

ECONOMIC PARALYSIS: PLANNING FOR CULTURAL GENOCIDE
A STUDY OF MAINSTREAM DEVELOPMENT IN WEST AFRICA

A Thesis
Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Cornell University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Rachel-Maryam Campbell
January 2012

© Rachel-Maryam Campbell 2012

ABSTRACT

ECONOMIC PARALYSIS: PLANNING FOR CULTURAL GENOCIDE A STUDY OF MAINSTREAM DEVELOPMENT IN WEST AFRICA

Rachel-Maryam Campbell, Ph.D.
Cornell University, 2012

This dissertation examines the proposition that global capitalism is a culturally discrete system of production that is patently unsuited to operate successfully in regions like West Africa. In essence, the hypothesis postulated is that history and culture uniquely influence social and economic organizations of production. If this is the case, when one compares the discrete social dynamics that have formed the bases and influence the economic and political paradigms historically and currently in place in Western Europe and West Africa, one is left with the legitimate question, as to whether a Eurocentric system of production, such as capitalism, can ever be grafted successfully onto regions like West Africa.

Chapter One presents an historical survey of West African social relations, and analyzes the symbiotic relationship between history/culture and economic processes; the disruption of indigenous social structures is documented, specifically in reference to the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade, colonization and decolonization.

Chapter Two describes the history of social relations in Western Europe and North America, to establish the contrasting nature of these regions' cultural evolutions, and to highlight the influence of culture on political and economic structures. The center-periphery dichotomy that seems inherent to international capitalism is traced back to the inception of colonialism and the essential failure of decolonization in West Africa, in that this latter was inspired and led by an indigenous elite who were culturally aligned with the dominating system.

Chapter Three further analyzes the hypothesis that a culturally discrete development paradigm will not be successful in West Africa until it can take back control of its economic and cultural reality, by presenting a case study of Nigeria's political-economy as it has evolved since decolonization. It is suggested that the underlying motif behind West Africa's economic dependency is in fact the cultural hegemony of international capitalism.

Chapter Four closely examines the connection between culture and political economy by presenting the theories of Amilcar Cabral, Walter Rodney and Franz Fanon, Antonio Gramsci and Martin Bernal. It also examines the work of several other political analysts and historians mentioned throughout this thesis, including but not limited to Ngugi Wa Tha Ong'o, Chinua Achebe, Basil Davidson, Ali Mazrui and Cheikh Anta Diop.

Chapter Five summarizes the major themes presented and discusses the conclusions reached in the context of the central hypothesis, which is that culture is at least as much a determinant of production as is the economy. Finally, some solutions are offered that might help redress ongoing problems associated with underdevelopment in West Africa. These include a blue print for a more functional paradigm of production and economic development, doing away with the colonial boundaries still in place, and establishing a continental government and language; something akin to the U.S.A.

Biographical Sketch

Rachel-Maryam Campbell is from Ghana, West Africa and Britain; she is of Afro-Saxon parentage. Born in Manchester, England and raised in Ghana, she immigrated to the United States in 1976 and completed her undergraduate work in English/Journalism at West Virginia State College, in 1986.

After reporting for the Charleston Gazette she won a fellowship to do graduate work at Cornell University in the fall of 1986, and moved to Ithaca with her nine year old daughter, Yasmeen. Campbell enrolled in the Masters/PhD program in the Department of City and Regional Planning and declared minors at the Africana Studies and Research Center and the English Department, which she maintained while studying for her Master's in Regional Planning and then her PhD in International Development. In 1990, Campbell started teaching full time at Ithaca College. In 1994 she left Ithaca College and continued teaching at the Africana Center and the English Department at Cornell while completing her Dissertation.

After leaving Cornell, Campbell continued teaching at the university level. She is also an independent contractor and an A+ Certified copy-editor. The focus of her work is education, the environment and international development. Campbell is also a poet and author.

Acknowledgements

There are so many who helped me bring this horrendous process to completion. My Chair, Dr. Bill Goldsmith, who saw my potential and brought me to Cornell; Mwalimu Nanji, my brother, whose advice and support have been incalculable; Dr. Ayele Bekerie; thank-you for making me go to class, silent and bleary-eyed after all those Wednesday Nights.

I would also like to thank Dr. Susan Christopherson, who despite a very busy schedule and pressing personal problems was able to remain on my Ph.D. Committee; Dr. Terry Platter whose support and friendship got me through the last year; Dr. Anne Adams, who met my twin; Dr. Jeyifo (B.J.), that closet political-economist in the English Department.

The list goes on; I cannot possibly mention everyone. Mrs Rowe and Mrs. Dean at the Africana Center; Ian, Gwen and Alida, those bright and energetic undergraduates; Dr. Vietorsz, who in my first year of graduate work told me "Muhammad, you're reinventing the wheel; go and read Cabral"; Rob Young whose quirky brilliance adds a twist of joy to my life.

I would especially like to thank my daughter, Yasmeeen, whose presence on the planet changed my life irrevocably; I can say with all honesty that if it was not for her, I would not be here. Also, Attorney Douglas Miller, my teacher, mentor and best friend (RIP), whose love and intrepid intellect widened my horizons. Lastly, I wish to thank Dr. James Turner, my main man and de facto co-chair, for the brilliant and stimulating discussions over the years. Without his cajoling, pushing and "tough love" I would not have finished; consigned forever to the nebulous ranks of ABD. I'm sorry for my occasional rudeness; thank you from my heart for your guidance and friendship, which I hope survived this ordeal.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE

PRE-COLONIAL AND COLONIAL WEST AFRICA

Cultural Hegemony	1
Culture and Economic Production	1
The Efficacy of Mainstream Planning	3
Pre-colonial West Africa	6
Culture and Technology	6
Pre-colonial Social Formations	8
The Empire of Ghana	11
Land Tenure	13
Exploration	17
The Slave Trade	19
Causes and Effects	23
Decline	27
Christianity and the Colonial Enterprise	28
The Victorian Era	30
Reconstruction	36
The Indigenous Elite	41
The Failure of Decolonization	43
The Philosophy of Leopold Senghor	45
Contributions of Kwame Nkrumah	46

CHAPTER TWO

PRECOLONIAL AND COLONIAL EUROPE

Culture and Development	50
Europe in Antiquity	51
The Origins of the Ancient European State	52
The Foundation of the Western Hegemony	56
The Introduction of Periphery Capitalism	59
The Fante Federation	61
The Capitalist Rationale for Colonialism	63
The Rise of the U.S. to Superpower	68
The Legacy of the Caucasian Diaspora	73
The Communist Threat	76
U.S. Foreign Policy in Africa: The Case of Zaire	77
The case of Angola	82
Consolidating the Western Hegemony	85

CHAPTER THREE

MULTINATIONALS, DEPENDENCY AND CULTURAL HEGEMONY

Problems of Mainstream Development	87
MNCs - Outposts of Imperialism	91

The Stated Function of MNCS	91
The Vertical Hierarchy of MNCs	92
Common Cultural Heritage	93
The New World Order	94
The Dilemma of the Periphery	96
Nigeria - the Rentier State	100
The Economic Repercussions of Disarticulation	101
Lagos - Nightmare at the Periphery	102
Nigeria, One among Many	102
Decreasing Demand, Increasing Poverty	104
The Center-Periphery Dichotomy	104
Maintaining the Cultural Hegemony	107
Nigeria Today	108
Cultural Repression and Economic Stagnation	110
Towards a More Multicultural World Economy	111
The New World Proletariat	113
CHAPTER FOUR:	
THE RELEVANCE OF CULTURE TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	
The Cultural Monogamy of Mainstream Development	115
Replicating for Failure	
Amilcar Cabral: The Unknown Soldier	122
Gramsci's Theory of the Organic Intellectual	131
The Cultural Cooption of West Africa's Elite	132
The Failure of the Post-Colonial State	134
The Cultural Legacy of Mainstream Development	135
The Cultural Legacy of Periphery Capitalism	136
The Status of Women	140
The Role of Women in Pre-Colonial West Africa	141
The Exclusion of Women from the New Social Order	143
The Implications of Elite Collusion	150
CHAPTER FIVE	
REGAINING ECONOMIC CONTROL	152
Strategies for Change	154
Signs of the Times	156
Designing A New Cultural Matrix	159
Redefining Boundaries	162
The Case of Dubai	168
Planning For the Future	171
REFERENCES	178
APPENDICES	182

LIST OF FIGURES

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 1. Figure 1: Agriculture in Pre-colonial West Africa | 18 |
| 2. Figure 2: Map of Pre-Colonial Trading Routes in West Africa | Appendix 1 |
| 3. Figure 3: Map of Pre-colonial West African Empires | Appendix 2 |
| 4. Figure 4: Map of Africa after the Colonial Partition | Appendix 3 |

CHAPTER 1

PRE- COLONIAL AND COLONIAL WEST AFRICA

...Culture, whatever the ideological ...characteristics of its expression, is...an essential element of the history of a people....Like history, or because it is history, culture has at its material base the level of productive forces and mode of production....¹

Culture and Economic Production

Most mainstream and Marxist theorists accept without question the premise that economic production is the primary determinant of history and culture, which are essentially shaped and influenced by economic processes. In other words, history and culture are seen as secondary, even tangential to the process of production itself. The hypothesis being examined in this research study is that the inverse can also be viewed as an equally valid assumption - that economic production, with all its attendant social and political structures, is a manifestation of specific historical and cultural realities, notwithstanding additional factors such as geography, climate and availability of natural resources. This latter hypothesis, it is suggested, postulates a more symbiotic relationship between culture and political-economy. For example, it can be used to explain the cultural uniqueness of various modes of production that sprang up on the same historical time line. As Cheikh Anta Diop noted, matrilineal and patriarchal social formations evolved in response to specific cultural and economic factors found in different regions of the world - the former in sedentary, agricultural societies and the latter in nomadic and semi-nomadic societies.

¹

Cabral, A. (1979). *Unity and Struggle*, p.142. Monthly Review Press .

It is unlikely that such geographically different cradles as the Eurasian steppes – favourable [sic] to nomadic life -- and the Southern regions of the globe and in particular Africa - favourable to agriculture and a sedentary way of life - could have produced the same types of social organization. ²

Thus variants of the tributary mode of production can be explained, at least in part, by referencing the historical and cultural realities which gave rise to them. For instance the tributary mode in West Africa - sometimes referred to as "Asiatic" or "African Socialist" mode - was fundamentally different from feudalism, also a tributary mode, which evolved in Western Europe. The histories and cultures of these two regions are quite discrete. The former's pre-colonial economic systems were based on the cultural imperatives of communal ownership of the means of production and matrilineal kinship lines, while the latter's were and are grounded on the concept of private ownership and patriarchy.

It is suggested that the cultural base of any society informs its social relations of production. In other words, how the acquisition and application of knowledge, information and ideas, both historical and otherwise, impact the material base and the applications of technology. This of course will depend on a number of other variants operating within a given cultural context such as the nature of the class structure and the social interaction that it engenders; gender relations; the distribution of labor and wealth; the nature and primacy of worship; political institutions; education; values; customs; world view. While these factors definitively inform the economic base, they are essentially manifestations of the historical process, of which culture is a repository - a composite, concrete and organic illustration of a people's history. To accept this

²

Diop, C. (1991). *Civilization or Barbarism*, p. 28. Lawrence Hill Books.

perspective is to also accept that cultural norms inform economic production and processes.

