybridity:* Technically, a hybrid is a cross between two different species.<sup>10</sup> The term is used here as a postcolonial construct to describe the cultural mixtures and multi-layered forms of interactions between the civilizations of the colonized and those of the colonizers. The political and intellectual cross-fertilization entailed in the logic of this mixture embody multiple power relations which make possible the subversion of colonial authority. Homi Bhabha argues that, as a critical element in research relating to the postcolonial condition, hybridity reserves the effects of colonial disavowal so that denied knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and undermine the authority of that discourse.<sup>11</sup> Bhabha posits hybrid or multilayered identities as a characteristic of the postcolonial and global condition.

*Indigenous education:* This term refers to locally developed forms of teaching the young, based on the traditions and values of African societies.

*Global times:* Used here in reference to globalization, this term refers to the current global/world conditions which are characterized by: changes in the capital and finance markets; the global expansion of new technologies; the rapid movements of people across national and international borders; and the transfer of cultural and other values /ideologies /products, especially of Western origin. In global times, phenomena are no longer territorial, geographic or national - a condition that has produced local forms of resistance but also an increased sense of belonging together as humans to one common globe. Globalization has produced modes of economic restructuring (by supranational organizations such as the IMF, World Bank, and WTO) involving budget reductions affecting social services. It has led to the reduction of state sponsorship and financing of education while at the same time imposing business management and efficiency standards as a framework for making decisions about curriculum, teaching, testing, and teacher training. In the former African colonies, these global times suggest that the growing importance of the knowledge economy in the re-alignment of global capital portends educational changes for the economic and sociocultural survival of these countries.

*Sankofa:* "Returning to the past to move forward"

The *Sankofa* concept is derived from the Akan people who make up one of the largest cultural/ethnic groups inhabiting Ghana and the Ivory Coast. The term can be translated as

"retrieving the past is no taboo, thus say the ancestors." The Akan have an ancient and rich cultural tradition that includes the extensive use of pictographic symbols as a writing system, with each symbol representing a specific proverb or saying rooted in Akan experience. One of the most common Akan symbols for *Sankofa* depicts a mythical bird flying forward with its head turned backward. There is an egg in the mouth of the bird, depicting the "gem" or knowledge of the past upon which wisdom is based and from which generations would benefit. This symbol is often associated with the Akan proverb "Se wo were fin a wosankofa a yenyi" which translates to "It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten."<sup>12</sup>

*Sankofa* teaches that we must go back to our roots in order to move forward - that is, we should reach back and gather the best of what our past has to teach us, so that we can achieve our full potential as we move forward. As a measure of time, *Sankofa* looks at history as a circular process (rather than the linear construct of time prevalent in Western culture) where we think of the past not as events frozen in time, but rather as occurrences that are at one with the present and the future.<sup>13</sup> *Sankofa* implies that to initiate a progressive civil social existence, one that preserves our humanity, we would have to reach back into the past for the wisdom of our ancestors, the best of our traditions, and renew and refine these traditions for new meanings that are relevant for the present.<sup>14</sup>

Such an appeal to tradition is itself controversial in our world today where the charge is that tradition is disappearing, that "it is simply no longer able to provide the thread needed to keep the fabric of social life from unraveling," and that its demise should be seen as an opportunity for newness, creativity, and modes of individualism hitherto impossible or unimaginable.<sup>15</sup> Karl Marx, dramatically expressed this revolutionary attitude toward tradition:

The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. The social revolution cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped off all superstition in regard to the past. Earlier revolutions required world-historical recollections in order to drug themselves concerning their own content. In order to arrive at its content, the revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead.<sup>16</sup>

My position is that this is not a productive way of thinking about tradition. There certainly are dangers inherent in retreating to an allegedly "better" past rather than creatively responding to the world as it comes to us. However, it would be foolish indeed to ignore whole realms of experiences and meanings that have been nourished for generations, and on which we can draw for insights about nourishing our own lives. I, therefore, argue for a return to tradition: More specifically, I call for a return to what was deemed and still is deemed to be valuable in indigenous African education that can inform educational reconstruction in Sierra Leone today. These indigenous practices are among what David Gross calls "substantive traditions"- that is, those long-standing modes of thought or practices that for centuries have organized social and cultural life.<sup>17</sup> In proposing a re-appropriation of tradition, however, I do not mean a restoration of an earlier set of norms, or a 'heimisch' (home) to which we nostalgically return, as articulated by traditionalists. Rather, I propose a re-appropriation of tradition to bring these traditions forward in a manner that disturbs and challenges some of the complacencies of present-day

curricular and pedagogical conceptions and practices. *Sankofa*, in this sense, is embraced not as some nostalgic return to earlier traditions but for the "creatively disruptive effects"<sup>18</sup> of these traditions, disruptive because they call into question some of the norms that have shaped formal and informal education in Sierra Leone. In formal education these norms include the application of business management standards to education, the schism between theory and practice, and the erosion of the life-world of Sierra Leoneans from curriculum and pedagogy. Informally, they include indigenous practices such as teaching the young to defer to authority unquestioningly.

How can tradition be recovered for these critical and creative purposes? To answer this question, I present, in the next section, a brief discussion of tradition and the possible attitudes one might adopt in rethinking tradition. My discussion draws on the ideas of two leading thinkers on tradition as a form of postmodern / postcolonial critique - David Gross and Brian Fay.

### Framing tradition, rethinking tradition

Tradition is an existing set of beliefs, practices, teachings, and modes of thinking that are inherited from the past and that may guide, organize, and regulate ways of living and of making sense of the world. The term comes from the Latin verb *tradere*, meaning to transmit or to give over. The noun *traditio* indicates the process by which something is transmitted or handed down. Gross depicts the central responsibility involved in *traditio* as receiving something valuable or precious, preserving it, and passing it on to those who come after. Tradition, however, is not merely preserved and passed down intact to subsequent generations. As traditions are handed down consecutively over time, they undergo changes because the relations that encompass a receiving generation are never exactly the same as those of the transmitting generation. Gross writes:

As social and cultural changes occur, so do ways of confronting and organizing experience. And as experiences change, so do modes of perception, including perceptions of what a tradition is and means. When needs and perceptions shift, no matter how slightly, the inherited traditions cannot help but be apprehended and assimilated differently. Hence, no tradition is ever taken over precisely as it was given, or passed on precisely as it was received. Rather it is always adapted to a situation.<sup>19</sup>

In the past tradition provided the cohesion that held social life together, and by indicating what was culturally normative, tradition established a framework for meaning and purpose. As human beings, we are embedded in our cultural traditions. Therefore tradition cannot be treated as something purely external which can be simply accepted or rejected on the basis of rational analysis. Neither can it be treated as something which is wholly Other, "as if one could continue to be a person even if it (tradition) were entirely rejected."<sup>20</sup> This suggests that the relationship between personal identity and tradition is far more intimate than implied in Karl Marx's previously quoted statement. People understand and construct their identities in terms of the traditions that are a part of them and, as Fay illuminates, "coming to be a person is in fact appropriating certain material of one's cultural tradition, and continuing to be a person means working through, developing, and extending this material and this always involves operating



in terms of it [tradition]."<sup>21</sup> An appreciation of the importance of tradition in shaping identity enhances our understanding of how tradition imposes limits on the change that is possible in a society. No matter how revolutionary the change, some continuity will remain in the form of certain modes of thinking, perceiving or relating. Certain habitual ways of behavior will survive as important ingredients in the identities of the people "who are what they are because they so deeply share them."<sup>22</sup>

All earlier traditions exist in three forms today. First, there are traditions that have been neglected or dismantled as active processes but continue on as fragments of value or behaviors in the periphery of their original contexts. Second, there are traditions that persist at the centre of social life, but at the cost of being rationalized by the state or commercialized by the market. Third, there are traditions that endure more or less intact, but primarily on the margins of society and within a greatly diminished sphere of influence.<sup>23</sup>

Of the three forms in which traditions currently find themselves, my concern is with the first, that is, those social and cultural traditions that British colonial administration neglected or dismantled as part of the educational processes of African children, but which continued on the margins as valuable fragments of indigenous child-rearing practices. In rethinking traditions such as these, one could: (a) bury lapsed or dismantled traditions and move on to opportunities for newness and creativity; (b) reject present realities and engage in a coercive restoration of lapsed traditions under the assumption that they were better or morally healthier than the world we now have (traditionalism); or (c) bring back lapsed traditions into the modern world, not to escape into them, but to reclaim them as an opportunity for understanding and rethinking the present.<sup>24</sup>

For my purpose here, the last attitude and relation to tradition is the most compelling because it salvages outmoded traditions that can contribute significantly to solving contemporary problems. Precisely because they were neglected or marginalized under colonial rule, our sense of connectedness to them has lapsed and so they represent something other than what they represented to preceding generations. They now embody something strange or Other - the *unheimisch* that disturbs our present-day sensibilities and raises doubts about some of our hitherto protected illusions. Rethinking lapsed traditions in this way not only makes possible a better understanding of the present, but "it also lays the groundwork for something just as important, namely, a critique of modernity from outside."<sup>25</sup> Through this critical leverage, tradition ceases to be an obstacle to progress and becomes a way forward.

The next section, therefore, describes three traditions of indigenous education among the Mende people of Sierra Leone that were neglected, marginalized or dismantled in British colonial education. I juxtapose these traditions with education during and after colonization so that through their 'strangeness' they raise questions about British colonial education and its legacies in Sierra Leone and thus provide us with a better understanding of current educational practices in this former British colony.

## Mende Indigenous education versus education during and after colonization

Indigenous approaches to education among the Mende emerged from indigenous knowledge systems based on understandings of the physical, social, and spiritual



environments. These approaches were grounded in norms, values, and traditions developed over several generations and they are characterized by many features. Here I focus on three features that did not become part of the processes of formal education during British colonial administration in Sierra Leone but which survived as fragments of informal education, especially in Mende rural communities. These features are: (1) interwoven curriculum; (2) communalism; and (3) multi-layered understanding transmitted through stories and proverbs.

*Interwoven curriculum:* Mende indigenous education was for an immediate introduction into society and preparation for adulthood. It was largely informal and emphasized job orientation, social responsibility, spiritual and moral values, and community participation. These aims were interwoven with the content and learning processes which were derived from the needs / purposes of the society and its patterns of work. Education was, therefore, relevant and closely linked with productive activity. There was no division between manual and intellectual education or between theory and practice; learning occurred in social settings as lived experience rather than through formal school programs. In teaching farming to the young, for example, the Mende did not provide their children with elaborate theoretical discussions for later application. Instead, from an early age, children simply accompanied adults to the farms where they participated by observing and emulating what adults did. From about age six, children could be seen with tiny blunt utensils digging the soil, planting seeds, chasing birds away from crops, and harvesting. Over the years, they acquired necessary knowledge about the land, the soil, different seasonal crops, and trees that were imbued with spirits and therefore not cuttable. From years of observing and emulating their mothers and other significant adults, Mende girls learned how to take care of their families and how to balance household chores with those of farming.

There were aspects of pre-colonial Mende education which could be described as 'formal' because there was a specific program and a conscious division between teachers and learners. Two examples of this kind of 'formal' education were the apprenticeship system and the education provided by the *poro* and *sande* secret societies. In the apprenticeship system youth (usually boys) from an early age would be assigned for years to experts to learn vocational skills such as craftsmanship, artistry, weaving and blacksmithing. The *poro* and *sande* secret societies carried out the initiation or 'coming-of-age' education of Mende boys and girls respectively. In the 'sacred bushes' of these societies, boys and girls were not only circumcised but also underwent trials of endurance, received information on tribal and sexual customs and learned the secrets of masked figures like the *sowei* and the *gbeni*. The duration of this coming-of-age education ranged from a few weeks to several years and, like informal education, it was directly connected with the needs and purposes of the community. Because it was for entering adulthood, the work and ways of adults provided the material for this education.

How 'formal' and informal educational knowledge was perceived by its teachers/proprietors (known as *karmohs*) and received by learners was equally important, making the pedagogical relationship highly significant in Mende culture. Knowledge was not seen as having intrinsic value (for elevating humanity) independent of social relations between the learner and the teacher. Rather, the Mende saw valued knowledge as a key economic and

political commodity 'owned' by the 'karmohs' who controlled access to it through rituals based on secrecy and who could demand compensation for imparting it to those who benefited from it.<sup>26</sup> Compensation normally occurred through years of service, deference, and loyalty to the *karmohs* by the learners who held the firm spiritual belief that by rendering these services and dispositions, they were 'buying (earning) blessings' from the *karmohs*. In return, the *karmohs*, parents or elders who imparted this knowledge would ask God, through the ancestors, to pour His blessings on the learners in acknowledgement that they had fulfilled their obligations. Acquired knowledge that was unaccompanied by ancestral or earned blessings was believed not to benefit (elevate) the person acquiring it. Thus the Mende placed education within "local and authority structures of obligation and mystical agency,"<sup>26</sup> a cultural framework still used by illiterates and the educated alike to reinterpret and subvert the meaning of the schooling and social relationships imposed by colonial and missionary education.<sup>27</sup> For example, one often hears comments such as "You can have all the degrees in the world but if you do not have blessings, that education will lead you nowhere (in terms of prosperity, honour or elevation)."

The foregoing examples of the interwoven nature of Mende indigenous education demonstrate clearly that the impartation of abstract knowledge that was divorced from the needs, values and spiritual beliefs of the society was not part of pre-colonial education among the Mende. The Mende did not believe that people first had to develop theoretical understanding of things and events and then apply this knowledge to concrete situations. Rather, understanding was conditioned and constituted by reflection upon how to act wisely in concrete situations. Hans-Georg Gadamer's argument for an inextricable connection of the theoretical and practical in all understanding held true in the Mende philosophy of education.<sup>28</sup> Any theory emerging from such a system was grounded in practice; knowledge was practice-based and deeply linked with the spiritual beliefs of the people.