However because culture is generally perceived as being determined by economic production, rather than being a determinant of same, it has historically played a rather muted role in the analysis of political and economic paradigms. Simply stated, by allowing that culture is much more of a co-factor in the economic process, it is not unreasonable that it should assume a more central role in said analysis. The purpose of this thesis is not so much to rehash the finer points of well known and generally argued theories of development, but to reexamine them through the lens of cultural theory; using this latter as a base from which to posit alternative strategies for planning and development in West Africa.

Economic production then can be perceived as deriving from information and knowledge that is either historical in origin or grafted, voluntarily or by force, from external sources. When a society's historical and cultural foundation is replaced by external cultural forces as a means of controlling its economic resources, the indigenous culture must of necessity be negated. Failure to do so invites resistance aimed at regaining control of the indigenous economy. History has demonstrated that uprisings of this nature are by definition, centered on the notion of cultural resistance.

Cultural hegemony, with its attendant internal dynamics and supremacist underpinnings, remains the problem behind the problem. Sustained exploitation of African peoples... [has]...sought to shake...their cultural foundations. The dominated [are] required to accept a world view defined by their oppressor. Historical negation and distortion became central to the process of domination in order to weaken the ability of the victimized people to sustain a self-conscious and self-directed sense of origin,

evolution, and purpose. The need [is] to force the victim to relinquish internal control (independence) for external control (dependence).³

The Efficacy of Mainstream Planning in West Africa

The question then, is whether mainstream planning for economic development can be successful in regions like West Africa, where capitalism is an externally oriented, culturally discrete system of production. Its imposition not only arrested the natural evolution of indigenous social relations of production, it also severed the crucial link between West Africa's culture and its political-economy, subsuming the latter into a western cultural matrix and leaving the former to function in a quasi-vacuum. Abstracted from the economy, culture is nothing more than ritual and memorabilia; a withered residual of a people's stagnated history, unable to influence or direct economic or social development.

The well documented lack of development and the general decline in the standard of living in West Africa is explained by mainstream theorists as inevitable, given the cultural and economic backwardness of the people. The result so the argument goes is unequal exchange, dependency and underdevelopment. According to the logic of mainstream development theories, given time and the workings of the free market, these regions will eventually develop the skills which will enable them to compete and ultimately gain parity in the global market. Until then the poverty and deprivation associated with underdevelopment must be contended

³

Semmes, C. (1996). *Cultural Hegemony and African American Development*, p.2. University of Chicago Press.

with. This argument is flawed, in that it contradicts the internal logic of capitalism itself. It is not in the interests of this system, which tends towards concentration and monopoly, to invite competition, least of all from periphery regions which have historically contributed to the wealth and development of the centers.

This study argues that West Africa's inability to successfully integrate into global capitalism is related to its discrete cultural orientation, as opposed to any intrinsic inferiority on the part of its culture or people. Further, the imposition of periphery capitalism, which process negated indigenous cultural trends, seems to preclude operational parity. Thus it can be postulated that if West Africa is ever to regain control of its economic and political systems, it must reshape them to reflect its own historical and cultural reality, as in the past. That is to say, it must design and implement an Afro centric, as opposed to the current Euro centric, model for development. This is not a radical or separatist view point; on the contrary, it follows the model assumed by all successful social organizations, including capitalism.

The idea is not to necessarily replace or negate, but rather subsume, the European cultural model into a more African centered paradigm that can address problems and issues of development which are specific to the region. If the entire third world was to adopt this agenda - reassert its cultural integrity as a means of regaining control of economic resources, a restructuring of global capitalism would be inevitable; a more multi-cultural, heterogeneous world economy would probably result. In fact, given the dynamics of the emergent, information age global economy, it could be said that this is actually in the process of happening.

People, as a matter of course, place themselves at the center of their universe. They seek to understand others in terms of how they understand themselves. They also seek to understand how phenomena external to their shared sense of territory and experience affect their well-being and survival. Culture is the bond that provides a common center through which and from which these phenomena are observed and interpreted. Thus, given the cultural moorings of a people, they can be said to have a center, a perspective, and a world view.⁴

This chapter documents the political-economy of pre-colonial West Africa through the lens of culture. The objective is to demonstrate that the rather nebulous and often intangible relationship between culture and economic production must be in place if balanced development is to occur; this is true of any society. For the purposes of this study, West Africa is viewed as a single geographic entity, although individual nation states will be specifically referenced as they emerged during the colonial period. The reasons for this are simple enough. Before colonization this region of Africa, while being far from monolithic, shared a common, albeit overlapping history in terms of political institutions, economic development, and notwithstanding differences in language and religion, broadly shared cultural practices and beliefs; several pre-colonial empires encompassed most of the region. In addition, the impact of colonization on preexisting cultural formations and the dismal failure of decolonization are also discussed.

⁴

Semmes. *Cultural Hegemony and African American Development*, p.12.

Pre-colonial West Africa

Pre-colonial West Africa was a more or less cohesive geographic entity, made up of dozens of different ethnic and language groups. Archaeological remains of an enduring Iron Age culture, demonstrate that the indigenous people have inhabited the region since ancient times. Major cultural changes came with the development of farming and the acquisition of metal working technology, chiefly in iron, which supplemented stone as the material of everyday tools. The techniques of smelting and forging iron were put into practice along the fringes of the West African forest belt soon after 500 BC. Among those who made the transition to an early Iron Age were the people of the Nok culture, living astride the lower reaches of the Benue River and across the Jos plateau, in what today is Central Nigeria. The Nok culture produced an abundance of small terra-cotta figures and heads, fine in conception and admirably composed, revealing a detailed and sympathetic observation of the human face. ⁵

Culture and the Transfer of Technology

The transfer from abstract knowledge, to its concrete manifestation, technological applications, is common to all societies. Because ideas, information and knowledge are all expressions of culture, their transfer to the economic process is fundamental to successful development. Whether or not transfer occurs will depend on the specific needs of the society and crucially, whether these needs are recognized and acted on by the leadership; they create an environment conducive to transfer and resultant technological advances.

In other words, it can be said that it is the uniqueness of a given culture that singularly informs a particular society's economic processes and progress. In the context of the Nok culture then, it was not merely the knowledge of iron smelting, but its

⁵ Diop, *Precolonial Black Africa*, p. 91.

transfer to the economic process, which technology led to more sophisticated farming and military applications. This resulted in more complex political and social structures, as communities invested surplus accrued as a result of more efficient exploitation of the material base, in social construction. This process further enriched the cultural base, transfers from which continued shaping political, economic and social institutions. At this point the relationship becomes reciprocal: transfer from the cultural base to the material base; improvements in the latter feed the former and so on.

With the gradual diffusion of metal working technology into the forest lands, there opened a broad sequence of development, from very small settlements, to larger ones, from primitive tool making skills to [technologies of] considerable ingenuity, and from merely local trade between neighbouring [sic] hamlets to complex systems of exchange across wide territories. Social and political forms of self-government that reflected these changes evolved in considerable variety, although they all seem to have originated from simple family systems in antiquity. East of the lower reaches of the Niger River, for example, the increasing complexity of community life led the Igbo and many neighbouring peoples into forms of government by village assembly or by elders who were the heads of lineage groups. Occasionally, these elders became kings. Others, west of the Niger, turned away from the customs of village democracy and evolved distinctive forms of aristocratic and monarchical government. Prominent among these were the Yoruba and some of their close neighbours. ⁶

⁶

Ake C. (1981). *A Political Economy of Africa*, p. 69. Longman Publishing Group.

Pre-Colonial Social Formations

Pre-colonial economic systems in West Africa remained agrarian and or nomadic and were characterized by autonomous political entities that centered on the clan, the nucleus of which was the family. While a few hierarchical structures did develop, mostly among the nomadic peoples of the Sahel in the Northern regions of West Africa, even these were somewhat influenced by what were essentially matrilineal clan formations.

The family, immediate or extended [was] the basic unit for the organization of production....Land [was] the essential means of production...and [tended] to be communally owned and exploited subject to certain obligations.....[The norm was] commodity exchange among relatively equal petty producers who [produced] predominantly use values.⁷

Broadly speaking the northern tribes of the Sahel were nomadic herdsmen. Further south, as the vegetation changed to savannah and then tropical rain forest, people engaged in shifting agriculture, hunting and fishing; land was communal as was the means of production. Common to all these cultural groupings was an underlying social responsibility, which was greatly emphasized in the complex laws of the various social formations. Cultural norms such as community responsibility, accountability by the leadership and shared ownership of the means of production were inherent, to varying degrees, in all West Africa's political and economic frameworks. Individual obligation to the community rather than individual rights was, at least to some degree, a basic premise in all the region's social formations. Social relations of production were

⁷

Diop, *Precolonial Black Africa*, p. 2.

cooperative and the division of labor was based on caste, gender and age; the line of descent was usually traced through the mother. Political and social power was generational; elders were regarded with an esteem that was based on status, not class. Surpluses in production were shared therefore personal wealth was not a criterion of status. In other words, one did not have to be necessarily high born, to acquire social prominence. In this sense, the caste system was unique compared to those of Western Europe and Asia, where an individual's class, and for the most part, prospects, were determined by birth. Another difference was that in West Africa, those designated as the nobility, could not exploit those below them without losing prestige within the community:

On the contrary, they were obliged to assist lower caste members in every way possible. Even if less wealthy, they had to 'give' to a man of lower caste if so requested. In exchange, the latter had to grant him social precedence.⁸

Pre-colonial groupings that lived in the geographic area of present day Senegal typify how the social relations of production were integrated into the bodies politic for most of West Africa. Society was divided into slaves and non-slaves, this latter comprising of distinct groups: the nobility, who were the priests and the judiciary; the farmers, whose work was considered sacred; and the artisans - shoemakers, blacksmiths, craftsmen and the like. The slaves, usually prisoners of war or raids, were either servants or in the army. Although generally not dehumanized, their status was reflected by the position of their owners. In other words, even though they could, and

⁸ Diop, *Precolonial Black Africa*, p. 91.

sometimes did, acquire social prominence, it did not change their position within the society; their children, however, were not slaves.

Apologists for the Atlantic Slave Trade have said that slavery was indigenous to Africa; that taking Africans in bondage to the New World, while reprehensible, was not doing anything alien to the African tradition. However, as Howard Zinn points out:

[African slavery] was a harsh servitude, but they had rights which slaves brought to the new world did not have, and they were altogether different from the human cattle of the slave ships and the American plantations.....African slavery is hardly to be praised but it was far different from plantation or mining slavery in the Americas, which was lifelong, morally crippling, destructive of family ties, without hope of any future [and generational]. African slavery lacked two elements that made American slavery the most cruel form...in history: the frenzy for limitless profit that comes from capitalistic [sic] agriculture; the reduction of the slave to less than human status by the use of racial hatred, with that relentless clarity based on color, where white was master, black was slave.⁹

West Africa's pre-colonial history was relatively free of violent revolution and major change. In part this was due to the relatively stable, though harsh climate, which discouraged invasion, and the abundance of natural resources. Largely though, it was the socialized means of distribution, complimented by a laterally integrated political system and common religious observances among the different cultural groupings. In

⁹

Zinn, H. (2005). *A People's History of the United States 1492 –Present*, p. 29. Harper Perennial, 2nd Edition.

conjunction, those in a position of political prominence were directly accountable to those they governed.¹⁰

This is not to say that pre-colonial West Africa's indigenous social relations of production would not have eventually manifested disruptive class conflict had its cultural integrity not been violated by European slavery and colonization. Inherent to any society are internal conflicts and tensions that can give rise to an antagonistic class hierarchy. However, the relatively stable social relations in the region at this time tended towards evolutionary, as opposed to revolutionary, change.

Over time and war, empires were established, some of them great. By the seventh century AD, several empires of some size and influence had emerged in West Africa. As early as the third century A.D. the kingdom of Ghana was established. In the evolution from clan to empire, there were modifications and even corruptions of the original social organization, which never the less remained the basic blue-print of West Africa's social relations of production until the Slave Trade and colonization.

The Empire of Ghana

Islam proved to be a strong positive influence as trade developed between the Empire of Ghana, which well before the first millennium was a flourishing metropolis, and North Africa. Without getting side tracked, it is worth remarking that Islam's relative success in regions like West Africa probably had to do with its ability to mold itself to indigenous cultural norms. In other words, as it spread outward from its point of origin, it fused with the preexisting social norms it encountered, changing itself, as opposed to the environment with which it meshed, and in the process reconstituting itself to reflect indigenous cultural trends. Capitalism, on the other hand, is historically rooted in its

¹⁰ Diop, *Precolonial Black Africa*, p.103.

original cultural matrix. To date it has not demonstrated a capacity to merge successfully with a discrete cultural environment.

The [Ghana] Empire at its height extended from Djaka on the West of the Niger to the Atlantic Ocean and north to south, from the Sahara to the edge of Mali. The gold rich region of Upper Senegal, centered around Gadiaru, Garentel and Iresni, belonged to the Empire....The capital was already a cosmopolitan and international city; it had its own Arab quarter where Islam existed alongside the traditional cult, before the conversion of the royal dynasty and the people [around the eleventh century]. ¹¹

As trade grew, there was an increased use of monetary exchange throughout the West African Empire. However it never achieved universal or standardized usage; barter remained the most common means of exchange well into the colonial period.

The alienation and economic exploitation of the masses that marked the feudal system in pre-colonial Europe was largely absent. This was because the land remained communal and therefore the means of production were not owned by the ruling caste. In addition, latent class antagonisms were balanced by a relatively equitable distribution of wealth and direct access to the political process by the general population.

Neither king nor lord in Black Africa ever truly felt they owned the land. Land possession never polarized the consciousness of political power...The king and the little local lord knew...that

¹¹ Diop, *Precolonial Black Africa*, pp. 104-106.

they ruled the entire country...Yet they never felt they owned the land... The African peasant's situation was therefore diametrically opposed to that of the serf bound to the soil and belonging, along with the land he cultivated, to a lord and master.¹²

Land Tenure

The system of land tenure in Pre-colonial West Africa graphically demonstrates the traditional symbiotic relationship between culture and productivity. Ownership of the means of production was collective; individual rights were subsumed to those of the family, group or clan.

The relationship between the family, group, community or tribe and the land [was] a complex one and the rights of an individual in the land [co-existed] with those of the family or whatever the larger unit [was]. Indigenous African society generally [recognized] three main categories of land tenure, namely family land, tribal or community land, and 'stool' land.¹³

So-called stool land belonging to a family, chief, or king, for example the Asante Hene, in Kumasi, present day Ghana, was placed in trust. In other words, elders were

¹² Diop, *Precolonial Black Africa*, p. 118.

¹³ de Graft Johnson, J. (1962). *An Introduction to the African Economy*, p. 38. Asia Publishing House, Bombay.

in a position similar to that of a trustee or guardian. They were in no way considered free holders; no more than were individuals who gained use of the land.

Collective ownership of the means of production logically presumes a sharing of any surplus. Pre-colonial West African culture informed and shaped an economy that was predicated on the cultural precepts of collective responsibility and shared ownership of the means of production. As previously mentioned, this basic blueprint, while adapting to encompass vast territories, remained essentially intact until colonization. It should also be noted that the cultural realities of communal obligation and land sharing are diametrically opposed to the underlying cultural assumptions of Western capitalism, which are individual rights and private ownership of land and the means of production.

...The African regards the earth and all things that grow on the land or have the earth as their foundation as sacred. The African holds that land is more ancient than the tribe and that the link or tie between the two is never complete.... [T]he gods of the land alone possess the land, control the fertility of the soil and protect it from misuse or abuse by mortal tenants....

The possession of land [had] a social and political significance, for the individual's right in the land [was] not only his source of livelihood, but it [was] also a tangible proof of his membership to the social unit. Community grazing and hunting rights [existed] side by side with individual rights in tree crops. Products of special value, such as copper, iron, gold, salt and tin were formerly the monopolies of clans who alone knew not only how to mine and treat them, but

more important still, how to perform the religious ceremonies that would bless their users. In all African communities, rubber, firewood, fruits, honey and game were the property of none but their finders...¹⁴

A common criticism leveled by many mainstream theorists is that West Africa's indigenous land tenure systems were static, designed for subsistence agriculture and entirely unsuited for a progressive, industrial economy. In fact what little is known of West Africa's pre-colonial history tends to contradict this assumption, in that the underlying socialized accumulation and distribution of wealth (land) accommodated the growth of large and complex empires; hardly economic stagnation. This perspective speaks to the cultural hegemony of capitalism itself, which, as a paradigm for development, tends to assume the inherent inferiority of different racial, cultural, political and economic structures.

Granted, West Africa's indigenous social relations, unable to withstand the European incursion, were ultimately decimated, initially by the Slave Trade and then fatally, by colonization. However, up until this time, the region had developed successfully for over a millennium, while maintaining its cultural integrity. Just prior to the Slave Trade it was more than likely in a state of flux, poised on the verge of transition, as indeed was Western Europe. The need for change however went unrecognized in West Africa; indigenous cultural norms were no longer functioning to facilitate social relations. It was probably this vulnerability that exacerbated the social and economic disruption caused by the slave trade.

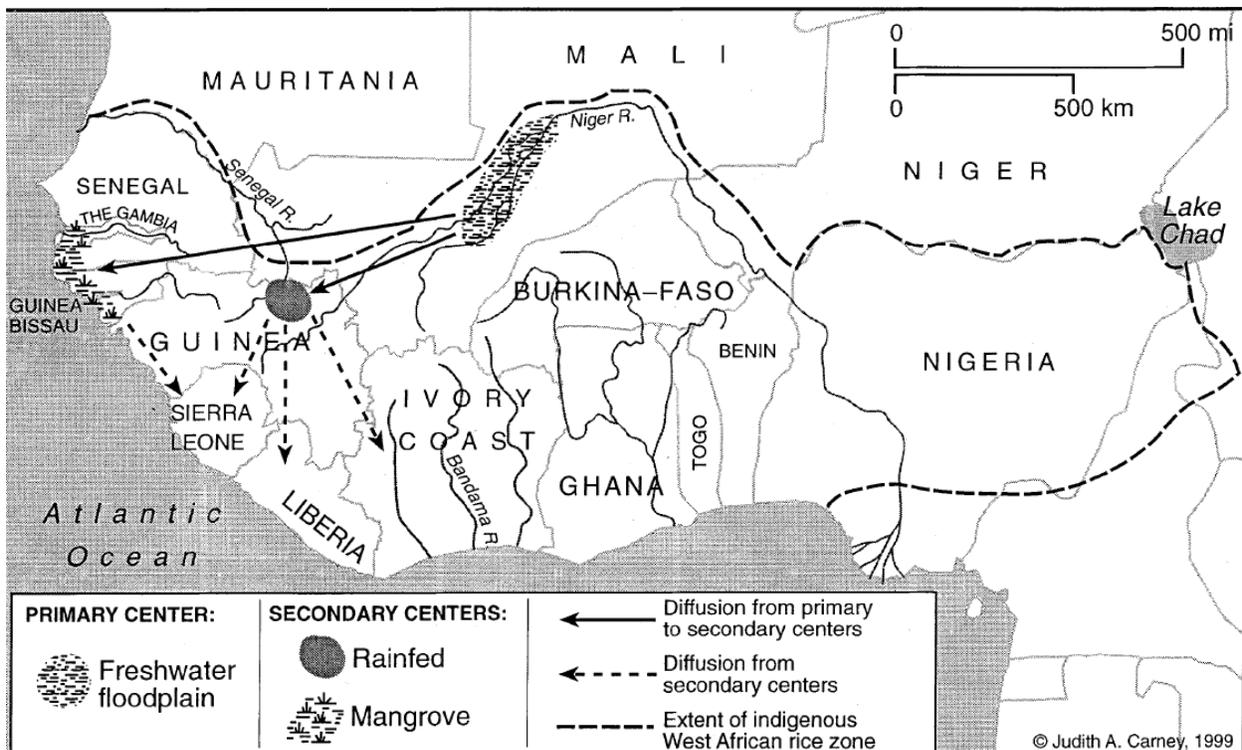
Likewise, colonization succeeded primarily because West Africa's internal evolution, already disrupted by the slave trade, was unable to parry another external

¹⁴

de Graft Johnson, *An Introduction to the African Economy*, p.41

assault. The imposition of periphery capitalism thus met with little or no organized resistance. Although this will be dealt with at length in the following chapter, suffice it to say that periphery capitalism, a manifestation of western European culture, neither informs nor is informed by West Africa's indigenous social relations of production. As such, it neither reflects nor facilitates the social relations of the majority of West Africans, whose lives still revolve around the pre-colonial cultural reality.

Figure 1. Rice Agriculture in Pre-colonial West Africa (1000 - 1800)



Source: Reproduced from Carney (2003).

Wetland rice farming in the Senegal and Middle Niger rivers played an important role in the food supply that facilitated trade and the growth of the Ghana Empire from the 11th century onwards. As Hawthorne (2003) has shown, this type of cultivation by the 16th century was restricted to Mandinge speakers in the Senegambia. Through their

control of the trade with Iron they also controlled the technologically advanced rice cultivation. With the arrival of Portuguese traders other groups along the coast were able to the Iron and the paddy rice cultivation spread southwards during the 17th and 18th centuries partly and formed an integral part of the slave trading network. The story of the labor intensive paddy rice cultivation in Western Africa from the 11th to the 19th century thus reflects an intricate interplay between the political economy of the slave trade, ethnic affiliations and an advanced iron-using technology.

The Empire of Ghana, and later Mali and Songhai, whose nobility were all landless, collected tribute for their own upkeep and to run the government in the form of taxes, both payment in kind and gold. Customs duties were also levied on both exports and imports. The main source of revenue, however, was gold.¹⁵

These Empires of pre-colonial West Africa were founded and protected by huge militias. Ghana, which reached its zenith about A.D. 800, was reputed to have a stand up army of over a quarter of a million. As in the kingdoms of Mali and Songhai, the king of Ghana was the commander in chief and directed military operations. The princes and nobility were the knights; many wore at least partial armor and chain-mail. The cavalry comprised of those of more modest birth and the foot soldiers were slaves. These Empires founded dynasties that lasted, in some cases, for hundreds of years, which again suggests a certain political stability and an internal cohesiveness that discouraged either revolution or invasion.