Unfortunately, school curriculum during British colonial administration in Sierra Leone was far removed from this indigenous view of education. The early founders' motives for establishing education in the Freetown colony (as the original British colony in Sierra Leone was known) may have been 'altruistic' (they saw education as a key to the enlightenment and social and economic improvements of the freed slaves); however, by the time schooling became specifically targeted for the indigenous population of Sierra Leone, it had become a means of economic and political exploitation. Short-term and exploitative, the purpose of the British colonial school system from the late nineteenth century was instrumental - to train a small number of Africans to 'man' the local administration at the lowest ranks and to staff the few British capitalist firms in Sierra Leone. Curriculum content and the teaching methods employed in the schools were intended to achieve these limited instrumental purposes. Curriculum knowledge was intended to 'civilize' and 'civilized knowledge' comprised practical skills like agriculture and crafts for the boys delivered in government trade schools. There were elite schools such as Bo Government Secondary School for Boys and Harford School for Girls, fashioned after English public schools for cultured ladies and gentlemen, where boys studied European history, science, literature and the arts while girls studied handwork and homemaking. Curriculum was therefore alien, abstract and divorced from the needs and values of Mende rural communities. It was transmitted through didactic teaching and assessment

methods that ensured its digestion without reflection, challenge, or questions. The colonial intent was for 'civilized knowledge' to be ingested in its purest form, unmediated by local influences, and passed on intact to subsequent generations. As 'civilized knowledge' was seen as objective with intrinsic values for elevating and developing humanity independent of social contexts and social relationships, the teacher was merely a conduit for delivering the curriculum for the greater good of colonial designs.<sup>29</sup>

Since independence, education in Sierra Leone has been characterized by the same instrumental, technical, and human capital approach prevalent in the Western European countries that have funded educational activities in the country. Human capital theory rests on the assumption that formal education is highly instrumental in improving the productive capacity of a population. In the current contexts of economic globalization, this view has had tremendous influence on, and indeed determined, education policies not only in Western countries but also in many former colonies where funding agencies and organizations such as the World Bank, IMF, and OECD (sometimes referred to as 'the new colonizers') have introduced and demanded the implementation of economic structural adjustment policies (for example, the introduction of user fees) which stifle indigenous African responses to educational crises.<sup>30</sup> The belief in human capital theory as a key agent for the development of a society has produced an explosion in educational enrolments and expenditures in both the industrialized and the developing countries. In Sierra Leone, this expansion has been accompanied by increasing demands (by the funding agencies) for state interventions in education through bureaucratized and controlled curricular practices within which education is planned, implemented, and evaluated in ways that are similar to the values of business culture. This has led to widespread acceptance of the technical model of education which frames curriculum and teaching questions in terms of technical management focusing around pre-specified objectives, identification and organization of learning experiences to obtain the objectives, and the most effective means of evaluating the achievement of the objectives. The model lends itself well to the bureaucratic management of education where the aim is to fragment, control, measure, and rationalize education so that the best economic dividends are reaped from educational investments. It is a marked contrast from the interwoven approach of indigenous education where aims, content, and methodology are all merged and grounded in the socio-cultural values and needs of the people, making education effective and meaningful for the society.

*Communalism in Mende social thought and practice:* Ghanaian social philosopher, Kwame Gyekye, describes communalism as the doctrine that the group (society) constitutes the main focus of the lives of individual members of that group and that an individual's involvement in the interests, aspirations, and welfare of the group is the measure of that individual's worth.<sup>31</sup> The doctrine of communalism emphasizes the activity and success of the wider society rather than, although not necessarily at the expense of, the individual. Implicit in communalism is the view that the success and meaning of the individual's life depend on identifying with the group. This identification is the basis of the reciprocal relationship between the individual and the group:

It (identification) is also the ground of the overriding emphasis on the individual's obligation to the members of the group; it enjoins upon him or her the obligation to think and act in terms of

the survival of the group as a whole..Since this sense of obligation (responsibility) is enjoined equally upon each member of the group - for all the members are expected to enhance the welfare of the group as a whole - communalism maximizes the interests of all the individual members of society.<sup>32</sup>

Communalism as a social philosophy was given institutional expression in the social structures of many rural African societies. Because it was participatory and characterized by social and ethical values such as solidarity, interdependence, cooperation, and reciprocal obligations, the material and other benefits of the communal social order were likely to be available to all members of the community. Furthermore, its intricate web of social relations would tend to ensure individual social worth, thus making it almost impossible for an individual to feel socially insignificant.<sup>33</sup>

Communalism, demonstrated by a strong sense of solidarity with the community and willingness to live and work together, was an active component and objective of indigenous education among the Mende in rural Sierra Leone. This component and objective were instilled into the young from a very early age, and certain activities were undertaken to encourage and nurture them. For example, youngsters between the ages of ten and sixteen were divided into groups or age grades, and from time to time, they would be required to perform specific tasks to contribute to community effort and progress. Thus in a village community, for example, all young men belonging to the sixteen year "age grade" might be assigned the task of building a wooden bridge for community use, or helping a community member with the harvesting of his or her crops. Such assignments were carried out under the supervision of adults and performed with great enthusiasm, accompanied by community work songs rather than by competitiveness and selfishness. Individual success or misfortune was seen as community success or misfortune. For the rural Mende there was no life without the community. Recent research has pointed out that the communal or collective approach has a long pedigree on the African sub-continent and has provided the cultural basis for indigenous self-help movements such as *harambe* in Kenya and *tirisano* which is currently being used by the government of South Africa for educational reconstruction.<sup>34</sup>

This communal social structure was, however, weakened considerably by massively-changing population patterns during British colonial rule in Sierra Leone. British infiltration into the country's hinterland as well as both World Wars, in which many Sierra Leoneans participated as British subjects were accompanied by massive migrations of the young from the rural areas of the country to the main trading and population centres such as Freetown on the coast where the wars in particular had created a sudden market for unskilled labour. Migrants were drawn to the high-wage public works which war necessarily required, including armaments, modern port facilities, communication structures, and civil defence projects. The equally sudden completion of these projects left large numbers of unemployed labourers in the towns.<sup>35</sup> To survive as town dwellers, the migrants had to abandon their rural outlook and develop different skills such as literacy, commercial, and professional skills. In the process, they were forced to rely on individual talents rather than the teamwork involved in rural life. Much more widespread was the new understanding, based on capitalist individualism, that individual labour should benefit the person concerned and not some wider collective such as

the clan or the community.<sup>36</sup> Geography and the new culture of city life, therefore, set young migrants apart from the rural community practices in which they had been brought up.<sup>37</sup> This colonial legacy of individualistic values has continued on in Sierra Leone after independence. In schooling, for example, the individualistic value of distinguishing oneself from others and claiming one's autonomy to affirm one's basic originality has produced classroom arrangements, pedagogic processes, and assessment strategies that have left students with the belief that their originality and full potential can only be developed through the rejection of communal values such as interdependence, cooperation, and social responsibility.

*Stories and proverbs:* Stories and proverbs are primary ways through which a great deal of African philosophical thought, knowledge and wisdom has been taught.<sup>38</sup> Preliterate African culture was characterized by an oral tradition that found expression in stories, folktales, anecdotes, proverbs, and parables that provoked a great deal of reflection. As there were no written records of the ancient past of the Mende people, all that has been preserved of their knowledge, myths, philosophies, liturgies, songs, and sayings has been handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. These oral media preserved, more or less accurately, the history of the people, their general outlook on life, and their conduct and moral values, and they were used in Mende rural communities as forms of indigenous knowledge which played an important role in the education of the young. For example, adults would gather youngsters around a fire at night and tell them great stories and legends about the past that helped the youngsters to grasp the prevailing ethical standards of their community. Stories that personified animal characters were often told, and these stories, while explaining the peculiar trait of each animal, also transmitted the virtues valued by the society. For example, stories about *kasiloi* (the spider), always taught youngsters about the unwanted consequences of traits such as greed, egotism, disobedience, or cunning. Typically, a spider story would begin with a question such as "Do you know why the spider has such a slender waist?" The question would then be answered by an instructional story such as the following:

Spider was invited to two feasts in two villages at the same time. Not wanting to miss either feast, Spider tied a rope around his waist and gave each end of the rope to each village. He instructed each village to pull the rope precisely when the feast began. The harder Spider was pulled in each direction, the smaller his waist became. He screamed and screamed in pain till his neighbour heard his cries and came and untied the rope. Through greed, therefore, Spider lost the feast in each village and never regained his waistline.

Proverbs are particularly useful as powerful tools that teach without being intrusive. A great deal of African traditional wisdom and folklore is expressed through proverbs which have the ability to reveal the characteristics and qualities of situations, times, and persons in a way that is hard to capture in clear language or in a direct manner. In addition to stories, therefore, proverbs were used in Mende indigenous education to teach moral values and appropriate behaviours without directly and overtly moralizing and criticizing an individual. Many of these proverbs survived in the lyrics of Mende songs. Others are painted on buses and trucks across the country, for example (translated from Mende): 'No pain no gain'; 'Don't look where you fell, look where you tripped'; 'Nobody knows from which direction the wind will blow to bend the



chicken's ear' (meaning: it's not always possible to predict the sources of one's good or bad fortune).

Stories and proverbs can be understood as metaphors to guide moral choice and self-examination because, when reflected upon, they act as mirrors for seeing things in a particular way. More than any theoretical discussion or philosophical writing, they throw light on the concrete reality of lived experience; they serve as important pedagogical devices because they provide experiential case material on which pedagogical reflection is possible.<sup>39</sup> As learners break into (analyze) the proverbs or stories they are able to reflect on the meanings and implications embedded in the experiences. Indigenous Mende educators drew on these teaching devices to informally structure an educational program that encouraged learners to listen to stories and proverbs and reflect on them to derive meanings that informed and guided conduct and behaviour. Furthermore, these devices brought together the learners and the community because the elders, as the sources of the stories, songs, and proverbs and as experts in oratory, were charged with the responsibility of teaching them to the young.

Unfortunately, these powerful traditional teaching and learning tools were negated in British colonial education, despite the fact that their usefulness as sources of African wisdom and cultural knowledge had been well documented by nineteenth-century scholars and missionaries like J. G. Christaller, who collected and published well over three thousand Akan stories and proverbs.<sup>40</sup> The inclusion of these indigenous educational tools in colonial education would have also addressed the problem of the separation between the school and the community that was introduced during colonial administration. This negation of indigenous knowledge can be explained by the fact that British colonial education was an ideological process in which education and schooling were used as agents for the internalization and acceptance of British cultural values, and as vehicles for developing in the colonized peoples the preferred sense of psychological and intellectual subordination. Cameron McCarthy and Greg Dimitriadis have categorized these practices of negation as *ressentiment* (after Nietzsche) which they describe as "the specific practice of identity displacement in which the social actor consolidates his identity by a complete disavowal of the merits and existence of his social other."<sup>41</sup> With Linda Tuhiwai Smith, I posit that the negation of indigenous views constituted a critical part of the colonial strategy, mostly because these views would have challenged and resisted the mission of colonization.<sup>42</sup>

### Educational reconstruction in Sierra Leone: Embracing *Sankofa* creatively

In this section I attempt to recover, creatively, aspects of the foregoing Mende educational traditions and integrate them into the content and processes of formal education to make curriculum proposals that are responsive to the educational needs of Sierra Leone in postcolonial, post-war, and global times. Creative recovery means taking a critical look at certain aspects of tradition that may have been effective for earlier purposes but now need to be re-appropriated in new ways to serve today's purposes. The curriculum proposals I make take into account the fact that curriculum is not a static system unaffected by change. Curriculum, like all bodies of knowledge rooted in human experiences, must constantly renew itself and draw on other currents of thought in order to remain relevant and viable.



In this regard, the recent move by curriculum scholars worldwide to internationalize the discourses of educational reform and research should be thought of not only as exhortations of change but also as a way of reshaping the images of social action and consciousness through which individuals are to participate.<sup>43</sup> Underlying the new discourse of internationalization is curriculum consciousness that "denotes a collective sense of a group of people, a community that begins to imagine and feel things together."<sup>44</sup> This imagining of ourselves as a community participating, interpreting/understanding ourselves, and creating knowledge together is critical to curriculum reform in postcolonial and global times. *Hybridity*, as articulated earlier, becomes crucial in the formulation of this reform agenda.

One of the consequences of European colonization and, now, the global migration of former colonial subjects into the metropolitan centres of Western Europe has meant that, intellectually, culturally, and politically, the colonizer and the colonized have been brought together in identity formation that is continually in a process of hybridization. Identity formation in these contexts occurs in what Homi Bhabha, in his analysis of the postcolonial, calls "the third space of translation" - a space where the meaning of cultural and political authority is negotiated without eliding or normalizing the differential structures in conflict.<sup>45</sup> Elsewhere, I have referred to Bhabha's "third space" as the place for the construction of identities that are neither one nor the other.<sup>46</sup> I have argued that because of centuries of Western European impact on Africa (from missionary and trade activities to outright colonization and, now, globalization), it is no longer possible to postulate a unitary Africa over and/or against a monolithic West as a binarism between a distinct Self (as African) and Other (as European). There is no longer in Africa a unitary set of discourse about progress and change; rather, there is a hybrid, a third space, where local African and global images meet in a weaving that has its own configurations and implications. This overlay is best expressed in the response of Giyatri Spivak (the Indian Diaspora scholar) to critics who have faulted her on not seeking possibilities of discovering and/or promoting 'indigenous (Indian) theory' in her writings: "I cannot understand what indigenous theory there might be that can ignore the reality of nineteenth century history..To construct indigenous theories, one must ignore the last few centuries of historical involvement. I would rather use what history has written for me."<sup>47</sup>

Indeed, education itself in Europe's former colonies occurs within an overlay of discourses that move in the interstices of the colonial and the colonized. The rapid movements and collision of peoples and media images across the world have further disrupted the traditional isomorphism between self, place, and culture. The Eurocentric and Afrocentric debates that have emerged in discourses about curriculum reform are themselves driven by nostalgia for a past in which Europe and Africa are imagined without "the noise of their modern tensions, contradictions and conflicts."<sup>48</sup> These debates refuse the radical hybridity that is the reality of today's major metropolitan societies everywhere.

Educational reconstruction in Sierra Leone must be informed by these realities even as some indigenous traditions are recovered and used to make such reconstruction meaningful and relevant for Sierra Leoneans. Thus imagined, educational reform does not involve pitting indigenous Sierra Leonean cultural knowledge against that of the West. Instead, reform would occur in a 'third space' which recognizes the heterogeneous basis of useful knowledge and the need to find abiding links that connect African knowledge and values and the knowledge and

values entailed in Western education. The hybridity entailed in such a process produces knowledge that can be best described as an alloy of racial, cultural, and ethnic metals.<sup>49</sup> For instance, the technical-rational or managerial efficiency approach that currently pervades curriculum development in Sierra Leone, which has produced implementation difficulties, could be reformed by utilizing the Mende indigenous practice of interweaving curricular aims, content, and methodology to enable successful curriculum implementation and to make education more functional and relevant to the places and lives of the students. This hybrid approach would not diminish Western education which produces significant parental enthusiasm because of the prestige and economic capital it carries. Rather, the approach would place school curriculum firmly within a cultural framework that can be used by teachers to provide students with insights into students' own cultural values and the tools they need for interpreting the ambiguous cultural contexts in which they are now living. The situational and contextual analysis preceding the development of such curriculum would take into account the contemporary needs and goals of the society, the local values and dispositions considered to be important, and the cultural resources available in the society. Such a process would facilitate the selection of curriculum content and teaching methods based on the environment in which the curriculum is developed and used, not on educational objectives and principles as defined solely by outsiders. Curriculum and pedagogy thus become hybrid processes in which communal values such as cooperation, interdependence, social responsibility (sorely needed in citizenship education after the civil war in Sierra Leone), and stories and proverbs are integrated into classroom learning. Curriculum would also be adaptable and open to further interpretation and renewal in light of changing circumstances and specific contextual needs and aspirations.

Living in postcolonial, global times involves a rethinking of pre-given categories, histories and traditions. Therefore certain aspects of Mende indigenous education itself have to be interrogated for their inherent limitations for addressing contemporary educational needs and problems. For instance, a crucial objective of indigenous education among the Mende was the preservation of the ethnic or community heritage, accomplished through the transmission of values such as unquestioned respect for, and acceptance of, the views of elders and *karmohs* as authoritative. The successful transmission of these values required obedience and conformity. But while this approach may have helped to sustain the ethnic Mende values and hold the community together, it has been criticized by some Sierra Leonean scholars as transforming African children into submissive youngsters who, although biologically equipped with the same keen interests and imagination as their counterparts from other cultures, quickly come to lack the spirit of initiative, creativity, and critical thinking. There is, therefore, a need to question whether the tradition of instructing children to accept authoritative teachings simply out of deference for authority figures will serve them well in today's contexts of globalization and the multiple post-war challenges requiring creative and expanded critical thinking skills that appreciate how different cultures and societies solve problems. While an intimate connection does exist between personal identity and particular traditions, humans are not passive in the way that traditions define identity or destiny. Human beings can affirm some of their inherited traditions, transmute them, or recreate them in novel ways.<sup>50</sup> Indeed continuing to be a person means continuously revisiting tradition and upholding certain elements of it

while rethinking others. On the issue of tradition and change Gadamer writes: "Tradition is not merely what one knows to be and is conscious of as one's own origin. Changing the established forms is no less a kind of connection with the tradition than defending the established forms. Tradition exists only in constant alteration."<sup>51</sup>

I interpret Gadamer here to mean that, in addition to having a past which affects us in innumerable and complex ways, we have a present that to some extent always differs from the past and is animated by concerns and interests driving it towards the future. Thus the past shapes us but we contribute to its outcome by responding to it in light of our current needs. Confronted with new situations that we seek to understand, we are forced to re-examine our traditions in relation to emergent realities and the meanings and demands of those realities. The real issue, it would seem, is the political will and preparedness to read tradition as an open-ended text rather than as a closed entity.<sup>52</sup>

Cumulative events such as the European infiltration into Africa, the subsequent colonization of the African continent, the Western-style education that colonization brought, and the current forces of economic and cultural globalization have all led to a present that differs from our past and to changed and changing concerns shaping our future. This invites questions about how to educate students so they become able to function meaningfully and effectively in these new contexts. In Sierra Leone, it invites critical reflection on certain aspects of traditional educational practices (e.g., the uncritical acceptance of authoritative teachings) that may have served well to hold the community together, but that now need to be examined critically vis-à-vis incoming authoritative ideas about education for development and, since the end of the country's civil war, lectures about peace, justice, equality and human rights. We must appreciate that indigenous educational experiences that discourage critical questioning are likely to shape and mediate how Mende children experience Western-style education. Having been socialized not to question or disobey authority, children come to extend these values to all authoritative sources. I believe that children can be taught to assume a critical voice towards authority without necessarily devaluing, disrespecting, or destroying authority altogether. A critical voice, rather than merely destructive criticism, attempts the delicate work of rearticulating the tensions within practices, the constraints, and the possibilities, even as it questions the taken-for-granted knowledge that shapes everyday life.<sup>53</sup>

Educational reconstruction based on the creative re-appropriation of tradition requires improvement in teacher education on two fronts. The first would have to be an emphasis on the preparation of teachers as critical inquirers who, through offering themselves as models, will eventually pass the habits of critical inquiry on to their students. On the second front, teachers would have to be taught the cultural traditions that are important to the people of Sierra Leone and how to blend these desirable traditional values and principles with current and appropriate formal educational content and processes. Improvement on these two fronts will equip teachers to help students develop the knowledge and skills necessary for successful living in postcolonial/global times.

## Conclusion

My imagination of educational reconstruction in Sierra Leone as a hybrid process in which the past is retrieved creatively and combined with the realities and needs of the present is partly informed by Immanuel Kierkegaard's argument that no matter how much is subtracted from the individual there is always a 'remainder' that could embrace the task of reconstituting the Self.<sup>54</sup> This reconstituting process involves what Kierkegaard calls 'repetition' which, like *Sankofa*, is a forward movement that is cognizant of the past. Through the process of repetition the individual becomes able to press forward, ".not toward a sheer novelty which is wholly discontinuous with the past, but into the being which he himself is..Repetition is that by which the existing individual circles back on the being which he has been all along, that by which he returns to himself."<sup>55</sup>

The experiences of European colonization and neo-colonization, in a variety of forms, have led to self-fragmentation in many Africans. A fragmented self lacks full access both to itself and the world, thereby impairing capacity for informed action. Amidst such fragmentation, we need to define ourselves in terms of new memories through which we come to know, understand, and experience ourselves. These memories, however, need not be lodged within monolithic African identities, for we are both what we know (our African knowledge and traditions) and what we do not know (others' knowledge and traditions). As Priscilla Wald has cogently argued: "Older identities are now estranged and one's 'home' (identity) is no longer located where one thought it was."<sup>56</sup> If, indeed, we are serious about the construction of a new narrative about education for development in postcolonial and global times, then reform needs to be based in communities where relations are no longer unidirectional or univocal, whether flowing from the former colonies to the colonialists or vice versa. The challenges facing the African sub-continent in the 21st century (for example, poverty, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, consolidating fledgling democracies, fostering social cohesion) transcend national boundaries and single sets of discourses. They could be called "supranational or transnational challenges", as Walter Parker et al have suggested.<sup>57</sup> Educational response to these challenges requires hybrid curriculum thinking and acting which consists of overlays of multiple discourses and plural strategies, including the creative re-appropriation of substantive traditions. Jomo Kenyatta got it right when, forty years ago, he enjoined teachers to "promote progress and preserve all that is best in the traditions of the African people and assist them in creating a new culture which, though its roots are still in the soil, is yet modified to meet the pressure of modern conditions."<sup>58</sup>

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# Comparative Assessment of Indigenous Methods of Sweet Potato Preservation among Smallholder Farmers: Case of Grass, Ash and Soil based Approaches in Zimbabwe

EDWARD MUTANDWA AND CHRISTOPHER TAFARA GADZIRAYI

**Abstract:** Lack of suitable storage facilities among smallholder farmers continues to expose farmers to intermittent food shocks. Farmers are thus making use of locally available preservation methods, derived from indigenous knowledge systems (IKS), to improve storability of sweet potatoes. However, not much is known about their efficacy in maintaining the quality of the stored crop. Thus the broad objective of this research was to assess the effectiveness of using soil, ash and grass as means of preserving sweet potato variety Mozambican White. The three mediums were tested over a period of 5 months and each treatment had two replicates. Three kilogram of soil, two kilogram ash and one kilogram grass were used for the analysis and the quantities were informed by local smallholder farmers. The experiment was conducted at ambient room temperature. Two parameters were monitored, the rate of discoloration of tubers and weight change over time. The results indicate that if quality of the stored crop and weight variation of tubers is considered, then use of soil banks is the most effective. However, weights of tubers for ash and grass were not statistically different from the soil treatment but some tubers were discolored. If farmers are to get the best results, a combination of the above techniques, particularly ash and soil, is recommended.

## BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM

The bulk of developing countries in Africa are ensnared in abject poverty with individual households living on less than \$1 dollar per day.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has also ravaged social and economic systems of developing countries, thus compromising long-term economic development. Contemporary anecdotes reveal that at least 35 million people were infected by HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa in 2003. By the end of 2004, related estimates showed that 37.8 million people were infected by the scourge.<sup>2</sup> Thus it is not surprising that the gap between the rich and poor countries has been escalating over the last few years.

Although agriculture remains a key strategy to revitalizing the livelihoods of the rural poor, bottlenecks of major inputs such as fertilizers, chemicals and other synthetic inputs required for enhanced productivity remain a challenge for farmers and on household decision

**Edward Mutandwa** is a lecturer in the Department of Agriculture at Bindura University of Science Education. He has been involved in research for NGOs such as ITDG Southern Africa, particularly the Women in Construction Project and Knowledge and Information Systems Project in Epworth. He has worked as an Operations Research Consultant in ITDG Southern Africa. **Christopher Tafara Gadzirayi** is a lecturer in the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Science at Bindura University of Science Education. He has extensive experience in research work ranging from supervisory management, environmental management and education and training.

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v9/v9i3a4.pdf>

making vis-à-vis crop enterprise choice. Smallholder production trend indicate a shift in production patterns from the conventional crops such as cotton, maize and tobacco to other "unorthodox" crops which are less demanding in terms of input usage and labor requirements.<sup>3</sup> Crop enterprises such as indigenous vegetables and sweet potatoes are increasingly becoming an important option for the achievement of household food security in Southern Africa, including countries such as Zimbabwe. However, one of the major issues exposing farmers to chronic and transitory food shocks (particularly in the off-season), is postharvest loss. Studies indicate that postharvest loss due to pest and disease attack can account for as much as 40-60% of crop output.<sup>4</sup> Given that chemical-based systems of crop preservation are expensive for most farmers, least-cost preservation strategies need to be identified and there is not much literature on the efficacy of the various indigenous strategies to preservation.

In Zimbabwe, sweet potatoes are becoming an important component of the diet for both urban and rural households. For urban households, this has been necessitated by the escalating costs of bread and other starch-based foods such as Irish potatoes. Thus the integration of sweet potatoes should be considered as a rational coping strategy adopted by households to ensure food security. Sweet potato is an annual plant that thrives well under warm equatorial and tropical regions with hot summers. Taubenhouse (1989) noted that every buyer, grower, and storer of sweet potatoes has his own practices, theories, and beliefs about storing sweetpotatoes.<sup>5</sup> Therefore there is no universal method of managing postharvest losses. Postharvest losses are often identified as one of the key snags to the achievement of food security in Sub-saharan Africa.

Most smallholder farmers use methods that have been passed on from generation to generation through indigenous knowledge systems. Indigenous knowledge is perceived to be the knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society.<sup>6</sup> It creates the basis for local level decision-making in agriculture, health care, food preparation and preservation, education and natural resource management.<sup>7</sup> Indigenous knowledge is an important ingredient for development but is grossly under-utilized.<sup>8</sup>

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Although important, techniques of preserving crops derived from indigenous knowledge have only rarely been subjected to scientific enquiry. Thus there is a general paucity of information vis-à-vis their effectiveness in assisting households overcome short and long-term food shortages. An inventory of methods used in Africa to preserve sweetpotatoes shows that a number of methods, which include use of grass, ash and soil, are common. In Mali, Kone (1991) showed that sweetpotatoes could store up to 6 months in temperatures ranging from 12-14 degrees Celsius.<sup>9</sup>

Drawing from literature, this study investigates the storability of Mozambican White under room temperature whilst monitoring parameters such as turgidity and color changes using three preservation techniques viz. soil, ash and grass techniques. This study is premised on the

observation that local smallholder farmers in Zimbabwe use most preservation methods informally but not much is known about their efficacy from a scientific perspective. In addition, storage techniques based on IKS are grossly undervalued because farmers are now using chemical based methods but these are expensive in the country. These developments are linked to the volatile macro-economic environment that is besieging the country.