West African imports included wheat, raisins, figs, salt, cowries, copper, dates, silk, henna, olives, tobacco. Major exports included gold, slaves, iron, tin, leather goods, cloth etc. The caravan trade was an Arab undertaking, in which the majority of West

¹⁵ Diop, *Precolonial Black Africa*, p.137.

African merchants did not participate, confining their trading activities, for the most part to regional markets such as Djenné, Timbuktu, Gao and Waleta (see Appendix 1 for West African Pre-Colonial trading centers).

Exploration

While economic need was not a factor, attested to by the many documented accounts of international travelers and merchants who frequented the region, contrary to mainstream historical accounts, there is strong evidence to suggest that sea-faring West Africans did indeed venture out and that in fact, their cultural legacy was well in place in the New World well before Christopher Columbus 'discovered' it. Ivan Van Sertima provides meticulously documented evidence that certainly seems to account for the many cultural, linguistic and archaeological similarities between West African, Mexican and Aztec cultures.

The most remarkable examples of this evidence are the realistic portrayals of Negro Africans in clay, gold and stone unearthed in pre-Columbian strata in Central and South America....We [also] now know, without the shadow of a doubt, through the most modern methods of dating, that some of the Negroid stone heads found among the Olmecs and in other parts of Mexico and Central America are from as early as 800 and 700 B.C. Clearly American [and world] history has to be reconstructed to account for this irrefutable piece of archaeological data...¹⁶

¹⁶

Van Sertima, I. (1976). *They Came Before Columbus*, p.24. Random House, N.Y., N.Y.

Van Sertima, once again carefully referencing historical documentation from Mali and Cairo that survived the European purges of pre-colonial Africa, reported that in 1311, Abu Bakari the Second, King of Mali and half brother to Mansa Kankan Musa, (famous for his pilgrimage to Mecca two decades later), set off on a voyage for the New World, embarking from the Senegal coast, traveling on the Canary Currents. Abu Bakari never returned, but, as Van Sertima pointed out, he or others must have reached the Americas. Evidence of contact between the two continents has been discovered in archaeological digs in America. The overwhelming array of artifacts, were carbon dated to precisely this time period.¹⁷

When Van Sertima wrote *They Came Before Columbus* over forty years ago, it seemed that mainstream academia was going to finally set the record straight and let this and other information enter the general scholarly discourse. However, this never happened. The few scholars like Van Sertima who have attempted to revise and correct the historical record, are generally ignored or ridiculed. It would seem that the evidence forwarded by Van Sertima, is not only scrupulously documented and irrefutable, it is already known; obscuring the last several thousand years of history could be interpreted as one more excess of the European cultural hegemony.

The legendary university of Senkoure in Timbuktu, was a focal point of learning well before the reign of Abu Bakari the Second, like his predecessors, was a generous patron of the arts and sciences in this famous university city. Many European and Asian intellectuals, from Antiquity through the Middle Ages, went to study and confer with renowned African scholars who taught science, mathematics, logic, rhetoric, dialectic theory, geometry, astronomy and music. Despite the international acclaim of such learning centers and the reputation of the scholars, such intellectual endeavors were not considered primary to development. This was partly because there was no

¹⁷ Van Sertima, *They Came Before Columbus*.

perceived need to transfer such knowledge to enhance economic development; partly because matters of the spirit tended to eclipse more earthly pursuits. It is more than likely that this laissez-faire attitude contributed to a gradual economic stagnation which, coupled with other factors, led to the ultimate collapse of the region.

[R]eligion was the center of everything; all knowledge was merely secondary for the mind, whatever its practical value; ... Whereas the west developed [the] sciences, the Arabo-African world merely remained where it was and even regressed in some areas...¹⁸

Again, one can discern how culture influences the application of knowledge to the material base and thus how it shapes development. There was no perceived need for change in West Africa, or the continent generally. The evolution of indigenous social relations had to date more than adequately met the economic needs of most of the population. However, as stated, it was probably this inability to initiate change which contributed to the region's ultimate decline. Later attempts to transform the material base proved too little too late; West Africa finally succumbed to the western hegemony.

The Slave Trade

By the start of the European Slave Trade, pre-colonial West Africa was an intricate thriving assortment of social groupings, with trade links and diplomatic alliances in North Africa, Asia and Europe. Its wealth and general prosperity were legendary; its political systems advanced and encompassing. A unique, spiritually based relationship between the different castes had, up until this time, ensured survival

¹⁸ Diop, *Precolonial Black Africa*, p.180.

and even prosperity for the majority. As stated, this was because the region's social, economic and political formations were based on specific cultural realities that tended to engender cooperation between the different social strata; the antagonism and hostility that have been a hallmark of European culture since antiquity were largely absent.

As the European contact became more pervasive, the dissolution of West Africa's social organizations progressed, especially as the demand for slaves in the Americas and the Caribbean increased. Between the early 1600s and the end of the trade, it is estimated that one hundred fifty to three hundred million people were taken, mostly from the west coast of Africa. Of these, perhaps one third died in transit. The slave trade was rationalized by categorizing Africans as less than human.

By the 15th Century...there is no doubt that clear links were [being] made between dark skin color...evil and inferiority.... [It] is generally accepted that a more clear-cut racism grew up after 1750 and this was greatly intensified by the increased colonization of North America, with its twin policies of extermination of the Native Americans and the enslavement of Africans. ¹⁹

How many Africans were actually taken is unknown, but the depopulation caused by the slave trade had a near catastrophic impact on indigenous social relations of production. Based on population estimates compiled by Willcox, between 1641 and

¹⁹ Bernal, M. (2004). *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, 19th Printing. Free Associate Press, London.

1845, Africa's population dropped from approximately 100,000,000 to 27.6 million; by 1904 it had rebounded to 149 million. ²⁰

Research by Rodney based on various sources including estimates gathered by the United Nations indicate that between 1650 and 1850, Africa's population remained steady at approximately 100,000,000. During the same two-hundred year period, however, Europe's population increased by 126,000,000, despite widespread transportation and migration to the Americas, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Overall African population, which was approximately 18.3 percent of total world population in 1650, had shrunk to about 7.4 percent by 1900. ²¹

One knows that if one liquidated the top brains in any...society, the progress of [that] society would be checked for a time....We cannot tell how often the top brains in given African societies were killed in the slave hunts or shipped to the New World and the effect that these developments had on the skills and accumulated knowledge that a given generation was able to hand over to the next....In West Africa, we have [one] example of the neutralization of all top brains and the destruction of all available literature in the closure of the University of Sankore in Timbuktu in 1591, the burning of all public and private libraries and the deportation of the professors...²²

²⁰

Willcox, W. (1931). *International Migrations, Volume II: Interpretations*. Volume Publisher NBER. Volume ISBN: 0-87014-017-5.

²¹

Rodney, W. (1981). *How Europe Undeveloped Africa*. London, Bogle L'ouverture Publications, Revised Edition.

²²

Rodney, W. (1988). *The Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*, p. 39. London Bogle L'ouverture

The golden age of the Trans-Saharan gold trade and the end of Timbuktu as a center of learning started with the collapse of the Songhai Empire after the Moroccan invasion of 1591. The disintegration of West African political structures, the economic decline of Northern Africa, and European competition on the Guinea coast made the caravan trade less profitable. Nevertheless, it continued until the advent of railroads and formal colonization ended it once and for all at the close of the nineteenth century. Another probable cause for the decline was that the ruling elite controlled every aspect of people's lives and beyond prayer, did not encourage literacy; it was much the same in Europe until the Industrial Revolution.²³

Literacy rates in both Africa and Europe from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries were low; many of the ruling elite were themselves illiterate, especially in Europe. Reading and writing tended to be a trade secret of professional scribes cloistered in religious orders; some were employed by their rulers. Monks, rabbis and other spiritual leaders, as well as intellectuals and historians were considered the keepers of knowledge in most medieval societies.²⁴

The shift in favor of the Atlantic trade began with the arrival of the first Portuguese ships on the Mauritanian coast in 1443. For West Africans, who had already had contacts with other peoples for centuries, the coming of Europeans was no cultural shock. Although

²³ M'hammed, S. & Vikor, K. (1997). *The Trans Saharan Trade and the West African Discovery of the Mediterranean*. Bergen/London.

²⁴ Ferguson, C. & Huebner, J. (1996). *Sociolinguistic Perspectives: Papers on Language in Society, 1959-1994*, Oxford University Press.

the merchants and merchandizes [sic] were different, the fundamental pattern of economic and cultural exchange was initially the same in the Atlantic trade as it had been in the caravan trade. Similarly, it was another channel for West Africans to the outside world. In 1594 a Portuguese navigator reported that he had in Senegal met many blacks who were not only capable of speaking French but had even visited France. It was only during the age of imperialism that the encounter of West Africans with other civilizations turned definitively from controlled relationship to collision.²⁵

Causes and Effects of the Slave Trade

This collision of course, started with the Trans Atlantic slave trade, which as can be imagined, seriously dislocated indigenous social relations of production; human beings became the primary export. As devastating as this episode was, it could not have occurred on the massive scale that it did without the co-operation of West Africa's elite, which segment of the population gained financially by procuring slaves for the Europeans. The increasingly fragile, reciprocal relationship between the rulers and the ruled was, it seems, irrevocably shattered by the region's first hostile encounter with early capitalism. The immediate and widespread corruption of this class - how abruptly they abandoned their social responsibilities, carefully defined by hundreds of years of law and custom - is indicative that social norms which had been in place for centuries were no longer operational.

When a culture starts disintegrating, it is a clear sign that internal factors which normally give structure and rationality to the social unit are no longer viable. Such was

²⁵

M'hammed & Vikor. *The Trans Saharan Trade and the West African Discovery of the Mediterranean.*

the case in West Africa just prior to the slave trade; the process of cultural denigration was probably gradual, even imperceptible. The facility, with which the elite embraced this new means of material acquisition, not just by abandoning their people to the traumas of kidnap and slavery, but by manipulating their considerable power in order to expedite the process, demonstrates that they, as a class, were no longer functioning in the capacity that West Africa's culture had envisioned. Perhaps the region's relative prosperity and general political stability had lulled the people into a state of complacency. Certainly there was no internal impetus for change - that spark, most often fueled by need, even desperation - was lacking. Thus while the elite cannot be held responsible for failing to respond to the need for change and the consequent technological lag that developed between West Africa and Western Europe, this latter was most certainly exacerbated by this group's whole hearted embrace of the enemy.

In addition the sharp, periodically savage antagonism that had, over millennia, defined and honed the relationship between the rulers and the ruled in Western Europe since antiquity - that which Marx referred to as class struggle - was, at least for the masses in West Africa, still embryonic in nature. Paradoxically it was the elite, lured perhaps by the novelty of quick money and the wealth that could be accumulated as a consequence, who embarked West Africa on its first perilous steps towards periphery capitalism.