## Objectives

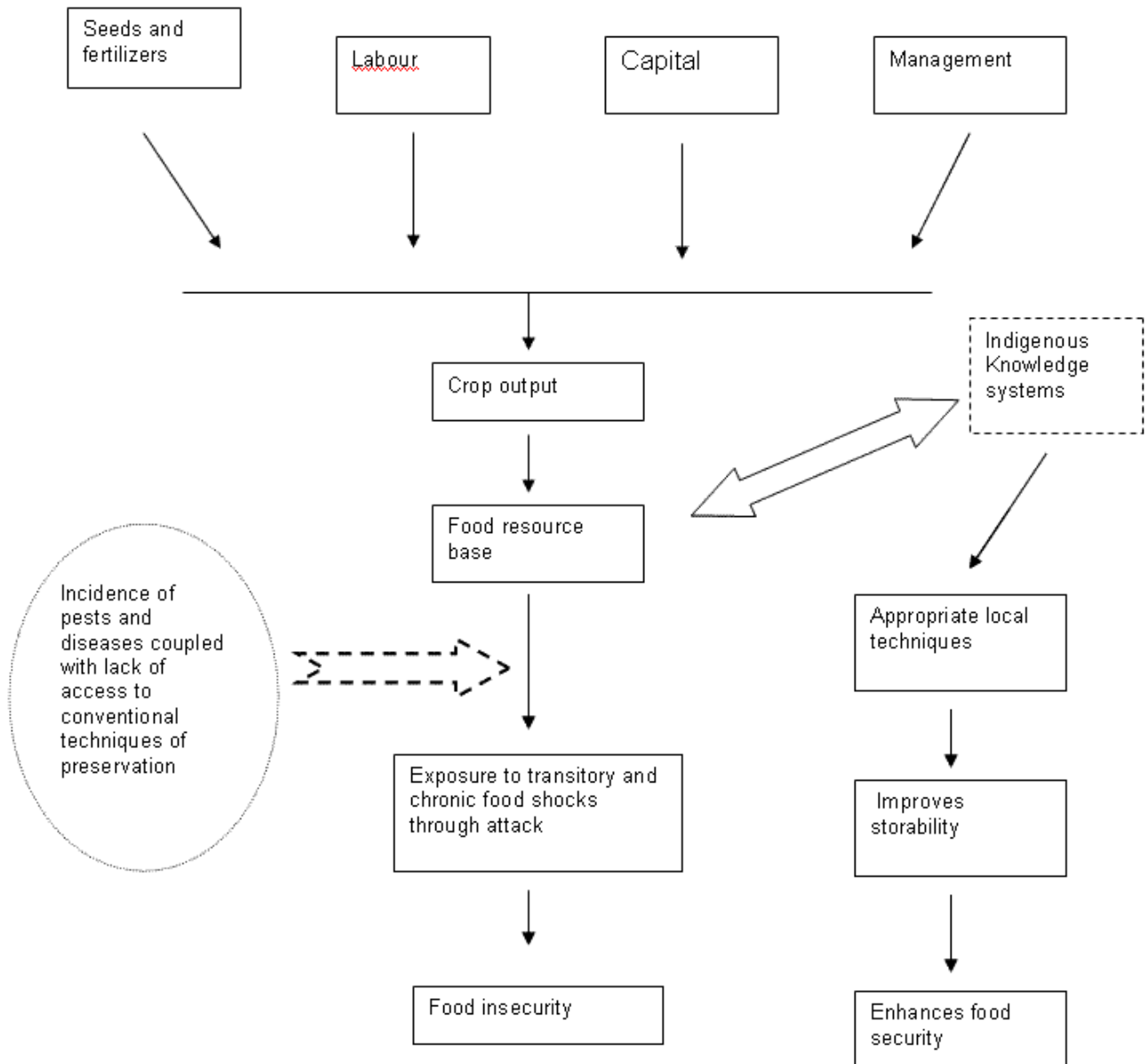
The main objective of this study is to carry out a comparative assessment of the effectiveness of three techniques of preserving sweet potatoes - soil, ash and grass.

The specific objectives are:

1. To assess the effectiveness of soil, ash, and grass methods in terms of:
  - i. The rate of water loss in tubers
  - ii. The rate of discoloration
  - iii. Weight change
2. To identify the most suitable storage facility to use for sweet potato storage among smallholder farmers.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

## Conceptual Framework



**Fig 2.1 Contribution of Indigenous Knowledge Systems to Household food security**

Fig 2.1 depicts the role and contribution of indigenous knowledge systems to household food security. The household typically combines the available inputs (land, labor, capital and managerial capacity) to produce crop outputs. This has the effect of increasing the food resource base. However, there are exogenous factors such as pests and diseases, which will lead to transitory (short term) as well as chronic (long term) food shocks resulting in food insecurity.

Lack of access to conventional processing and preservation techniques will also have the same effect on the food security status of the household. Another scenario would involve farmers also extracting appropriate local techniques from the indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). These local techniques are passed on and even improved over periods of time hence improving storability and leading to improved food security.

### Social Context

In Zimbabwe, the smallholder sector consists mainly of poor farmers who comprise over 70% of the country's agricultural producers. This sector is also characterized by social and economic factors such as heavy reliance on family labor, a generally poor resource base, inadequate technologies, underdeveloped infrastructure, weak institutional support, and low production levels. These problems are further aggravated by the lack of an explicit policy framework guiding national programs on research and development of orphan crops like sweet potato. Orphan crops consist of a range of crops that do not enjoy formal agricultural policy support programs to enhance productivity and are therefore marginalized even though featuring prominently in the household food economy.<sup>10</sup> The agricultural policy framework (1995-2020) identifies its major crops to include maize, wheat, soyabeans, cotton and tobacco. Sweet potatoes are not explicitly noted as a recognized crop in the framework.<sup>11</sup>

When sweet potatoes are in season, they form a significant component of family diets for most families in Zimbabwe, particularly the urban and the rural poor. Despite this significance, the crop is still viewed as a "woman's crop" and does not feature prominently in the allocation of resources at family the level or national agricultural settings because of the patrilinear nature of the Zimbabwean society which undervalues the contribution of women to the household economy.

### Agronomic requirements of sweet potatoes

Sweet potatoes (*Ipomoea Batatus*) are a tropical and sub-tropical plant that thrives in optimal conditions of between 20 to 25 degrees Celsius. In tropical zones, it can be grown in altitudes above 2500m.<sup>12</sup> At planting, it is important to grow the crop in moist soils to obtain good germination. The soils should ideally be moist for most of the production cycle of the crop, which ranges from 60-120 days. It does well in a wide variety of soils but the best are ferratic, brown humic, and calcimorphic soils.<sup>13</sup> The soils need to have good drainage properties. Sweet potatoes can be multiplied using tubers and stems however the most common method in Zimbabwe is the use of stems. In addition, planting is generally done by hand, putting the stem on a mound or ridge and covering it with earth using hoes. Most farmers in Zimbabwe do not use fertilizers for the crop.<sup>14</sup> Sweet potato productivity is stifled by the occurrence of diseases and pests. The most important diseases are the sweet potato virus complex (SPVD) and nematode infections.



## SWEET POTATO PRESERVATION METHODS

### Soil based technique

This method involves digging of pits at a certain level of inclination (sloped areas). This is done to facilitate the complete drainage of the pits which avoids accumulation of moisture which would in turn lead to rotting or germination of tubers.

### Ash based technique

This approach involves mixing ash powder with sweet potatoes. The ash will act as an absorbent to moisture and has a repelling effect on pests. Ash has alkaline properties, which are not conducive to development of diseases.

### Grass based Technique

In this technique, dry grass is used to create dry and cool conditions within the storage area. This avoids the development of fungal diseases that normally thrive under humid and warm conditions.

### Studies on the effectiveness of preservation techniques of sweet potatoes

Although sweetpotatoes are increasing in importance worldwide, there seems to be a relative dearth and paucity of information on the efficacy of local indigenous techniques of preserving the crop. Kone (1991) argued that sweet potatoes could be stored successfully in soil or ash for about 6 months.<sup>15</sup> However, it is critical to ensure that the stored crop does not have any bruises as this only aids infection and rotting.<sup>16</sup> Anochili (1984) investigated the impact of using ash on sweet potato storability and was of the opinion that the ash technique is effective.<sup>17</sup>

### Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)

Most of the existing methods on sweet potato preservation are based on indigenous knowledge. This is so because the orthodox approaches based on chemicals are relatively expensive. Thus one can argue that sweet potato preservation in Zimbabwe is predicated on indigenous knowledge. Berkes (1999) perceived indigenous knowledge as the local knowledge held by indigenous people and is unique to a given society. This knowledge is used to distinguish the knowledge developed by a given community from international knowledge bases or scientific knowledge. Warren's study indicates that IK refers to technical insight or wisdom gained and developed by people in a particular locality, through years of careful observation and experimentation with the natural phenomena around them.<sup>18</sup> Within this context, IK refers to the inventory of locally available techniques used to preserve sweet potatoes and these have to be derived from the community and have a direct bearing in their everyday lives.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Overview of the Storage mediums used for analysis

The broad objective of this study was to comparatively assess the effectiveness of three techniques used by local communities to preserve sweet potatoes. The research used soil obtained from local gardens in Mashonaland East Province (Hwedza District) where farmers typically stored their sweet potato harvest. These soils ranged from loams to sandy loamy soils. Farmers chose areas with such soil types as they have relatively lower water holding capacity when compared to clays and this reduces the likelihood of rotting due to moist conditions.

It was important to ensure that the soil was dry and free from observable external foreign materials such as sticks. Grass for thatch method was collected also from the local area, taking note of the aforementioned issues. Ash was prepared using wood from local tree species. The sweet potato variety used is Mozambican White, which was chosen because of its availability on the local market at the time of conducting the research.

### Materials Used

Boxes measuring 20x15x15 cm were used as materials for conducting the experiments. For each storage technique, two replicates were used making a total of six boxes for the experiment. Approximately three kg of soil was used for the soil technique and this quantity had to guarantee total coverage of the tubers. About two kg of ash and one kg of thatch grass was used for the other replicates used in the study. In each box 12 tubers were placed and subjected to the experimental conditions. These quantities were derived from local farmers in Zimbabwe.

### Research Design

The methodological approach used was the pre- and post-test design. Within this context, the desired parameters were measured before commencement of the study and after a period of 5 months. The experiments were conducted at room temperature that is 24 degrees Celsius in an agricultural shed. The diagrammatic presentation of the experiment is presented below.

**Treatment A**

Soil

**Treatment B**

Ash

**Treatment C**

Grass

**Sampling Procedure**

A simple random sampling technique was used to select tubers from each treatment and replicate. The random sampling approach ensured that the parameters under observation were taken from representative universe of units from each replicate and experiment. Two parameters, namely weight changes due to water loss and color changes, were recorded for each treatment. Discoloration of tubers was observed using visual assessment. Any tuber whose surface area had at least twenty five percent deviation from inherent off-white colour was categorized as discoloured. The twenty five percent benchmark was based on local consumer grading systems in major open markets in Zimbabwe. Parameters were monitored monthly over five months.

**Data Analysis**

An analysis of variance table was set to investigate whether there were statistical differences in parameters under observation. A one way ANOVA table was set up to investigate whether there were differences in the grand means of weights of potatoes before and after the experiment and across experiments.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS****Rate of Discoloration**

Discoloration in this study was defined as the change of color of the sweet potato tuber of at least twenty five percent surface area. This is normally evidenced by the presence of lesions on the tubers. The number of discolored tubers was recorded for each treatment.

There were no discolored tubers in treatment A, in which soil was used. In treatment B, where ash was used, a total of 6 out of 12 tubers were discolored at the end of 5 months. In

treatment C, a total of 8 out of 12 tubers were found to be discolored. The results are depicted in Fig 4.1.

**Fig 4.1 Rate of discoloration over time**

According to the graph, the three treatments had no discolorations for the first 2 months. However, in ash the discolored tubers were observed in the 3rd month whilst in grass this was observed in the 4th month of the experiment. On the basis of ANOVA test ( $p < 0.05$ ) there was no statistical difference in the number of discolored sweet potato tubers at the end of five months (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 ANOVA results for number of discolored tubers across treatments

Source of Variation	Sum of squares	DF	Mean square estimates	F value	Significance (5% level)
Between groups	2.733	2	1.367	2.267	0.147
Within groups	7.267	12	0.606		
Total	10.00	14			

Water Loss in tubers

The rate of water loss in the tubers from each treatment was observed using the average weight of the tubers. An implicit assumption made was that the change in weight between two time periods was attributed mainly to water loss. The research also ensured that the size of the tubers across treatments were roughly of the same size. In addition, the variety used had been screened for infections i.e. cultured. Therefore, the incidence of internal infections, which could lead to changes in weight, was minimal across treatments. The data obtained is shown in the table below.

Table 4.2 Percentage weight loss of tubers over 5 months

<b>Time period (months)</b>	<b>Treatment A Soil (grams)</b>	<b>Treatment B Ash</b>	<b>Treatments C Grass</b>
1	0.36	0.354	0.346
2	0.36	0.344	0.321
3	0.32	0.313	0.307
4	0.29	0.270	0.295
5	0.27	0.261	0.243
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>0.320</b>	<b>0.308</b>	<b>0.302</b>
<b>Final % weight change per treatment</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26.2</b>	<b>29.8</b>

Fig 4.2 Weight variation of sweet potato tubers over time

The three treatments were tested statistically using one-way analysis of variance procedure (ANOVA).

The hypothesis being tested was that the three treatments are equally effective implying that the observed average weights of tubers are the same for the treatments.

The results of the ANOVA are shown below.

**Table 4.3 Comparative assessment of mean weights of tubers for the three treatments**

Source of variation	Sum of squares	DF	Mean Square Estimates	F value	Significance (5 %)
Between groups	8.005E-04	2	4.003E-04	0.246	0.786
Within groups	1.95E-02	12	1.628E-03		
Total	2.034E-02	14			

Since the observed significance value is greater than 0.05%, it implies that we do not reject the null hypothesis that the mean weights of the tubers are equal. Therefore, it can be argued statistically that the above three treatments soil, ash and grass are equally effective in terms of maintaining the turgid state of preserved tubers. The results of the study are consistent with



other studies such as Anochilli (1984) and Kone (1991) whose study was carried out in Mal.<sup>19</sup> They found out that ash and grass are effective means of preserving sweet potatoes, especially among resource constrained smallholder farmers.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

The study attempted to provide a scientific analysis of preservation methods that have traditionally been used by smallholder farmers over generations. In this regard, the results showed that if both parameters state of the crop (color) and weight changes - are to be considered, then preservation in soil would be most recommended. This finding is consistent with Owen's study (1987) that highlights the importance of using soil banks as a means of preserving sweet potatoes.<sup>20</sup> However, in terms of maintaining the weight of the stored crop, all three can be considered by resource-constrained farmers in Zimbabwe. There is need also to research the issue of variation across different sweet potato varieties.

### Recommendations

The socio-economic value of indigenous knowledge cannot be under estimated. The results of this study point to soil banks as the most effective in terms of maintaining the quality of the stored crop and reducing water loss. However, use of grass and ash are also valuable methods but could be associated with loss in quality judging by the incidence of discolored tubers. If the best results were to be obtained, it would be recommended to use a combination of these preservation methods. This is because ash has some repellent properties to vices such as pests. There is need for further investigation to identify the effectiveness of these techniques across other varieties of the sweet potatoes and also under varying conditions.