The co-optation of this caste in the midst of plenty is somewhat puzzling. One may surmise, however, that they were quickly seduced by the promise of exotic riches and perhaps a desire to emulate Europeans; at least to have what they had. In their haste and greed, the elite broke ranks with their people, in the process rending the already thread-bare fabric of West Africa's indigenous culture. That it tore so readily speaks not only to the general malaise of this caste, but perhaps even more importantly, to the widespread dissolution and inefficacy of the region's cultural reality

which, when confronted with the need to change, was unable to make the necessary transition.

It is also ironic that the stimulus which generated such a radical restructuring of social norms came from the elite; historically, regardless of the social organization in question, it is this segment which seeks to maintain the status quo and thus its elevated position. Generally speaking, it is from among the less privileged that the impetus for social transformation occurs. However, when one examines the different criteria for political power in pre-colonial West Africa - as a rule it was not vested in personal wealth and was bestowed by people to whom the elite were directly accountable; the reward for most was social prominence, as opposed to an opulent standard of living - it is perhaps understandable, given that this particular cultural paradigm was in many ways more beneficial to the many than it was to the few.

...It must be emphasized that the rulers in West Africa were in full political control during the period of the Atlantic slave-trade. This was true even in areas where European ports were established....The greatest weapon in the hands of the African ruling class was their control over legal and religious matters. Because the nobles, chiefs and kings were the judges and the lawyers in all court cases, they were in a position to abuse their powers and wrongfully convicted large numbers of people who were then sold to the Europeans. Many of the court cases involved disputes over women...financial matters...[and] witchcraft....[T]he laws and the religions of West Africa were made into the tools of the

Atlantic slave-trade, and in every instance the ruling group (which included priests) were on the side of the Europeans. ²⁶

However, while the African elite did most certainly aid and abet the enslavers, the enterprise was organized and financed by Europeans, who were also the primary and long term beneficiaries. Europeans controlled international shipping from its inception in the early sixteenth century. In addition, due to the superiority of their ships and canon, they were able to establish, maintain and finance international trade on the high seas between Europe, Africa and the Americas. Thus even before colonization, Africa's role of dependent supplier in the global economy was emerging. Its exports whether slaves, gold, ivory, palm oil or more recently petroleum, have always been determined by European demand.

...Some historians go so far as to say that the Africans took the major part in the slave trade...as a way of excusing the inhuman behavior of the Europeans by placing the blame and responsibility on the Africans. Nothing could be more incorrect and ridiculous, because...what happened in Africa was only one side of the whole story. The Atlantic slave trade was organized and financed by Europeans, who had already reached a capitalist stage of development. Africans had absolutely no control over the European side or the American side of the slave trade. Only the European capitalists had such world wide power, and they used Africans for their own purposes. ²⁷

²⁶ Rodney, *West Africa and the Atlantic Slave Trade* pp. 8, 12.

²⁷ Rodney. *West Africa and the Atlantic Slave Trade*, p.74.

Another reason that led to the Trans Atlantic slave trade was, simply enough, epidemiology. Native Americans, aside from being on their home turf and therefore more able to resist attempts to enslave them, had no immunity to European diseases; they died in droves. Africans on the other hand because of the relative geographic proximity of Europe and Africa and the long history of prior contact, had built up resistance to many European diseases.

The introduction of Old World diseases to the isolated New World populations decimated them. Smallpox, plague, typhus, yellow fever, and influenza carried away large numbers...Of the Old World populations, the Africans had the misfortune...of living in the most disease-ridden area. Malarial mortality rates for African children took a very heavy toll, but those who survived to maturity had near immunity from malaria, from other African diseases, and from many of the diseases known in Europe. ²⁸

The Decline of the Slave Trade

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the slave trade had been abolished in England and less than a decade later, in the United States. The accumulation of capital from slave labor greatly accelerated the process of industrialization in Europe and its settler colonies, rendering slavery, a labor intensive system, redundant. In addition, the building of railways linking the east and west coasts in North America, the construction of which were also financed by capital accumulated from slave labor, opened up new

²⁸

Manning, P. (1990). *Slavery and African Life*, p. 31. Cambridge University Press.

markets for consumer goods while making obsolete earlier modes of transportation, such as the river and canal networks. More to the point, the railroads opened up vast new tracts of land for settlement and agriculture; land that had been formerly "Indian Territory". From this chain of events emerged the Bread Basket of America. Crops which had previously been grown almost exclusively in the south were now also being produced for national distribution and consumption in the mid-west.

This latter phenomenon further reduced the need for slave labor; there was an abundance of food. In tandem, reproduction of the American slave population further decreased the demand for importation, as did the emerging rationale of capitalism - it was cheaper and more efficient to pay free workers subsistence wages and let them fend for themselves. This made eminently more sense than supporting a hostile slave work-force, whose labor-intensive mode of production was already in decline. England, the largest exporter of slaves, and the leading capitalist power, became the foremost abolitionist - it was making more exporting palm-oil, gold and diamonds. ²⁹

Christianity and the Colonial Enterprise

As the slave trade declined on the continent, missionaries and explorers continued to pave the way for colonization. The indigenous rulers tried to contain and control the advancing Europeans, fighting, if at all, only as a last resort. However, the Europeans, armed with guns and bibles, the weapons of imperialism and Manifest Destiny, could not be stopped.

The role of Christianity in Europe's colonial expansion cannot be overstated. Western cultural norms and values were largely transmitted through the church and mission schools to the native elite - those who would control the economy at the time of decolonization - as well as the masses. It was reasoned that if the colonized peoples

²⁹

Davidson, B. (1973). *The Africans*, p. 105. Harmondsworth, Penguin.

could be Christianized, they would be more accepting of foreign rule, and thus less likely to rebel. Inherent to their acceptance of Christianity, were the virtues of humility servility, honesty, cleanliness, modesty, hard work and crucially, a respect for private property and their social betters. Thus Western religion, which had long been used in Europe to keep the masses at bay, was instrumental in preparing West Africa for the transition to periphery capitalism.³⁰

In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe eloquently describes how Christianity eroded indigenous social norms in a small rural Ibo community in what is now present Nigeria. Through the various characters in the novel, he graphically details the fragmentation of local culture as the not so gradual imposition of western religion alienated many in the village and disrupted the traditional way of life, specifically the religious practices. These latter were not only tied to the agriculturally based economy, but gave ritual meaning to what had been a closely knit social unit.³¹

Similar dislocations of indigenous social structures occurred throughout West Africa as colonization ruptured socio-economic norms. The overall result was catastrophic for the masses, mainly because it displaced indigenous systems with replacing them. At the same time colonization redirected the region's wealth to European markets.

At this point, a brief analysis of the culture of colonialism is relevant, since in it one finds the roots of racism; a cultural norm that has been internalized by most Caucasian peoples. This is still evident in their institutions and is used as a rationalization for the underdevelopment of the third world. Racism is also a visual aid

³⁰

Jablow & Hammond. (1987). *The Myths of Africa*, p. 69. Library of Social Sciences, N.Y., N.Y.

³¹ Achebe, C. (1958). *Things Fall Apart*. Fawcett Books.

to capitalism, and was used to justify, until very recently, the international division of labor and the glaring disequilibrium in the global distribution of wealth and resources.

The Victorian Era

The Victorian era was in many ways the crucible that shaped and defined the emergent ethnocentric, capitalist bourgeois culture that currently dominates the world. This was a time of great social change. Britain was at the height of Empire; the concept of Manifest Destiny adroitly idealized imperial expansion. Africans were presented, largely through the abundant literature of writers, explorers and missionaries, as a people seriously in need of maturity and civilization.

[T]hey are only grown up children after all. Like other children they dance and play, and tell one another stories...like children they are greedy, cunning, sensitive, loveable and fondling, easily excited to laughter or tears; like children their anger is a madness...they are cruel...pilfer on the sly, and beg, beg, beg, without any feeling of shame. ³²

Here Jablow and Hammond are making reference to the early stereotyping of Africans, which was part and parcel of colonization. A typical portrayal, alluded to in more detail towards the end of this chapter, is that of the African child; by definition unable to lead or govern. A similar theme that is central to Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's writing, discusses the cultural and historical negation of Africa and its people through the colonial enterprise. In articulating the need for synthesis and a new cultural paradigm, Ngugi speaks to the

³² Jablow & Hammond, *The Myths of Africa*, p. 59.

centrality of language as a conduit of history and culture. In this context the cultural assimilation of West Africa's colonial elite was manifested in part by their affinity for the colonizers languages, which effectively reinforced and reaffirmed their organic unity with the euro-cultural paradigm; their vision of the world was created by the linguistic/cultural reality of the oppressor. Functioning as liaisons between the colonial managers and the indigenous masses, their alignment to the dominating culture was critical to the success of the colonial enterprise. This is because the economic subjugation of a people is virtually impossible without negating the indigenous culture, which is a concrete manifestation of historical and economic processes.

As Wathiong'o also points out, the imposition of colonial culture was designed to undermine the indigenous cultural foundation. The objective was to make people - specifically though not exclusively, the elite - look to European culture, as expressed by its history, languages and the arts as *the* criteria for their own existence.³³ By assimilating these beliefs, many of the elite not only learned to despise their own history but, predictably, came to believe that they could not regain control of their own economies; that the only way to eventual economic salvation was to imitate the oppressor.

When nations meet on terms of independence and equality, they tend to stress the need for communication in the language of the other... [in order] to....ease dealings with one another. But when they meet as oppressor and oppressed, as for instance under imperialism, then [they]

³² Wa Thiong'o, N. (1999). *Moving the Center*, p.43. James Curry Ltd, Islington, London.

cannot experience a genuinely democratic encounter. The oppressor [thus used] language as a means of entrenching itself in the oppressed nation[s].... [Next came] elevating the language of the conqueror. It became the language of the elect. Those inducted into the system, after having been sifted from the masses of the people...were given English or French or Portuguese. Thus equipped with the linguistic means of escape from the dark Tower of Babel, the newly ordained...had their minds systematically removed from the world and the history [and culture] carried by their original languages. ³⁴

Edward Said, in *Culture and Imperialism*, also documents the development of Western colonial culture, but at the centers, by analyzing popular European literature of the era; how attitudes were shaped and influenced by generic representations of Black and Brown people in the colonies. From Austen to Kipling, from Flaubert to David Livingstone (I presume), to newspaper editorials which flamboyantly captured the civilizing mission of Empire, the British public learned to accept without question its Manifest Destiny and the attendant albeit often subconscious notion of white supremacy. Said makes the interesting point that

....Even by the end of the nineteenth century, high or official culture still managed to escape scrutiny for its role in shaping the imperial dynamic and was mysteriously exempted from analysis whenever the causes, benefits, or

³⁴ Wa Thiong'o, *Moving the Center*, pp. 31,33.

evils of imperialism were discussed, as they were almost obsessively. [In other words], how culture participates in imperialism [was] somehow excused for its role....The great rhetoricians of theoretical justification for Empire after 1880... deploy[ed] a language whose imagery of growth, fertility, ... expansion [and] teleological structure of property and identity [of]... ideological discrimination between "us" and "them" had already matured elsewhere - in fiction, political science, racial theory, [in the press] and travel writing.³⁵

Said's cryptic portrayal of the colonial adventurer was firmly incorporated into the British national consciousness and quickly became part of the evolving cultural matrix: Rule Britannia. Britons of all classes and occupations were caught up in the excitement and mission of Empire. They came to see themselves as destined to rule the world; as innately better than the uncultured "wogs"³⁶ that they read of and heard about, living in far off unpronounceable places. They learned to see the 'Other' as different and inferior to themselves; even somehow aberrant. While in need of help, and certainly civilization, they were somewhat incomplete and sadly bereft of an essential humanity. This latter could be remedied, in time of course, with the help of the stalwart and stoic British.