### Notes:

1. UNDP, 2004, p. 16-18.
2. UNAIDS, 2004, p. 127.
3. AREX, 2004, p. 1-5.
4. Mariga, 2000, p. 16.
5. Tabenhouse, 1989, p. 8.
6. Warren, 1991, p. 8-9.
7. Warren, 1991, p. 23.
8. Flavier, et al, 1995, p. 5-6.
9. Kone, 1991, p. 7.
10. Mutimba, 1996, p. 4-7.
11. Zimbabwe Agricultural Policy Framework, 1995- 2020, P. 1-5.
12. Del Carpio, 1969.
13. Ramirez, 2005, p. 5-8.
14. AREX, 2004, p. 1-5.

15. Kone, 1991, p. 7.
16. Hand and Cockerham, 1921, p. 23.
17. Anochilli, 1984, p. 67.
18. Warren, 1991, p. 33.
19. Anochilli, 1984, p. 67, Kone, 1991, p. 7.
20. Owen, 1987, p. 16-23.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

### **Identifying the Limits to Humanitarian Intervention: Echoes from Rwanda — A Review Article**

**Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda.** Romeo Dallaire. Toronto: Random House Canada, 2003. 584 pp.

**White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good.** William Easterly. New York: Penguin Press, 2006. 448 pp.

**The Limits to Humanitarian Intervention.** Alan Kuperman. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001. 176 pp.

**A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide.** Samantha Power. New York: Basic Books, 2002. 656 pp.

**At the Point of a Gun: Democratic Dreams and Armed Intervention.** David Rieff. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005. 288 pp.

**Surviving the Slaughter: The Ordeal of a Rwandan Refugee in Zaire.** Marie Beatrice Umutesi. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004. 284 pp.

Humanitarianism is now a legitimate goal for nations to pursue. Indeed, it is widely agreed that the international community has a responsibility to intervene in the event of genocide, massive abuse of human rights, and refugee flight. But this is a new ideal which emerged only in the last thirty years following debates about whether sovereignty trumped the responsibility to intervene in places like Biafra, Bangladesh, and especially in Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge reign. This debate is now over: humanitarianism can trump sovereignty. Among other things, this means that genocide is a crime which must be responded to and refugees are entitled to assistance. But this leads to the next question: how in a world of sovereign states with their own laws, armies, courts, and police are such ideals achieved? In other words, in the real world, how can these newly sacred ideals be implemented? Given that there is no international police force or military, how will the international community respond when international humanitarian laws are violated?

A number of international humanitarian operations undertaken within this "responsibility to intervene doctrine" can now be used to evaluate how these ideals fare in the real world of international politics. Since 1980, these include the humanitarian airlift to Ethiopia in 1985, the

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v9/v9i3reviews.pdf>

humanitarian and military intervention in Somalia in 1992-3, interventions in the Balkans in the early 1990s, the humanitarian relief operation following the 1994 Rwanda genocide and refugee crisis, the NATO-led military and humanitarian intervention in Kosovo in 1999, and the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. The American invasion of Iraq in 2003 was partly justified on such “humanitarianism trumps sovereignty” grounds. In 2005-06, there are continuing calls for international intervention in the Darfur region of Sudan.

In the process of undertaking humanitarian interventions, the capacity of the international community to respond is revealed. Indeed, the strengths of the new international humanitarian relief regime are now even taken for granted, and include the responsibility of governments to protect human rights, a defined role for independent peace-keepers, and the responsibility of UN, governmental, and non-governmental agencies to safeguard the victims of war, famine, and other catastrophes. But many weaknesses of the international humanitarian system of are also now apparent.

The failure of the United Nations (and the United States) to respond militarily during the 1994 Rwanda genocide is typically cited as a paradigmatic example of what damage humanitarian inaction can cause. But this awareness is tempered by the observation that excessive involvement puts humanitarians themselves at unacceptable risk. Indeed, while the lack of political will is viewed as a problem, so are the dangers implied by “Crossing the Mogadishu Line,” a reference to the 1993 intervention by the US military which resulted in the deaths of 18 American soldiers. In short, there are risks and dangers associated with the new idealistic humanitarian doctrine for intervention. In the real world, policy makers evaluate when lack of action will result in genocide or famine, while at the same time being aware that interventions can also go badly awry. Literature emerging since 2000 wrestles with the difficulties that emerge as this new ethic is established.

### The Urgent Responsibility to Respond

In a *“Problem from Hell”: America and the Age of Genocide*, Samantha Power examines American responses to genocides of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As the title says, this influential book is about American responsibility to respond to genocide, not about the types of societies which commit genocide. Books like this are particularly important for defending the morality of humanitarian intervention. Though passionate in making this case, they are less precise in developing ideas about what practical steps are available in a world where trumping sovereign rights requires prescient analysis, diplomacy, political will, and logistical capabilities.

Power finds that the United States has long verbalized a commitment to control genocide yet beginning with the Armenian genocide in 1914, there is a bureaucratic incapacity to respond in a timely fashion. She observes a pattern wherein idealistic individuals within the American bureaucracy have raised the issue of intervention, mirrored by a reluctance of politicians to respond to incipient genocides which have little political payoff among domestic constituencies. In short, Power writes, politicians in the democratic United States personally lack the “will” to mobilize the resources of the United States government to stop genocide. Power goes on to compare the righteous bureaucrat who points out the abuse with reluctant bureaucracies more in tune with domestic political considerations than human rights

outrages. Power identifies this pattern with respect not only to Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, but also the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust.

Power selectively chooses her examples by focusing on failures to intervene. This is an easy temptation in the field of disaster prevention where successes (i.e. catastrophe prevented and therefore nothing happens), is always less obvious than failures (i.e. no intervention occurs, and a catastrophe occurs). Power does point out that on occasions outside action seems to have stopped at least some atrocity. Her best examples both come from Kurdistan and include the threats of sanctions against Saddam Hussein who committed atrocities against Kurds in the 1980s as well as the establishment of a humanitarian safe-zone in Kurdistan following the 1991 Gulf War. One could add the case of South Africa which teetered on the brink of civil war in 1993-94, and much of Eastern Europe at the end of the Cold War. Both were places where genocide did not occur despite rapid social dislocation, but as the example of Yugoslavia points out, easily could have.

There are also two other types of interventions missing in Power's analysis. First, Power does not evaluate cases where the United States military did intervene, ostensibly for "humanitarian" reasons, but the intervention failed to meet the high goals set for it. The current war in Iraq which was partly justified on the grounds of Saddam Hussein's terrible human rights record, comes immediately to mind. Other examples include twentieth century interventions in the Caribbean (e.g. Haiti and the Dominican Republic), and other areas. Second, while Power discusses at length the lack of intervention during the Rwandan genocide in 1994, she is inexplicably silent about outrages which did not attract the attention of western political interests. The forced march of several hundred thousand Hutu refugees across Congo/Zaire in 1996-98 comes most immediately to mind. This attack by the victorious Rwandan army helped precipitate the killing and wars leading to the deaths of some four million since 1996 a humanitarian catastrophe unmatched since World War II.

Also unexamined in Power's book is the actual capability of the United States to respond to genocide. At its best, *A Promise from Hell* is a passionate description of the amoral political and legalistic knots that the United States policy making apparatus ties itself into as genocide emerges. But she avoids specifics about how many troops make a successful intervention force, how are these troops supplied, how nineteen year-old Marines communicate with genocide survivors, or how stable government emerges after intervention. But hers is not a nuts and bolts book. Rather it is a general description of the problem of American political will which she assumes has an almost utopian capacity to project force and command obedience anywhere in the world.

### The Limits of Humanitarian Bureaucracies

Where Power is insistent on the appropriateness of US or UN power to solve humanitarian crises, William Easterly is more skeptical. This has more to do with his understanding of international bureaucracies, rather than the justness of a cause. A veteran economist from the World Bank, Easterly now questions the basic premises of large scale efforts by the West to assist the poor, including humanitarian relief operations. As an economist, he emphasizes that foreign aid programs for which beneficiaries cannot provide feedback through either market



mechanisms (i.e. purchasing relief somewhere else if the proffered source is inadequate) or the ballot box (voting out incompetents) are unlikely to efficiently benefit the poor. Humanitarian operations in which a bureaucracy based in New York or Geneva extends protection is likely to be of this nature. Such bureaucracies are primarily responsive to the domestic constituencies which support them through votes and taxes, rather than the foreign poor or potential victims of genocide. He writes that as a result, to fund foreign aid programs, planners often make utopian promises to domestic constituencies who often want “to do good.” As with the nature of all utopias, the actual program inevitably comes up short.

Nevertheless, in the case of Rwanda, Easterly supports the conventional wisdom that military intervention would have mitigated the genocide. Albeit, he does this grudgingly since his overall thesis is that external bureaucracies are unlikely to be effective in responding to a situation with which they are inherently unfamiliar. Preventing the Rwandan genocide may well have worked, but he also notes that the end result would have been an international protectorate which has worked poorly for dealing with issues of economic and political stability in both the colonial (Dutch Indonesia, British India, Belgian Congo, etc) and post-colonial (Haiti, Dominican Republic, Iraq, Serbia/Kosovo, Vietnam, etc) periods.

#### The Limits of Western Diplomatic and Military Response

Alan Kuperman answers the question of what might have happened in Rwanda had the United States intervened militarily in *The Limits to Humanitarian Intervention*. Kuperman claims that given the actual political, military, and diplomatic resources of the United States, it is unlikely that a large enough military force could have stopped the genocide. Kuperman’s estimate is made by evaluating both military logistics, and the actual course of the genocide. Under a *best case* scenario, 15,000 American soldiers could have secured Kigali and rural areas where the genocide occurred. Given the flow of information and logistical capabilities, Kuperman calculates that the operation could have been in place within 40 days, and that as many as 125,000 victims (i.e. 15-20% of an estimated 600,000-800,000) might have been saved.

Kuperman’s thesis has since been challenged by Samantha Power and others who question the dates he used for when President Clinton “could have known and acted” assuming timely and accurate evaluation of available information. The critics indeed may be right. It is clear that President Clinton and others avoided the issue of intervention by resorting to legalism, rather than confronting a criminal act. But this only moves up Kuperman’s “best case” estimate a few days at best, and his central point that the deaths of over 400,000 would have occurred, more than enough to qualify as a major genocide goes unchallenged. The unanswered question throughout is: was this a result of a character deficit specific to President Clinton, or is it embedded in the nature of foreign and defense policy bureaucracies? Critics like Power lean toward the character flaw argument, by explaining that failure to intervene in places like Rwanda is due to weak-kneed leaders lacking political will. But Kuperman points squarely at the limitations of the bureaucracies themselves. Like Easterly, Kuperman is suspicious of the capabilities of bureaucracies to rapidly analyze complicated field data, assemble a diplomatic and military consensus, and then implement a complex logistical operation.

## The Urgent Need to Response in a Difficult Situation

The Canadian general Romeo Dallaire who wrote *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, was the commander of the UN forces assigned to Rwanda beginning in August 1993. As such, he was well aware of logistic issues. Famously, he requested permission to seize weapons brought in by the Rwandan government in a January 1994 fax, but was refused permission by the then-Assistant Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, Kofi Annan. In April 1994, days after the genocide began, he also requested 5,000 troops in order to quell the killing. This request was also denied by Annan at the behest of the Clinton administration.

Dallaire weaves his personal story with the recent history of Rwanda. He describes well the various personalities involved in the genocide and its aftermath. Revealing are his interactions both with the former government of Rwanda which committed the genocide, and the government established in July 1994 by the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) of General Kagame. Dallaire's affection for his multi-national force is obvious, and he relates the sad story of his post-Rwanda emotional breakdown in an engaging fashion which emphasizes how vulnerable we all are to horror.

As with Power, Dallaire is a proponent of aggressive military engagement in humanitarian catastrophes like Rwanda. And undoubtedly he is right that if his orders had been changed, and reinforcements arrived when he requested them, many lives, particularly in Kigali, could have been saved. Unlike Kuperman though, Dallaire does not dissect the logistics of stationing and supporting troops on short notice in rural Rwanda where so much of the killing took place. This leaves unanswered the more detailed questions about how much force is needed to curb a genocide? Likewise, how credible were threats from an invading army (in this case the RPF under General Kagame), that any intervention would be viewed as a hostile act?

## Morality, Ambiguity, and More Utopias

Like Power and Dallaire (and unlike Kuperman), David Rieff's essays in *At the Point of a Gun* have a strong focus on the morality of humanitarianism and human rights. Rieff describes in detail the emergence of the new humanitarianism, and gives credit to the non-governmental organizations which in the 1980s and 1990s developed the humanitarian imperative to provide aid and comfort to civilian populations. Rieff's complaint is about the success of this idea. As he points out, humanitarianism has been so successful that western governments, particularly the United States, have co-opted humanitarian advocacy groups (e.g., the Red Cross, IRC, CARE, and UN agencies) which developed the concept in the first place, with lucrative contracts to provide humanitarian aid. The U.S. government now even seeks to provide relief services through private contractors they can control, as in the case of the Iraq and Afghanistan.

Indeed, Rieff repeatedly quotes from U. S. Secretary of State's Colin Powell's speech in which he thanked humanitarian NGOs such as CARE for joining the US "combat team" in the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan. Rieff is particularly skeptical about the role of militaries in stopping human rights violations. He views the use of military force as an inherent affront to humanitarian ideals and is critical of NGOs who assume that they can use militaries to protect

relief operations. In fact, he claims that using the terms “military” and “humanitarian” in the same breath is always a contradiction. Whenever soldiers and humanitarians come into contact, it is military logic emphasizing skills at war, security, and violence which dominate. He cites numerous cases from places like the former Yugoslavia, Kurdistan, Somalia and Afghanistan where such cooperation did not work in the manner planned by humanitarians.

Despite acknowledging that military intervention typically makes a situation worse before it gets better, Rieff is not a pacifist. He supported the use of military in places like Kosovo and Afghanistan where long-term humanitarian good is served by deposing odious governments. Nevertheless, he notes that even in these cases, the use of military power always results in the death of innocents. This results in the ironic assertion that it is sometimes necessary to destroy a place in order to save it.

So Rieff’s contention is not so much with military intervention per se, rather it is with the co-optation of humanitarianism by militaries. Because so much funding and policy making originates from the U.S. State Department, no longer do humanitarian agencies critique policy, or more importantly, independently implement programs reflecting abstract humanitarian principles, as opposed to U.S. foreign policy. After all, if relief is about simply delivering services, why not let a food catering services or building contractor do it? Rieff’s fear is that as cooptation occurs, refugees will come to see such agencies not as their protectors, but as representative of foreign policies and even militaries. While undoubtedly refugees would rather be at the mercy of the US foreign policy rather than the Somali, Sudanese, or Rwandan governments, Rieff points out that humanitarian pioneers are nevertheless losing their independence.

### A Ground Level View of the Humanitarian Relief Regime

Rare feedback from the beneficiaries of humanitarian aid is provided by Marie Beatrice Umutesi, a Rwandan NGO organizer. In 1996-7 she walked 2000 km. across Zaire with hundreds of thousands of Rwandan Hutu refugees fleeing the new RPF-dominated government. Umutesi provides a moving account of what it meant to be a Hutu refugee in 1994-97 in a variety of refugee camps, and later on the fly as she and her adopted family of women and children fled. Her story is an account of fear, flight and hope — something of a cross between *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and *The Great Escape*. But the focus of this review is on her view of international refugee agencies’ policies towards, her and fellow Rwandan refugees.

Umutesi’s view is important because the Hutu refugee population was stigmatized by the UNHCR, U.S. government, and many NGOS, as being less worthy of assistance because Hutu *genocidaires* lived amongst them. In describing their experience, Umutesi illuminates both the strengths and weaknesses of the humanitarian assistance regime. The refugee relief agencies, convinced that all Hutu refugees were guilty if not of genocide then at least abetting it, extended aid only begrudgingly. Assistance, Umutesi writes, was too little, too late, and distributed with a poor understanding of political conditions. She is also critical of agencies which when faced with security concerns, abandoned refugees during military offensives by Kagame’s Rwandan Army and Congolese rebels. Instead of offering succor, western agencies encouraged forcible repatriation of refugees to Rwanda on flights chartered by the UNHCR. As

reported by Umutesi, encouragement even included offering \$10 bounties to Congolese betraying fleeing refugees.

Umutesi's view of the international humanitarian relief regime is both a hopeful and harsh one. As a refugee, she actively seeks, and sometimes receives assistance from the UN and other agencies. It is clear from her account that she does believe that the assistance provided by CARE, MSF, UNHCR, WFP, and the other agencies are humanitarian entitlements, not charity. Time after time Umutesi's survival depends not on the international refugee relief regime, but on the generosity of local Congolese and other refugees. In the meantime, the children and women with whom she flees die and disappear in the context of violence, hunger, disease, and exhaustion.

But most of Umutesi's book is not about the short-comings of the international humanitarian community. Rather it is about the people who helped her. Many of these people are refugees themselves, and Congolese. There are also Europeans. Her heroes are those who fed them and provided a safe place to sleep despite risks to themselves. Her book is a reminder that no matter how fantastic and far-reaching the reach of the international community may be, it is on the ground when people flee that humanitarian assistance is proffered.

### An Uneasy Way Forward?

The debate in the humanitarian world today — between the ideals and the real world applications — is an old one. Indeed, classical sociologist Emile Durkheim described it in his essay about the “dual nature of society” as being about the sacred world of shared ideals, and the everyday profane world where people fail to meet their own high standards. Much good advocacy work was done by people like Samantha Power to establish humanitarian ideals, and hold governments accountable at least in the court of public opinion. The success of advocates for human rights like Power and Dallaire is reflected in the range of new agencies and institutions addressing problems previously considered to be internal sovereign matters. Among these are refugee rights, genocide, and mass murder. These ideals are now sacred, and in the very real world of international politics can even sometimes even trump state sovereignty.

Ideals, sacred or not, are always idealistic and utopian. But they are important for orienting bureaucratic action, even if perfection is not always achieved. The problem is that single-minded crusaders pursuing sacred ideals have a natural tendency towards hubris and in the process sometimes even miss humanitarian outrages such as the Congo catastrophe. They are above all moral entrepreneurs specializing in establishing new principles, and not focused on the unintended complications of the policies they advocate. The righteousness of the humanitarian cause is now self-evident, yet they still need people like Alan Kuperman, David Rieff, and William Easterly to remind them that organizations are not only made of ideals, but also of policies, programs and constituencies. These are imperfect institutions which, left to their own devices and without checks, tend to become focused on internal bureaucratic and ideological dynamics, rather than the problem they were designed to address.

The most compelling critique of both the successes and weaknesses of the international refugee relief regime is found in Beatrice Umutesi's story. Her goal was to seek the assistance

from the international aid regime to which she was entitled as a refugee. As a refugee, she is aware of the new international norms about her rights against forcible repatriation, and the UNHCR's responsibility to her. This awareness is a success. The victims of Biafra, Bangladesh, and Cambodia did not share her expectation. Instead it was simply assumed that sovereign governments could treat their citizens without any accountability to the outside world. Beatrice Umutesi and the illiterate Rwandan peasants she fled with in 1996-97 were aware that there was a new ethic in the world to which the humanitarian agencies are accountable. Umutesi is of course repeatedly disappointed and the deaths of her family and friends are the result. This happened because she is both an idealist and acutely aware that humanitarian institutions are unable to achieve high ideals in a profane and imperfect world. The appalling costs of such limitations are very apparent in what she writes. But the hope that this new humanitarian consciousness, which extends even into the remote Congolese forests, should also not be forgotten. This is a victory of the world's humanitarian activists like Samantha Power, and they should receive credit for it.

Tony Waters  
*California State University, Chico*

**U.S. Policy in Postcolonial Africa: Four Case Studies in Conflict Resolution. F. Ugboaja Ohaegbulam. New York: Peter Lang, 2004. 280 pp.**

This book is one of many books that have been directed at the American foreign policy in Third World Countries. It attempts to give its readers clear accounts of the U.S. foreign policy in Africa since the end of colonialization. The central objective of the United States foreign policy is to protect the United States' national interest. Ohaegbulam demonstrates that although the U.S. had no interest in the continent prior to the 1940's, the threat of the Soviet Union, and the influence that the Soviet Union could wield in the decolonizing African states, was pivotal in how the United States advanced its foreign policy on the continent. Therefore, the U.S. involvement is seen as a response to the Soviet Union's actions in the African continent.

Ohaegbulam maintains that although the U.S is not the primary sponsor of conflicts in Africa; some of its policies have helped to permeate these conflicts. The exigencies of the United States and former Soviet Union's contention during the Cold War, and the inefficiency of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now African Union (AU), in conflict resolution, according to the author, exacerbated most of the African conflicts. The book contains ten chapters. The first, which introduces the U.S. role in global politics, provides a conceptual definition of U.S. national security, which is tied to U.S. national interest. Chapter two is an overview of African conflicts since the demise of colonial rule. Ohaegbulam laments the various internal crises that have left Africa in a state of dilapidation.

Chapters three and four address U.S policy in Africa by proxy, as evident in logistical support of America to its European allies who were the colonial powers in Africa. According to Ohaegbulam, the aim of this support through the colonial powers was to suppress "the struggle



for national liberation”(51). However, the events of the Second World War had greatly weakened the economic powers of these colonial countries, such that they could not maintain their grips on their colonies. The Soviet Union and the U.S emerged as the two superpowers produced by the Second World War. The fear of the Soviet Union spreading its communist ideology to Africa, and the fear that Africa might become the Soviet Union’s area of influence; made Africa one of the central focuses of U.S. foreign policy. This was the beginning of the colossal rivalry between the U.S. and the Soviet Union in Africa. The U.S. strategy shifted from logistically supporting its Western allies to becoming physically involved in Africa. For instance, one of the first U.S. involvements in Africa was in Ethiopia, in the Horn of Africa. The U.S. marveled at the “Ethiopians’ valor in the Korean War and decided to provide the Ethiopians military assistance. Moreover, the U.S. saw the proximity of Ethiopia to the Middle East as strategic to its interest in the region (55).

In chapters five through eight, which provide the main substance of the book, Ohaegbulam uses four case studies to illustrate the U.S. policy in Africa, with a chapter dedicated to each case study. The case studies are: “U.S. Role in Conflicts in the Horn of Africa”; “U.S. Role in the Western Sahara Conflict, 1975-2003”; “U.S. Role in the Angolan Conflict, 1975-2002”; and “The United States and the Genocide in Rwanda, 1994.” The succinct presentation of each case by exploring their historical and political themes is the strength of this book. Each of the cases presents a different cultural and political aspect into the evolution of their problems. Ohaegbulam demonstrates that in all these conflicts, the U.S. was a major supplier of weaponry. Most exceptional is the Genocide in Rwanda. As the most powerful nation on earth, the U.S failed to stop the act of genocide from happening partly because of its bureaucratic policy decision- making structure, and largely because of the traumatic experience of the Somalian saga where eighteen U.S. marines were killed in the early 1990s. The picture of the marines that were killed in Somalia haunted the Clinton administration and prevented action in the case of Rwanda (213). In the remaining case studies, the author gives insight into how the U.S. supplied the weapons that were used in these conflicts.

Together, these case studies demonstrate the negative impact of the U.S. involvement in these conflicts on the socioeconomic status of African countries more than a decade past the end of the Cold War. The countries profiled in these case studies are some of the problematic situations that still threaten security in Africa. Chapters nine and ten deal with the formation of an African security force, (African Crisis Response Initiative) inspired by the Clinton administration after the Rwandan failure, to perform peacekeeping mission in the region because it is believed that Africa’s problem would be best solved by Africans.

For political science graduate students, the first chapter of this book can be skimmed over because the message it conveys has been brilliantly done elsewhere (See Wittkopf, Kegley, Jr., & Scott, 2003). This book provides its readers with intrinsic compilation of issues that surround both the internal and external influence on the conflicts in Africa. For its positive contribution to the study of American policy in Africa, Ohaegbulam’s book is somewhat limited by its focus on only the security aspect of the U.S. policy in Africa, thereby ignoring other aspects such as diplomacy and economics.

Another weakness of this book is the occasional repetition of certain ideas. To be fair, in many instances, this weakness is the consequence of the similarities of the U.S. policy in each



study. This book might not be the most thorough analysis of U.S foreign policy in Africa, but the author shares with his readers a clearly written review of U.S. involvement in Africa, from an African perspective. In sum, Ohaegbulam's book contributes nothing new to the study of the U.S. policy in post-colonial Africa, but it offers its readers a reminder of the U.S. over-all policy of self-interest in Africa.

Lekan Badru

*University of Louisville, Kentucky*

Reference:

Wittkopf, R.E., Kegley, Jr., C.W., & Scott. (2003). *American Foreign Policy* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth Inc.

**Southern Africa in World Politics: Local Aspirations and Global Entanglements. Janice Love. Cambridge: Westview Press, 2005. 224 pp.**

If one wants to understand the Southern African region, one needs to look at the interaction between 'global entanglements' and 'local aspirations'. This is the subtitle and the central message of Janice Love's book 'Southern Africa in World Politics'. For the military, political and economic fields she convincingly shows how global involvements influence what happens in the region and that these can have both positive and negative effects. In chapter four on 'political globalization' she illustrates the positive effects by pointing at the enormous contributions of the international anti-apartheid lobby to end the white minority regimes in the region. In chapter three and five on military and economic globalization respectively, she shows the negative effects by pointing at the protracted wars in Angola and Mozambique due to cold war world-power meddling and the influence of global neoliberal policies that have as of yet done little to decrease the enormous economic disparities in the region.

These and many other examples of where the global meets the local in Southern Africa are carefully traced through history, whereby Love distinguishes between various phases of globalization, but lays most emphasis on 'contemporary' globalization from 1945 to the present. The main questions in the book are whether there is anything distinctive about the contemporary phase versus past phases of globalization and whether the heart of globalization is formed by its economic dimension (pp.14-15). Love believes that the former is clearly proven in the Southern African region because of the intensity and speed with which global-local linkages change and influence one another. Regarding the latter she argues that although "in summary, if judged by the plight of the majority of people, economic interactions across local, regional, and global arena's on the whole have not served Southern Africa very well" the analysis in her book "shows that globalization is both multidimensional and complex" and one dimension of the phenomenon does not clearly outweigh the others (pp.210-211). And this is probably the strongest point of the book. Although people familiar with the region will find little new information in Love's book, she does put forth a very balanced picture of events in the

region, showing both the complexity and multidimensionality of globalization in Southern Africa.

The downside of the book is the rather simplistic way in which the theoretical framework is set up and applied, leading almost expectedly to few fresh or new insights in the rest of the book. Love, after Giddens and Held, defines globalization as the way in which “culture, politics, economics, and other social activities are stretched out across boundaries such that ‘events and decisions taking place on one side of the world have a significant impact on the other’” (pp.2-3). As a corollary, globalization is also characterized by localization but this is basically where the framework stops. In a liberal behavioralist tradition, she then analyses and frames all important military, political and economic events in this simplistic format. Love uncomfortably equates localization with ‘African ethnic rivalries’ (p.49), military globalization with a global ‘expanding of organized violence’ in the region (p.64) and argues that post cold war ‘new developments in military globalization’ revolve around disputes *within* nations (p.66). Moreover, the amount of times whereby inherently political issues are brought back to the mere ‘links between the global, regional and local’ leave the reader wondering whether these links are in the end unavoidable and more or less neutral interactions that have little to do with political ideology or historical inequalities. Admittedly, Love does on several occasions critique ‘neoliberal’ political and economic global entanglements in Southern Africa or the devastating disregard for local lives due to cold war rivalries, but somehow these do not sound convincing as they seem to disappear into the inevitabilities of the links between the global, regional and local. Possibly these points of critique stem from the fact that the book does not draw on a very wide range of literature available on the region. In fact, the book draws heavily on several ‘hot’ authors in the general global governance and globalization debates, such as Rosenau, Held and Sachs and therefore looses out on the more critical and nuanced literature available, especially that from the region itself.