The images of Western imperial authority still remain - haunting, strangely attractive, even compelling. Gordon at Khartoum, fiercely staring down the

³⁵

Said, E. (1994). *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 107. First Vintage Books Edition.

³⁶

A derogatory English term used to designate non-white people of all races.

Sudanese dervishes; Conrad's Kurtz in the center of Africa, brilliant, crazed, doomed, brave, rapacious, eloquent; Lawrence of Arabia, at the head of his Arab warriors, living the romance of the desert, inventing guerilla warfare, hobnobbing with princes and statesmen, translating Homer; all the while trying to hold onto Britain's "Brown Dominions".³⁷

These personalities became in a sense archetypal and in many ways personified British attitudes, which incidentally set the tone for the rest of Europe and North America. A whole range of intellectual and academic pursuits were colored by the colonial enterprise. History, literature, music, anthropology, linguistics, sociology, law, politics and the sciences were all expanded to include the notion of the 'Other'.

During this period there was also a major intellectual movement to revise the historical legacy of Africa in Greece. Martin Bernal carefully documents the impact of this reformation, which led to an historical revision of Greek Antiquity that is still in place. It was in part a response to political pressure - Europe could not very well claim Greece as the cradle of its civilization, if said island owed its cultural legacy to Black Africa. In part it was the influence of the Romantics, as well as other intellectual groups who, in line with the growing colonial enterprise, staunchly heralded the primacy of European racial superiority.

While the Romantics had toyed since the 18th century with the idea of a northern origin for the Greeks, scholarly attacks on the Ancient Model, from Samuel Musgrave to Karl Otfried Miller and Connop Thirwall, had insisted on the autochthony of the Greeks and on the affinities between Hellenes and

³⁷ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 110.

Pelasgians. By the 1850s, the Indo-European language family and the Aryan race had become established facts. With a coherent racial theory, and the concept of an original Aryan homeland somewhere in the mountains of Central Asia, the picture of Greek origins was transformed ...On the whole...the supporters of the Aryan Model [were] concerned with racial hierarchy and racial purity, and the idea of Egyptian and Phoenician colonization [was] distasteful to them.³⁸

Africa was regarded as uncivilized because its agriculturally based society was not industrialized. Industrialization was linked to progress and progress was perceived as the result of hard work and upstanding morality. That West Africa's internal evolution had been arrested by the slave trade and again by formal colonization, was not deemed a good enough excuse for its backwardness; the people would have remained savage and lazy if left to themselves; they had no notion of what to do with their abundance of natural resources. Slavery and colonization were thus necessary to the civilizing mission and the general progress of humanity.

[T]here were in Africa no railroads, no steamships, no factories....It followed that the Africans must also lack the moral concomitant....Progress - the dynamic factor for civilization - could be achieved only by hard work. The African must be taught the value of work, chiefly by being compelled to work...African societies did not provide the

³⁸

Bernal, *Black Athena*, pp. 330, 331.

necessary motivation or compulsion...it was up to the British to provide a government for the Africans that would. ³⁹

Thus, even at this early date, the different evolutionary trends in Western Europe and West Africa were correlated to European cultural superiority. West Africa, like the rest of the continent, had an agriculturally based economy. When the slave trade and colonization interrupted its historical evolution, it had not yet reached a stage where the transition to industrialization was perceived as necessary for its continued economic progress and development.

Racial differences, rationalized by Darwin's social theories, particularly *his Origin of Species* ⁴⁰ were frequently alluded to in the prolific literature of the period and became synonymous with the racial inferiority of non-whites, which further justified colonization. This latter in real terms constituted the exploitation of West Africa's resources, with little or no regard for the customs and culture of the indigenous people, except where they could be employed to facilitate the appropriation of resources and labor for the colonial centers.

Reconstruction

The 'Scramble for Africa' in the late nineteenth century was yet another manifestation of western capitalist expansion. Given this system's propensity to become increasingly concentrated, even during its early phases, competition gave way to monopolies and oligarchies relatively quickly. Backed by the banking institutions, they increasingly controlled the emergent colonial economies. At the Berlin Conference in 1894-95, West Africa, along with the rest of the continent, was carved up between the

³⁹

Jablow & Hammond, *The Myths of Africa*, p. 78.

⁴⁰

Darwin, C. (1872). *Origin of Species*. London. John Murray (Second Edition).

European colonial powers; Britain and France received the lion's share. Although their colonial administrations were different, which is apparent today in the languages and cultural affiliations of the people, especially the more educated, their motives were identical: to supply raw materials to feed industries at the centers and expand consumer markets to sell the increasing amount of manufactured goods being produced.

Key to the success of colonization was monetizing West African economies, a necessary prelude to wage labor. As mentioned previously, monetary exchange was not unknown in the region, but it was inefficient because it was not standardized and not in universal usage.

The monetization of a pre-capitalist economy is necessary for its integration into a capitalist one....The essence of the capitalist mode of production is that it penetrates and takes over the production process...production occurs for the purpose of exchange. This process...requires a universal medium of exchange - money. ⁴¹

The barter system which by the end of the nineteenth century was still widely used was systematically eradicated, as European currencies took hold. Money became the accepted means of exchange; the concept of wage labor was thus introduced and external controls over West African economies further tightened. As more and more arable land was designated for the cultivation of cash crops for export, peasants and small farmers were disfranchised. In order to survive, many were forced to sell their labor to the colonizers, who now controlled the means of production - the land.

⁴¹ Ake, *A Political Economy of Africa*, p. 32.

Currencies were distributed and controlled by the metropolis. It was argued by the colonial powers that this was necessary in order to stabilize the colonial economies and allow them international status, which would eventually help their trade; in fact the opposite occurred.

The monetary system...helped to create a capitalist economy...structurally dependent on foreign economies. Thus the colonial currency was tied to that of the colonizing power, and the money supply was determined mainly by the social and economic forces in the metropole[s], particularly the demand for the colonies exports.... [This] reinforced not only the export orientation of the colony, but...compelled its specialization in primary products...which further reinforced its organic unity with the metropolitan [economies].⁴²

Predictably, the little surplus capital that accrued to the colonies was used to import manufactured goods. This further undercut local manufacturers who could not compete with cheaper European imports, which further exacerbated underdevelopment. There was little or no coherent planning; only what was necessary for the production and export of raw materials. Colonization was directed purely to the interests of western capitalism. There was no regional planning in terms of roads, railways or public services. The nature of the colonial superstructure in many ways actually precluded internal development. Economic growth was in the hands of a few trading companies; they were given carte-blanche economic power by their governments. To have developed articulate planning policies that encouraged internal

⁴²

Ake, *A Political Economy of Africa*, p. 59.

trade and an infrastructure to support it would have been detrimental to the colonial enterprise. The idea was to expand European markets and provide raw materials for their industries, not invite indigenous competition.

In a country whose out-put of cocoa [was] the largest in the world (Ghana), there was not a single chocolate factory. While we produce the raw materials for the manufacture of soap and edible fats, palm products, the manufacture of these was discouraged. A British firm owning lime plantations ... actually expresses the juice from the fruit before shipping it in bulk to the United kingdom and exporting it back to us, bottled, to retail stores at a high price. Though we had the raw materials needed for their manufacture, every bottle used in this country is imported... Native initiative, where it was likely to endanger the interests of the colonial power, was quickly stifled. ⁴³

This dynamic was typical of all West African colonies; dependence on western technology was perhaps the most crucial element of the entire dependency syndrome. Without control of the technology, or the actual tools of production, the colonies were dependent on the metro poles for the very means of production.

⁴³ Nkrumah, K. (1975). *Africa Must Unite*, p. 27. International Publishers, New York, 3rd Ed.

.....This put the [colonial economies] in a position analogous to that of a producer who has no instruments of labor. Such a producer is helpless and totally at the mercy of those who are in a position to give him the use of instruments of labor. ⁴⁴

This essentially sums up the impact of colonialism in West Africa; indigenous production geared to maintain external markets. The connection between indigenous cultural trends and economic development was severed; the wealth and abundance that had sustained pre-colonial West Africa was now flowing outward. The new system of production, periphery capitalism, imposed as a direct result of western European economic expansion and grounded in the cultural norms of that region, was designed to enrich Europe, not its colonies.

Looking back on the colonial period, one can see the rupture caused by changes in West African social organizations; the paralysis of indigenous cultural trends which were supplanted by variations of the European model. The impact on the native population was, for the most part horrendous. Communities and social groupings were decimated as people were forced to restructure their lives and work in response to foreign hostile rule. The diametrically different relationship of people to the land, in particular, had a negative impact on indigenous social relations.

...Africans were brought into the modern economy of machinery and wages, but they could not share in the gains of that economy except as low-paid labourers [sic]. They were not taught technology, or even to read and write. Yet

⁴⁴ Nkrumah, *Africa must Unite*, p. 65.

they ceased to be independent farmers....Gradually new forms of inequality appeared within African society [as]...the inequalities of [the western lifestyle took hold].⁴⁵

The Indigenous Elite

As during the industrial revolution, it was decided that education was a necessary evil, but in this particular context, not for the masses. The children of influential natives as well as the settlers' half-caste⁴⁶ offspring, virtually all illegitimate, were sent to mission schools. They were taught a curriculum that was designed by the colonial home offices in the respective metro poles. They learned the culture and customs of the colonizers were far more advanced; that their own history was one of savagery and barbarism; that African civilization started with the European colonial enterprise. They internalized the ideology of white supremacy, while learning European history, geography and the classics. These were the elite; West Africa's future leaders. In British West Africa, they

⁴⁵ Davidson, B. (2001). *Modern Africa: A Social and Political History*, p. 29. Longman Group, U.K., Ltd; fourth edition.

⁴⁶ This term was used throughout Anglophone Colonial Africa to denote those who are bi-racial. The British invented the term; it is still used in all its former colonies.

were allowed to run the colonial bureaucracy, which became bloated and inefficient as it absorbed them. They were also allowed to compete in marginal capitalist endeavors, usually in the capacity of middle men or compradors. They became teachers and lawyers; effective buffers between the colonial settlers and the masses. They were often envied, sharpening budding class antagonisms, while deflecting the hostility of the masses away from the root causes of exploitation.

...At the same time the emerging class division...was soon to create a critical link between the colony and the metropole ...the common interests of the colonizing bourgeoisie and the African bourgeoisie...⁴⁷

As the indigenous elite grew, they eventually expressed a burgeoning dissatisfaction with their status. Their proximity to the colonizers and their involvement in the colonial superstructure reinforced their desire for equality, which, they were convinced, could never happen within the colonial framework. Their indoctrination into a western cultural mind-set usually manifested itself through the adoption of Eurocentric ideals, including a capitalist mentality, which further alienated them from their own cultures and people.