These critiques do not make the book a less worthwhile read, but do impact on the potential audience for the book. As stated before, neither the issues covered in the book nor the viewpoints with which they are approached are new to those familiar with the region. For those unfamiliar with Southern Africa, this book provides a clear introduction to the political and military economy of the region and is therefore ideal for teaching (under-) graduate classes. This is even more so because Love explains all the main concepts encountered in the text and because of the fluidity of her writing. This is an achievement in itself and although it should be taught together with some more critical insights, the book is therefore a welcome contribution to the literature on Southern Africa.

Bram Büscher

*Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands*

**Getting In: Mediators' Entry into the Settlement of African Conflicts.** Mohammed O. Maundi, I. William Zartman, Gilbert M. Khadiagala, and Kwaku Nuamah. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006. 256 pp.

*Getting In* is a well-written piece that delivers on its promise of a systematic study of the entry stage of mediation in macro-level African conflicts or wars. A comparative approach is used to make universal claims supported by interpretations of case studies from Rwanda, Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville, Liberia, Sudan, and the Eritrea-Ethiopia war. The authors use the scholarly literature and media accounts of the events in the targeted areas to describe the background of the conflicts and the attempts to mediate. They also draw on insider information from their contacts and Zartman's participation in the Congo-Brazzaville mediation effort of the Carter Center.

The book reads like a skillfully done write-up of a positivist research proposal, and it apparently emerged from the doctoral dissertation of Maundi, which was supervised by Zartman. The approach is grounded in concepts associated with Zartman such as the realist paradigm and the hurting stalemate, and *Getting In* is essentially an extension of his well-known work. A processional framework is used to situate the primary object of study, pre-mediation or initiation of mediation entry, as the first of three stages of international mediation. The second and third phases are issue negotiation and implementation of the agreement.

The authors employ a pragmatic, conflict management perspective. One of their conclusions is that international mediators do not need to change the parties' zero-sum (win/lose) orientation. The focus is on getting agreements that will reduce, contain, or end ongoing armed conflict. They do not substantively discuss reconciliation or the recent work on conflict transformation and peacebuilding. The core concept is summed up on page 175: "Prospective mediators are motivated by their own self-interests in either initiating entry or accepting an invitation to mediate and parties to a conflict are equally motivated by self-interests in accepting mediation and entry of a particular mediator." The volume masterfully presents the mainstream, rational choice theory type view prevalent in political science and international relations. The text is effective in illustrating the considerable explanatory power of the utilitarian, interest-based analytical framework for inter- and intra-state conflict.

The narrow focus is beneficial insofar as it makes for a tight, concise discussion. However, a dialogue with relevant Africanist scholarship would have made the work more interesting and broadened the potential readership. The citations are primarily drawn from media reports or policy-oriented scholarship from the northeastern United States. Many other connections could have been made. The Congo-Brazzaville discussion, for instance, could have been linked to the literature on the sociohistorical construction of pathologies of power and Bayart and Chabal's discussions of (neo)patrimonialism. Africanists might also find some surprises such as the use of the term "tribes" (p. 86) in the context of a discussion that makes much of ethnicity, although it seems to indicate that a fundamentally regionalist and not tribalist cleavage may be a more appropriate characterization of the divisions in Congo-Brazzaville.

*Getting In* is appropriate for policy-oriented readers interested in political science and the international relations approach to conflict resolution. It should be considered more as a product of those fields than as an example of specialized African Studies as it originated out of

what Avruch (1998) has called “the generic approach” to conflict resolution. As the authors aver, the conclusions of their comparative study are potentially applicable beyond the African continent. In this regards, several intriguing points mentioned in the case studies could have been given further consideration. It would have been interesting to see greater development of the more innovative aspects of the text such as the discussion of layered mediation (p. 90).

*Getting In* is not a provocative work likely to make waves or create debates but a very competent and well-organized examination of core concepts in the realist school of international conflict management. The first and final chapters would make good primers for students interested in that subject, and they also offer a nice illustration of the end product of a positivist research project. In fact, these chapters exemplify the scientific approach to research and could be assigned reading for some doctoral students preparing for their dissertations; they present a clear research problem and propose a number of hypotheses which are then addressed in the text.

The authors deserve praise for writing a clear and succinct book geared toward highlighting straightforward, practical lessons of interest to policymakers. As they point out, this is a relatively unexplored topical area; perhaps the next step could be a more creative extension of this substantial work. There are many theoretical issues that could be explored without losing sight of the laudable goal of producing practical insights of potential value to peacemakers. *Getting In* offers a good foundation and it will be a key reference for subsequent research and literature on the initiation of conflict mediation.

Mark Davidheiser

*Nova Southeastern University*

Reference:

Avruch, Kevin. *Culture and Conflict Resolution*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press. 1998.

**The Angels Have Left Us: The Rwanda Tragedy and the Churches (with foreword by Desmond Tutu). Hugh McCullum. Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004. 132 pp.**

The subject of the complicity of everyday citizens in the tragedy of the genocide in Rwanda has been thoroughly explored in both scholarly and popular literature. However, the issue of the complicity of churches of all faiths has a particular fascination. In fact, the title of perhaps the most widely read popular account of the genocide, *We Wish to Inform you That Tomorrow we Will be Killed with Our Families* by Philip Gourevitch comes directly from a letter written from Tutsi victims to the leader of the Adventist church in Mugonero. McCullum’s book deals explicitly with only the religious relationship, including historical context, in Rwanda and is admittedly a journalistic account of such events.

The introduction to the book examines some of the historical myths and details surrounding the Tutsi-Hutu divide in Rwanda and although the information presented in the opening chapters is basic and lacks detail, it is factually sound and makes no attempt to

promulgate the “ancient tribal hatreds” myth often found in journalistic works on the subject. A chapter briefly glosses over the international dimension of the genocide, including arms transfers, training, etc., although once again, it’s short on detail, but long on well-known criticisms of Mitterand’s France and Mobutu’s Zaire (Democratic Republic of Congo). The chapter detailing the gruesome anatomy of the genocide criticizes the international community, especially the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), but McCullum avoids the derisive condemnation found in other eyewitness accounts and these have largely been addressed in other, more complex works.

The best elements of this work are the descriptions of the various churches and their behaviors during and immediately following the genocide, as McCullum was a journalist-observer during the actual conflict, and thus provides detailed eyewitness accounts. An interesting note is McCullum’s brief detail of the church’s response to the largely Hutu refugees in Eastern Zaire immediately following the genocide. The meat of McCullum’s work is essentially concerning the Catholic and Protestant (Adventist and Anglican) churches in the country, placing blame on the churches for their inability or unwillingness to help during the genocide especially given the power of the Catholic Church as an institution in the country. The close relationship between Habyarimana’s regime and the Catholic Church is touched on, but not given much explanation. Especially crucial to understanding the church’s behavior is McCullum’s portrayal of the post-genocide meetings of the Presbyterian Church and others examining the church after the events occur. The author attempts to reach an understanding of why the churches failed to respond and his discussion of leadership, problems and solutions is clear, concise and well-meaning. A larger part of the book is actually devoted to the churches’ role in Rwanda post-genocide as opposed to complicity during the event itself. This is somewhat frustrating, as a clearer answer on exactly how entangled the churches, especially the Protestant denominations, were involved in the genocide is missing from the current literature on the subject. A deeper discussion on the relationship between the new Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)-led government and the churches would have added to the quality of the material. McCullum essentially introduces the question of how much the various religions and African governments should collude, but never entirely answers it.

I find a number of things lacking in this account. For one, the sources of actual information are scant and are mostly reports either put out by churches or other non-governmental organizations. While sometimes effective sources, these reports often suffer the burden of bias and subjectivity. The book certainly opens the subject of religious bodies and political conflict up to those casual observers of the genocide, but more seasoned scholars will almost certainly find nothing new in the narrative. While many significant inquiries are raised, both as a matter of general interest and as one worthy of scholarship, their treatment remains unsatisfying. The author poses some interesting questions and seems to suggest answers, but never completes the thought process and investigation behind them. The book’s brief length (121 pages) is indicative of the quality of data given by the book- it provides only minimal coverage. Thus, the book is really meant for the introductory reader into the study of the Rwandan genocide.

However, even given the lack of fine detail and the glossing of historical record, the book challenges us both as scholars and world citizens to probe the way in which we act during tragedy, and ask ourselves to grapple with the notion of religious responsibilities during acts of



violence. This is certainly a thought provoking dilemma, whether one is a scholar investigating religion and politics, a development worker trying to find post-conflict solutions, or simply an interested spectator. McCullum succeeds in presenting an easily digestible, accurate, and accessible account of the events that took place April-July 1994 and the immediate efforts of post-conflict reconciliation involving the various religious entities and the sheer difficulty all parties involved face in doing so. While not necessarily adding to the body of work available on the subject, McCullum certainly helps to survey another component of the genocide in the hopes that through historical dissection and review prevention is possible.

Cara Hauck  
*University of Florida*

**The United Nations Development Programme: A Better Way? Craig N. Murphy. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 372 pp.**

International development agencies suffer no shortage of critics. Fifty plus years removed from the international community's first efforts to reduce global poverty and lessen the inequality gap between the world's rich and poor, the agencies involved in this effort have variously been criticized for doing too much, too little, or nothing at all. The large multilateral agencies (i.e. IMF, UN, World Bank), given their central roles in development, have been placed under the greatest amount of scrutiny, most of which has originated outside these institutions.

Craig N. Murphy delivers an illuminating 'insider' exposition of one of the most ubiquitous international development agencies, The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which plays a strategic role in the coordination of UN activities in more than 150 countries. While the book was requisitioned by UNDP, Murphy — an academic historian — claims he was given total access to the organization and complete creative independence. Murphy deftly manages to synthesize twenty-two months of extensive research, including hundreds of interviews carried out in more than two dozen countries, into an impressively detailed yet accessible narrative. Although the book's focus is UNDP, its insights should be generalized to the development industry and internalized by all individuals or organizations interested in development.

Historically, international development agencies favored allocating resources to highly visible projects and the production of glossy reports for public consumption. According to the book, UNDP has taken a different approach to development. Murphy portrays an organization that prefers to operate 'behind the scenes', effecting change for which it neither receives, nor seeks, recognition. UNDP's willingness to work on development issues regardless of geopolitical or ideological considerations and to work closely with aid recipients to custom-design development plans has earned it the title of "the development programme of the developing countries." The trust and respect developing nations grant UNDP make possible the close working partnerships with governments and organizations so vital to the organization's success in fostering sustainable development.



Despite good intentions and its position within the UN, however, UNDP, like other development organizations, cannot completely ignore donor demands. Murphy's analysis reveals the tensions international development organizations face in attempting to appease donors while concomitantly designing sustainable poverty solutions that reflect the input of aid recipients. The two activities are not always compatible, and the traditional power structure of the international system and the interests of nation-states frequently impede UNDP's development efforts. One of the real strengths of this book is that it provides a rare inside glimpse into the complex problems international development agencies must overcome in order to survive and succeed. Though these organizations often are the objects of (deserved) criticism, Murphy's candid examination of UNDP reveals that, at times, circumstances force development organizations into compromises that sabotage their efforts.

In the face of the constraints that may act on UNDP within the international system, the structure of the international organization itself is actually much more freeing. In contrast to other more rigidly hierarchical multilateral development institutions, UNDP comprises a loose network of relatively autonomous people and agencies, which allows the organization the flexibility and self-reflectivity necessary to continually innovate and refine its approach to development. The organization's ability to learn and adapt is evident in its gradual shift from a "development as efficiency" to a "development as freedom" vision of development, in which UNDP's approach evolved from focusing on technical knowledge transfers to promoting human and political development to alleviate poverty. The organization's flexibility allowed advocacy issues — such as education, health, the empowerment of women, and democracy promotion — to become the core of its reconstituted agenda. The recognized complexity of development led UNDP in 1990 to create the *Human Development Report*, which charts global and national progress for a set of indicators related to people's capacities to direct their own lives. These annual reports have broadened the definition and focus of development and transformed the funding allocations of nearly all development agencies away from economic growth and efficiency toward poverty reduction and social welfare.

While UNDP has been criticized for working too closely with authoritarian governments or for supporting the austere measures of the World Bank and IMF, Murphy portrays the UNDP as an organization that recognizes the efficacy of a pragmatic and incremental approach to development. UNDP operates as a 'venture socialist' that opens political space, empowering local advocacy groups while simultaneously weakening the intolerance and resistance of repressive regimes. UNDP seeks to strengthen marginalized groups and individuals so that they develop the capacity to challenge the Bretton Woods institutions. In short, UNDP recognizes that it can effect greater change by operating within the status quo than it could if it disengaged completely.

Despite Murphy's praises of institutional innovation, critics of international development agencies will undoubtedly find evidence here to support their claims as well. For his part, Murphy identifies UNDP's shortcomings along with its strengths. He notes that at various times throughout its history UNDP has suffered from bureaucratic incompetence, inefficiency, and shortsightedness. It has initiated ill-advised projects that failed. Even though its structure as a 'loose' network has allowed it to learn and adapt, UNDP has on occasion suffered from

organizational insularity and the desire to control information, often at the expense of organizational learning.

Yet while Murphy dutifully records both the good and bad associated with UNDP's efforts, glaringly underrepresented in this otherwise impressive historical narrative is the story of UNDP told from the perspective of its supposed beneficiaries. Murphy relies on the archival record, secondary literature, and interviews with individuals associated with UNDP, and largely neglects the voices of aid recipients. What Murphy sterilely recounts as mistakes contributing to UNDP's learning process have had very real consequences for those the organization intended, but failed, to assist. Failure to account for these human costs lends the book an overall feel of championing UNDP. Throughout the book it is obvious — Murphy even acknowledges this explicitly — that he is a believer in the organization's vision of development. The book's contribution would have been greater had Murphy included the viewpoints of aid recipients and let readers arrive at their own conclusions concerning the effectiveness and appropriateness of the organization's vision of development.

This shortcoming notwithstanding, Murphy delivers an impressively well written account of the challenges and opportunities faced by one of the world's leading development agencies. At its core, this book is a story about human agency operating within the context of the constraints and opportunities created by the structures of a bureaucratic organization and the international system. It is the story of the trials and tribulations of well-intentioned individuals hoping to make the world a more equitable place. Like all humans, and like all organizations, they have made mistakes." These compassionate and hopeful men and women did things over sixty years that were sometimes triumphantly brilliant and, at other times, horribly foolish, even if motivated by impeccable intentions. "The real gauge of organizations like UNDP may be not whether they can foster democracy or eradicate inequality, but rather, whether they can improve "a situation that otherwise would have been worse."

Joseph Kraus  
*University of Florida*

**Images of Empire: Photographic Sources for the British in the Sudan. W. Daly and Jane R. Hogan. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2005. 391pp.**

Everything about the Sudan seems anomalous: A peculiar name (country of the Blacks), an exceptionally vast and oddly located country with little human and natural resources and a complex identity torn between black Africa and the Moslem Arab world. Stereotypes about the Sudan, its language, its people, its African backwardness and Arab culture of racism and violence, which still endure, add to the bleak picture of the Sudan. What is happening in Darfur today unfortunately reinforces these not new and negative perceptions of the Sudan.

This scholarly work, which deals with the socio - political history of the Sudan during the Anglo-Egyptian rule, a period also labelled the Condominium period, is a major contribution to

the imperial history of the region. This book, however, is much more about the British experience in the Sudan than the life of the Sudanese.

This pictorial history of the period offers us live images of the empire thanks to an impressive collection of photographic sources on the British Sudan from 1896 to 1956. The Durham Collection of photographs (together with the Sudan Archives Photographic Collection) is unique since it was never intended for publication. Yet, the authors' adequate choice of the photos and the way they illustrate the themes under cover, cast no doubt about their value as reliable historical sources of the period. Hogan and Daly's photographs tell us a great deal of the history of the British Empire in the Sudan, but in a different way. Very much like written sources, photographic sources settle controversies; illustrate key events; depict people and places; describe the famous and the powerful. Two significant criteria seem to have dictated the choice of the 303 photos of the book: their recording something of interest and their sense of time and place and what would represent it; including the interplay of change and continuity.

This copious photographic record is all the more important since it raises questions about the intellectual curiosity not only of the photographer but also of those who were photographed. Very few among these seem to have bothered writing about the country they ruled, the society around them, and the local culture and daily life of the Sudanese. Not one single photograph tells something about the Sudanese culture and society: a local wedding, a funeral, a meal, a mosque or a local tribe. These imperial images which clearly support racial and cultural biases towards the Sudan and Africa by extension, nevertheless, should not be seen in isolation and can in fact be instrumental in analysing and criticizing these imperial stereotypes.

Eleven short but highly documented and thoroughly discussed chapters (with the exception of the lengthy and historically loaded introduction) followed by an appropriate selection of photographs to illustrate the chapter's theme structure the book. The themes include the British departure to the Sudan and its mixed emotions, the North-South wide divide and their radically different fortunes, the development of the railways, the colonial architectural heritage left to the Sudanese, British leisure pursuits in the Sudan, and British women and their roles. All revolves around British rule, its grandeur; its ceremonial aspect and its achievements as well as around what the British used to do even when those activities were idle. The Egyptians, who co-ruled the Sudan with the British during the Condominium and who financed most of the infrastructures in the Sudan are belittled and almost excluded from this illustrated history.

This book is, of course, about a colonial encounter, which, in reality, did not take place and when it did, it was then largely fraught with dangers of misunderstanding, misinterpretations and misimpressions. The photographic sources tell us in fact more about the coloniser than about the colonised, partly because it is the coloniser who took the photos. It is also because the colonised was absent, irrelevant, subsidiary, passive and subordinate. He was almost everything the coloniser was not or did not embody. The backward local values could not match the enlightened and civilized colonial ones. In the encounter, the colonised is nothing but an alien.

The nature of relationships between the British and the Sudanese was crystal clear, one of superiors and subordinates. The British command, control, act, teach and guide, while the

Sudanese learn, imitate and obey. This is reflected not only in the public photography of the Condominium era, the official source, but even in the more personal photos taken by British officials, the administrative staff, missionaries, engineers, teachers and other British residents. Both kinds of photos emphasize those values which seemed most useful in justifying the British presence in the Sudan and maintaining British control such as military strength, order, ritual, the love of adventure and danger, the sense of sacrifice and achievement. The photos include the identity of the British but not the Sudanese. Many of these photos need no comment indeed. They relate all the story of the civilizing mission undertaken by the British in what was regarded as an out-of-the-norm continent.

This collection of imperial images of the Sudan has shown that the strong barrier of colonial mentality prevented positive interactions across races and cultures. Even in the Northern Sudan, where most of the British and Sudanese reside, work and therefore interact, opportunities for friendship even among the elites after more than half a century of colonial encounter were superficial and easier in theory than in reality.

This is an extra good reference for the historian and student of Africa and African colonialism. It highlights the richness of photographic sources for the understanding and analysis of British colonial rule in the Sudan. The photographic record can also be of great interest to those with a fancy for historical photos.

Adel Manai

*Université Tunis El Manar*

**Displacement Risks in Africa: Refugees, Resettlers and Their Host Population. Itaru Ohta and Yntiso D. Gebre (eds). Kyoto, Japan: Kyoto University Press/Trans Pacific Press, 2005. 394 pp.**

*Displacement Risks in Africa: Refugees, Resettlers and Their Host Population* is a compilation of studies that were initially presented at the conference, "Multidimensionality of Displacement Risks in Africa," held in Kyoto, Japan, in 2002. Itaru Ohta and Yntiso D. Gebre have brought together articles from the conference in this volume with the aim of analyzing the major causes of displacement, the groups at risk of displacement and strategies for countering these risks in Africa. Ranging from literature reviews to specific case studies, this book attempts analysis of an extremely broad and complex issue. Yet, it lacks an adequate framework of analysis or structure that would assist the reader in connecting the common threads of analysis.

The result is a book that contains a collection of articles that are at times fascinating for their research methodology, thematic focus or unique policy-relevant findings. However, as an overall volume, the book fall short of the aims outlined in the introduction, while the shortcomings are made all the more glaring by the strong statement in the introduction that the book "conceptually qualifies" as one of only three studies that "promote comparative analysis of displacement experiences" (9). Despite including the impacts of displacement on groups who have been "largely underestimated or neglected by donors, mainstream development

researchers, and policy makers" (9), the volume fails to capitalize on this focus and draw firmer theoretical analysis from some of the threads of commonality that emerge through the articles.

In the introduction of the volume, Ohta and Gebre advocate for a shift from a focus on 'forced migration,' or indeed, specialized sub-fields of study including refugee studies, disaster studies or resettlement research, claiming that such "compartmentalization of sub-fields [has] prevented cross-boundary communication and knowledge sharing" (8). As such, they suggest a focus on *displacement* as a concept, rather than migration, arguing that the concept of displacement is "more holistic and integrative than most other terms" (1). Having provided this interesting and important conceptualization however, very few of the articles make any reference to this shift, making it seem as though it is simply a change in nomenclature mentioned in the introduction, rather than a substantive shift in understanding that could actually shed light on the impacts of various forms of displacement on diverse risk groups.

Moreover, the actual structure of the volume – divided into three sections, each addressing issues separately that the editors claim have strong commonalities – undermines the claims that displacement can be understood more holistically. Overall, it is the truncated structure of the book which lessens the potential for the reader to believe that the individual contributions of the articles can together be understood to answer some of the questions posed in the introduction. This is not as much a failing of the articles themselves, but is due to a lack of a cohesive feel to the volume, which does not have concluding comments for each separate section or an overall concluding chapter.

One particular strength of the book is the policy focus that the researchers provide. Beginning with Crisp's analysis of the challenges of protracted refugee situations in Africa, many of the authors provide throughout their chapters recommendations and reflections for policy action. These proposals range from Schmidt-Soltau's argument for a shift in the current paradigm of conservation that often leads to displacement, to analysis of post-repatriation land problems in Rwanda, to Willems' suggestions for an urban refugee policy in Tanzania that could facilitate greater protection and enable refugees to access livelihood strategies. As such, this policy focus is where the breadth of the volume becomes a strength rather than a liability. It provides insight into a range of seemingly intractable issues, and encourages thinking that connects the policy challenges across a range of these issues.

The title of the book also implies a strong focus on risk, which actually only becomes a substantive focus in the sixth article by Michael M. Cernea entitled "Concept and Method: Applying the IRR Model in Africa to Resettlement and Poverty." The IRR model outlines the eight major risks associated with displacement. Cernea's article provides a detailed literature review of examples where the IRR model has been used to analyze issues relating to displacement, and the model is then drawn on in a number of the following articles. However, given the article only comes halfway through the volume, it does not adequately frame the previous articles.

Moreover, one question that surfaces in reading Cernea's reserved optimism about the power of the IRR model in providing a framework for mitigation of resettlement risks is the dissonance with the findings in the later articles. For example, de Wet's analysis of dam-induced resettlement in Africa finds that regardless of a necessary legal framework, resettlement policy and financing, these safeguards cannot "be seen as sufficient conditions for



successful resettlement” (277). However, Cernea’s argument – despite his admission that reconstruction has rarely happened in the majority of cases of development-induced displacement – is that risk analysis can be a tool “to make development sounder, more beneficial, by anticipating and preventing risks” (214). In fact, for Cernea, the IRR model can be used to make resettlement a *cause* of poverty reduction, and has the potential to become “itself one of the roads upon those affected could step towards poverty reduction is writ large” (241). The tension between Cernea’s position and the empirical findings in other chapters is not adequately explored, and would make an interesting point of departure for debate and analysis.

This volume addresses an important development challenge, which relates to a broad range of contemporary processes and dynamics in Africa, including increasing investment in infrastructure and industrialization, conflict and conservation. As such, the policy analysis that can be drawn from the chapters individually will be useful and interesting for scholars, policy-makers and students alike. The volume could have been vastly improved by a stronger emphasis on the theoretical shift advocated in the introduction and a structure that lends itself to understanding the linkages proposed by the editors. If Cernea’s IRR model is the proposed framework of analysis, it should not have only been examined halfway through the book, and some critical analysis of the framework would have been useful.

Sarah Meyer

*McGill University, Montreal*

**Fipa Families: Reproduction and Catholic Evangelization in Nkansi, Ufipa, 1880-1960.**

**Kathleen R. Smythe. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2006. 202 pp.**

This eloquent and succinct study skillfully explores intimate relationships between Catholic White Father missionaries and Fipa people living on the coast of Lake Tanganyika in Tanzania. Rather than try to discuss the wide range of interactions between Fipa and missionaries, the author concentrates on the themes of family life, generational and age expectations, and tensions between African and European priests, lay people, and nuns within the mission. Many of the typical concerns of scholars examining missionaries in colonial Africa receive little coverage here, especially spiritual beliefs. However, Smythe wisely warns her readers that her topic is family history rather than religious change writ large (p. xiv). And, if one looks at this study for what it intends to do rather than what it leaves out, it succeeds admirably.

After sketching out the influential position of White Father missionaries after their arrival in Ufipa in the late nineteenth century and their close links to German and British colonial authorities, the author examines the mission as an alternative site of socialization for young people. Other scholars have discussed the role of missions in operating settlements for former slaves, maintaining health care, and serving as a potential place of refuge for women. Creatively, Smythe discusses Fipa understandings of childhood and the process by which children slowly learn gendered tasks and behaviors en route towards adulthood. These



developments do not stay trapped in the prison of the ahistorical ethnographic present; the study follows individuals born in different generations over the course of the colonial period. The hopes of Fipa individuals and their extended families became tightly linked to the White Fathers by the 1920s, as the missionaries were the only providers of European-style education in the region.

Missionaries sought to persuade Fipa people that many Fipa social practices actually could be remade in a Catholic context, even though they urged Africans to abandon some of their older ways of socialization, such as communal sleeping arrangements for older children. Many Fipa accepted these terms, although members of the first generations that encountered Catholic clergy in Ufipa preferred to allow their own children to be educated and baptized rather than doing so themselves. However, tensions within families and between Fipa and missionaries emerged over who would be educated and how long children were to be allowed to stay in school. Many families wished to only allow some boys to stay in school for long periods to keep other young people close to home to support their families. At boarding school, children developed new academic knowledge and cultural capital that could later use to develop a career as well as entering an alternate form of socialization with different gendered expectations. The mission became understood as an alternate family, instead of a family always opposed to local kin obligations.

The last two chapters consider the intimate relationships of African clergy with their Fipa families and their European colleagues. This discussion is by far the best discussion of the challenges of African Catholic priests, nuns, and catechists in a colonial context that this reviewer has ever had the pleasure of reading. Fipa clans and European missionaries both sought to produce successful adults through education. However, missionaries wanted to create celibate priests and nuns while Fipa families wished for young people to marry and have children. Through archival research and life histories of two Fipa nuns, Smythe reviews the tensions caused by racial discrimination, family obligations, and troubles within the church hierarchy in the lives of both Fipa clergy and those who decided to not enter or remain in clerical life.

This book would make for an excellent addition to undergraduate courses on African Christianity and Catholicism in a global context. Its brevity and skillful prose will be a good fit for the classroom. It also is a good model for potential authors to follow in its unwillingness to stray from its central theme, to the point it even eschews such fashionable topics as sorcery and witchcraft. Unlike some other recent work on Tanzanian Catholicism that is more slanted against missionaries, especially the work of Maia Green, Smythe never dismisses the goals and views of her European subjects.

However, there are some issues that could have been clarified a bit. This study does not seem to distinguish between Africans living close to the mission with those Africans in outlying areas who only engaged with missionaries during rare visits or when they traveled to the mission. There are no direct references to archival sources in German that might have provided information on the pre-1914 period. Labor migration and the attractions of the coast do not get much attention here, despite the key role they had on other inland communities in Tanzania. Finally, the spiritual lives and concerns of Fipa laypeople and clergy never come into view: an

odd absence to find in a work that spends so much time on African clergy. Despite these minor issues, this book deserves a wide reading.

Jeremy Rich

*Middle Tennessee State University*