The inherent racism of the colonial enterprise precluded peer participation between the indigenous elite and whites. Many visited the metro poles at one point or another, either to study or vacation; their place in the scheme of things was invariably made blatantly clear. They returned home, often deeply humiliated, sometimes permanently scarred, always with a new and deeper awareness of the need for change.

⁴⁷ Ake, *A Political Economy of Africa*, p.42

The paradox is that because most of them held the same cultural values as their oppressors, the motivation for change was essentially class oriented. They were more concerned with bettering their own situation than creating sweeping social change that would benefit the majority. In other words, the need to supplant and replace the colonizers was centered on a desire for personal advancement.

In 1947 South Africa officially declared an apartheid system of government; a bellows to the already smoldering embers of rebellion. The malcontent West African elite spear-headed campaigns geared to mobilize the urban masses, which further strengthened their demands for political autonomy. The colonial governments' watched, apprehensive but not surprised, as resentment crystallized into specific political demands. The fervor of nationalism grew, spreading like a bush-fire.

The Failure of Decolonization:

The colonizers, motivated by both greed and fear, and wanting to avoid any disruption in the process of accumulation that mass uprisings would inevitably cause, acquiesced. They also rationalized that cooperation was more likely to benefit future exploitation; they were right. It was the mutual interests of the indigenous elite and the colonizers that diffused and largely negated the potential impact of decolonization, allowing the west to reintegrate the newly independent states into the emergent global capitalist hegemony.

In most of the West African colonies, transition governments were set up, and by the sixties all the individual states had achieved political autonomy. The same superstructures that had maintained colonial rule were inherited by the new governments, without change or even modification. In other words, West African colonial infrastructures, which had formerly been controlled by colonial trading companies and administrators, and geared to supply the metro poles with raw materials and import manufactured goods, remained intact.

In colonies of exploitation...the cities are extensions of the metropolitan space economy. Urban planning ideas and forms reproduce...the political, economic, social and cultural assumptions of the metropole, informed additionally ...by the processes of capitalistic [sic] industrialization....The principles of planning are those... based on colonial dominance. ⁴⁸

In addition, the new governments, on assuming power, found they had no material base - they were broke. Most of them simply used their political status as a means of accumulation, via the state, in order to safeguard their power and accumulate personal wealth. This was expedited by the externally orientated design of the colonially imposed, mutant replicas of the European bourgeois state structures put in place. State owned enterprises were set up, more often than not as covers for the appropriation of wealth by heads' of state and government officials.

In a situation in which politics is the way to power as well as wealth, the premium on the acquisition of political power becomes inevitably very high. The further implication of this is that political competition becomes a grim battle in which winning is all important. This is part of the explanation of the high incidence of political violence and political instability in Africa. ⁴⁹

⁴⁸ King, D. (1991). *Urbanism, Colonialism and the World Economy*. Routledge, N.Y. N.Y.

⁴⁹ Ake, *A Political Economy of Africa*, p. 126.

Leopold Senghor, on assuming the presidency of Senegal, visited France, and informed the French premiere that although Senegal was now independent "...in all things that mattered, nothing had changed." De facto this was the case. The inexperience of the new rulers, the magnitude of the problems their countries faced because of years of foreign, hostile rule - wide spread illiteracy, economic dependency, two divergent cultural perspectives, mass poverty, a vast and inefficient bureaucracy - in short total disarticulation - made the offers of help and conciliation that much more attractive.

The Philosophy of Leopold Senghor

In many ways Senghor typified the mind set of many of the indigenous ruling elite at the point of decolonization: absolute indoctrination into western culture. Senghor wholeheartedly believed in the universality of the European cultural paradigm which defined his existence; he saw himself as a Black French man. This is epitomized by his philosophy of Negritude, which essentially elevated characteristics that had been denigrated by European culture and celebrated them.

....The values of Negritude are intuitive or tactile spontaneous reason, sensation, sensuousness, instinct, feeling, rhythm, image, creativity, imagination, naturalness and immediacy....In the kingdom of childhood Negritude is king. ⁵⁰

To accept such a dichotomy - that racial groupings are biologically programmed with distinct mental, emotional and physiological characteristics, is to accept the notion

⁵⁰

Serequeberhan, T. (2002). *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy*, p. 47. Routledge, 29 West 35th Street, N.Y., NY.

that there are quantitative and qualitative racial differences between Africans and Europeans. In other words, Senghor's whole philosophy of Negritude was predicated on the euro-cultural concept of the 'Other'.

Many Third World Movements, of which Negritude is an example, have accepted the European conceit that only Europeans can think analytically; as a result of this many black and brown intellectuals have tended to deny their own analytical intelligence and retreat into the 'feminine' qualities of community, warmth and artistic creativity.⁵¹

The Contributions of Kwame Nkrumah

There were few notable exceptions among the emerging African elite; Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, was one. Strongly socialist and educated in the United States, he was totally committed to breaking the economic dependency of Ghana, and eventually, the rest of Africa, to western control. In the decade he was in power, from 1957, to 1966, he initiated many programs aimed at self reliance and true economic independence. At the heart of his initial success was an awareness of the importance of indigenous culture to economic development. In other words, Nkrumah understood that modernization did not necessarily mean westernization. His commitment to Pan Africanism, coupled with his novel approach to development, made his success unique and inspiring, if not to the entire African leadership, certainly to the African masses, who embraced him, almost as a messiah.

⁵¹ Bernal, *Black Athena*, p. 404.

[Nkrumah's] Ghana became the revolutionary Mecca of the entire anti colonial movement in Africa....All the continent's nationalistic roads lead to Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana. Everywhere on the continent, the former colonial slave was breaking his chains... [in the] hope for a more egalitarian society in...[his] economic, political and cultural life...⁵²

Nkrumah's comprehensive, socialist oriented planning was scrupulously thought out and implemented. He was aware of the many pit-falls of decolonization and the vulnerable nature of the new governments. All aspects of the economy - state enterprises, foreign private interests, joint enterprises, cooperatives and small-scale indigenous businesses, were carefully supervised, to keep fraud and conflicts of interest at a minimum.

Nkrumah initiated a drive to increase agricultural productivity, which he realized was an efficient way of accelerating the growth of the material base in order to provide capital for industrialization. This entailed a transformation from subsistence to commodity farming, which would also increase food production for the growing population and provide raw materials for secondary industries and the export of cash crops to help pay for necessary imports. Nkrumah also implemented free and compulsory primary and middle school education and made science a compulsory part of the curricula. Social welfare programs and clinics were set up and there was an effort to develop the rural areas. He believed that regional planning would contribute to reducing the differences in economic activity between the various regions by utilizing the natural potential of each region.⁵³ Seeking to control migration to the urban areas,

⁵² Wa Thiong'o, *Moving the Center*, p.61.

⁵³ Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*.

Nkrumah diverted surpluses from production to finance rural development; he established a minimum wage and housing subsidies and constantly tried to keep prices within the range of wages. Legislation was also enacted to limit the business activities of politicians, so that conflicts of interest and corruption could be kept at a minimum.

Nkrumah also conceived the Volta River Project, which was supposed to supply electricity to the whole of West Africa and generate hydro electric power to the American owned bauxite plant; he planned to establish an aluminum smelting plant to process bauxite indigenously and sell it on the world market. After initially trying to discourage the project, U.S. and European civil engineers finally constructed the dam. However they 'miscalculated' the water levels. In effect this translated into barely enough electricity to meet existing needs in Ghana; certainly not enough to supply an aluminum processing plant or sell any surplus to the rest of West Africa. Whether or not the water levels was deliberately misconceived is open to conjecture; the fact is that today, Kaiser Aluminum still exports raw bauxite from Ghana and the country does not produce enough electricity to supply even its own needs. Finally, Nkrumah established the Black Star shipping line, Ghana Airways and planned and built the port of Tema.

The socialist objective implies the universal good of the nation, and in the interests of that socialist objective it will be necessary for all of us to forgo some immediate personal desire for a greater benefit a bit later on. Speedier development...out of surpluses or social services in the interest of the community...confers more advantages on the greater number of people. ⁵⁴

⁵⁴

Nkrumah, *Africa must Unite*. p. 127

Nkrumah was very astute politically, and a planner par excellence. He saw the need for and actively sought to initiate an integrated socio-economic framework, marked by political cooperation and regional planning throughout the continent: a United States of Africa. He realized over forty years ago that it would take a Pan African government, or at least regional federations, to break the grip of colonization and the inevitable disarticulation of periphery capitalism, that prevented not just West Africa, but the entire continent, from regaining economic autonomy.

However, in the latter part of his presidency, Nkrumah became much more influenced by communism. While he had always leaned towards a socialist agenda, it was at least balanced by a perspective influenced by his own indigenous cultural reality. Even though he remained a staunch advocate of Pan Africanism, he became convinced that the only true road to independence was by adopting the Russian brand of socialism. As Serequeberhan points out, even while failing to make a distinction between Nkrumah's earlier success and his later wholesale embrace of Marxist-Leninism:

Nkrumah's formulation [was] basically aimed at superimposing a general and abstract - universal, context-neutral, and value-free - theory on a specific and particular historico-cultural situation. Thus the Eurocentric framework within which Nkrumah [posed the problem of development] as a whole remain[ed] unquestioned....⁵⁵

Ultimately, this was Nkrumah's undoing. At the height of cold war hostilities an overtly communist president in Ghana, the model of post colonial development at the

⁵⁵

Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy*, p.34.

time, was an intolerable prospect. He was deposed by a coup d'état initiated and financed by the United States in 1966 and died in exile some twelve years later.

CHAPTER 2

Pre-colonial and Colonial Europe

For every society, for every group of people, considered as an evolving entity, the level of the productive forces indicates the stage of development of the society and of each of its components in relation to nature [and] its capacity to act or react consciously in relation to nature. It indicates and conditions the type of material relationships which exists among the various elements or groups constituting the society in question. Relationships...between man and nature, between man and his environment ...[between] the individual or collective components of a society. To speak of these is to speak of history, but it is also to speak of culture. ⁵⁶

Culture and Development

When one compares Western Europe's cultural evolution to that of West Africa's, three major differences are immediately apparent: individualism versus collectivism; patriarchal versus matrilineal kinship lines; private versus communal ownership of property and/or the means of production. These fundamental differences and their collective impact on development would seem to point yet again to the profound, yet often overlooked influence of culture on the formation of economic and political paradigms. Conceding that these cultural dichotomies are more than likely the reason why West Africa's pre-colonial cultural/economic evolution was virtually an antithesis of Western Europe's, makes it easier to understand why the imposition of a

⁵⁶ Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*, p.67.

Western European paradigm for development in this region has to date, been an unmitigated failure. In other words, the structural relationship between culture and political-economy, which in the context of West Africa was irrevocably dislocated by slavery and the formal imposition of colonization, must not only be in place, but must be reciprocal, if coherent planning and articulate development are to occur.

Europe in Antiquity

As has been exhaustively chronicled by a myriad of historians, political economists, planners and analysts of every description, in the past Western Europe's hierarchical culture historically designated the vast majority of Europeans economically powerless and non-participants in the political process. The ideological and cultural roots of the western European bourgeois state can be traced back to European Antiquity: the individual as dominant; a patriarchal hierarchy with its attendant notion of primogenitors; and the exclusionary nature of political, religious, economic and social power.

At the risk of over simplifying a very complex and well documented history, suffice it to say that in Ancient Rome – which essentially established the rubric for the current model - the elite or equals and patricians, owned the land, the gods and all political, economic, religious and judicial powers. They created, defined and transmitted the cultural and social norms from which the essential blueprint of the modern European bourgeois state evolved. Ideological and cultural norms in any society rationalize the distribution of wealth and power. In the context of European Antiquity, however, it also excluded most of the population - plebs - latter day serfs with no land, no gods, and no power - from participating in the very institutions which controlled their lives. ⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Diop, *Precolonial Black Africa*, p. 73.

The Origins of the Ancient European State

The origins of the European city-state and later nation- state, started with the Egyptian colonization of Ancient Greece. Despite this early colonization, which did not really take, the region's original cultural paradigm - patriarchy, individualism and elitism - continued to influence the function, if not the physical formation, of the state. Again, this tends to reinforce the underlying centrality of culture in so far as it informs political, social and economic systems. When external structures are imposed they will not work as they were designed to do at the place of origin, if the new environment is, and/or remains, culturally discrete.

[In] the sixteenth Century B.C., the XV111 Egyptian Dynasty had effectively colonized all of the Aegean Sea [area] and consequently, brought this region of the world out of protohistory....This was a period when, according to Greek tradition itself...Cecrops, Egyptos and Danaus, all Egyptians introduced metallurgy, agriculture, etc....According to the same Greek tradition, it was these Egyptian Blacks who founded the first Dynasties in Continental Greece, at Thebes (Boeotia).

The First form of government was therefore that of the colonizer: Mycenaean Greece first had the African model of state...with its elaborate bureaucratic apparatus; this was the period of palace royalty that was described by Homer eight centuries later in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; this foreign state apparatus was, in many respects, very advanced compared

to the structures that had been there before; this is the reason why Greece, after the Dorian invasion, was quite naturally to lose the artificial use of writing for over four centuries, and to rediscover it only in the eighth century [B.C.], this time as a real need for development [was perceived]....⁵⁸

Europe's long history of social violence can be traced to specific cultural imperatives, as opposed to its state formation, per se. This is suggested by contrasting the social relations of pre-colonial West Africa, which were also based on the African model of state, but tended towards lateral integration and inclusion. This latter region's cultural matrix promoted stability and gradual change, even, one could argue, stagnation. On the other hand, Western Europe continued to be a hot bed of dissent, subversion and attempted revolution. It is argued that the exclusionary nature of European social formations, which continued despite external cultural influences, is the primary reason for this. All that to say, the feudal variant of the tributary mode of production, which evolved from the slave societies of Greece and Rome, was fertile soil for the development of global capitalism; the concepts of private property, political exclusion and an hierarchical social structure are still embedded in the cultural base. Historically and culturally this informs the social relations of production of the modern bourgeois state.

From Feudalism to Capitalism

As stated, the feudal system reflected the generally exclusionary nature of the hierarchical cultural matrix associated with Western European economic and political

⁵⁸ Diop, *Civilization or Barbarism*, p. 151.

systems. In essence, feudalism rested on rule by an aristocratic class, or estate, of titled land owners capped by royal families which provided the monarchies. The monarch was typically, though not always, assumed to rule by 'divine right'. The royal family in turn supported an established state religion that was regarded as the only true religion of the land. In feudal society individuals were born into a social caste or estate and there was little they could do to change that status. People were socialized from birth into accepting as divine fate their station in life. ⁵⁹

Feudalism was de facto, a system of slavery, in which the nobility owned not just the land but the serfs on it. Serfs had no rights; they were subject to the demands and whims of the landed elite who owned the estate. They could be killed or raped or sold; they had no rights or recourse under the law.

The final challenge to feudalism came from an embryonic bourgeois, which evolved from the town burger estates of the Middle Ages. As their economic power grew new theories of government, that were more reflective of the changing social order - from rule by divine right, to the beginnings of a secular system based on the notion of free market distribution - also evolved. Hobbes postulated that society is a human, not a divine construct; that egotistical self interest would engender the best social framework for governing; that the primary role of the state should be primarily to enforce contracts.⁶⁰ Although Hobbes was a Monarchist, his arguments foreshadowed

⁵⁹ Edwards, A. & Townsend, J. (2002). *Interpreting Modern Political Philosophy: From Machiavelli to Marx*. Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

later theories of representative government which further articulated the rationale of the modern capitalist state.

John Locke among others also advocated the separation of church and state, which as things transpired, was modern capitalism's only really radical departure from feudalism. In fact, the philosophy of early capitalism, as conceptualized by such men as Hobbes, Locke and Voltaire, with the possible exceptions of Adam Smith and John Jaques Rousseau, was still very exclusionary, even though it was conceived as a fundamental break from feudalism. ⁶¹

Let us note here that when Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu, [Jefferson, Franklin] and Madison defend[ed] the social contract of the citizenry or the rights of the citizen to elect representatives to government, they took for granted that this citizenry would include only [white] male property owners of some substance. No one among these early theorists of liberal democracy [except for Jean Jacques Rousseau] advocated or envisioned voting rights for the non-propertied, for factory and farm workers, for women, and certainly not, in the case of North America, for slaves. The term 'bourgeois democracy' describes rather precisely and objectively the limited extent of political participation intended by these proponents of early capitalist democracy; the bourgeoisie and its ideologists were fighting not for universal suffrage but for their own class rights. ⁶²

⁶¹

Edwards & Townsend, *Interpreting Modern Political Philosophy: From Machiavelli to Marx*

⁶² Ibid, p. 45.

Most, if not all of these early capitalist philosophers were essentially products of a racist culture; this was reflected to some degree at least in their writings. Perhaps an extreme example of this tendency was John Locke, who was not only a participant in North America's slave trade, but believed that the slavery of Africans was justified because as he stated, they did not practice agriculture and lived in a waste land. In other words they had no right to land or freedom because they were not farmers. This was a curious and untrue notion, but because it was extended by one of the foremost thinkers of the period, it became a widely accepted rationalization for African slavery.

The Foundation of the Western Hegemony

This historically well documented, hierarchical European cultural matrix survived the Dark Ages, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and mercantile capitalism. Thus by the Industrial Revolution, which was to catapult Western Europe to global ascendancy, the cultural roots of modern capitalism were already in place. Over the last 300 years, it has in fact become the dominant system of production in the world. It achieved this initially by colonizing virtually the entire non-white world, and since decolonization, by establishing and maintaining a cultural hegemony, backed by a military industrial complex. This process involved the internationalization of a Euro-cultural political-economy which now encompasses the entire globe.

As mentioned, it was during industrialization and colonization that one finds the concretization of the ideological infrastructure, the remnants of which currently still inform the western cultural hegemony. Part and parcel of this process was the negation of the Ancient Model of European history, and the imposition and subsequent acceptance of what Bernal refers to as the Aryan Model. This latter is based in part on

racial categorization, which grew exponentially with the expansion of slavery, colonization and periphery capitalism. ⁶³

The dominant culture invented an 'eternal West', unique since the moment of its origin. This arbitrary and mythic construct had as its counterpart an equally artificial conception of the 'Other', likewise constructed on mythic foundations. The product of this Eurocentric vision is the well-known version of 'Western' history - a progression from Ancient Greece to Rome to Feudal Christian Europe to capitalist Europe - one of the most popular of received ideas. Elementary school books and popular opinion are as, or even more important, in the creation and diffusion of this construct as the most erudite theses developed to justify the 'ancestry' of European culture and civilization. ⁶⁴

This thesis argues that in order for regions like West Africa to participate in the global market, acquiescence to the European cultural hegemony is still a necessary criterion. In essence, this means accepting the euro-cultural designation of the 'Other'. In economic and political terms, this translates into submitting to development programs that while stimulating growth in West Africa's export sectors tend to preclude indigenous planning and development similar to that experienced in Western Europe.

Thus the economic and political dominance of Western Europe seems to be grounded on, and maintained by, its cultural hegemony, which was achieved in large

⁶³ Bernal, *Black Athena*, p.137.

⁶⁴ Amin, S. (1994). *Eurocentricism*, p. 90. Monthly Review Press.

part by negating indigenous cultural norms in periphery regions like West Africa and superimposing a Eurocentric cultural paradigm, which rationalized Western Europe's economic and political supremacy while appropriating the economic resources and labor necessary for its growth and development.

To this end Western Europe not only rewrote the history of the world, but by globalizing its cultural matrix, has effectively made it the only accepted canon. The long and impressive history of Africa was virtually obliterated in the process. It was then replaced by a simplistic, inaccurate, revisionist version that portrayed Africans as savage and uncultured, without history or even written language.

In short, the cultural hegemony of Western Europe, which is the cornerstone of its economic dominance, is predicated on the general acceptance of certain assumptions concerning people of different races and cultures and is today still used as a covert rationalization for underdevelopment in Africa and the rest of the third world. What is lost in this equation is that economic development and stability at the centers seems to depend on underdevelopment and disarticulation at the periphery; there is an essentially reciprocal, dichotomous relationship between the two.

Indigenous economic development and the creation of a solid entrepreneurial class, which is the back-bone of any free market system, were seen as unnecessary and even undesirable in West Africa and similar regions. Certainly they would have been a great impediment to the metro poles' access to cheap and abundant resources and labor that were, and in many instances still are the touchstone of western industrial power and growth. Thus, it is not illogical to suggest that development and planning strategies which evolved from this Eurocentric model have tended to ensure West Africa's continued dependency. In other words, inadvertently or otherwise, mechanisms for planning in this region tend to reinforce the center-periphery dichotomy; the result is development at the centers and underdevelopment at the periphery.

In conjunction decolonized West African states never developed their own political frameworks through which to address their countries indigenous economic needs. During the process of decolonization, emerging colonial superstructures were immediately absorbed into preexisting European institutions, which were internationalized to subsume African, Asian and other newly decolonized political-economies. This essentially precluded any potential or actual movement to re-synthesize indigenous cultural realities and realign them, once again, to indigenous economic processes. This also explains the bias of West African political institutions to that of the western bourgeois state and the inability of the culturally co-opted leadership to design and implement policies geared to generate coherent regional planning.

The Introduction of Periphery Capitalism

In order to impose periphery capitalism in West Africa, it was necessary to fundamentally change indigenous economic structures, realigning them to a more westernized model. As previously mentioned, this was done initially by introducing a system of monetization, which meant the eradication of the wide-spread barter system, as well as privatizing the land, which, because it was communally owned, allowed most people some level of autonomy. This latter was essential; as long as the land remained communal an alternative means of generating income, other than wage labor, was possible.

There were serious logistical problems associated with grafting a discrete economic paradigm onto preexisting social relations that were premised on fundamentally different cultural realities. For a monetary system to take hold in West Africa, it was necessary to create a work force that had no choice but to exchange labor for wages. Thus replacing barter for a system of monetary exchange and pushing small farmers off the land and appropriating that land, effectively created a captive work-force. West Africans were forced to become dependent wage earners, either growing

cash crops for new expatriate landowners, which were exported to supply western markets, or mining strategic and non-strategic minerals which were also exported, to fuel western industries. In short, monetization and privatization not only created economic dependency and compelled most West Africans into wage labor, they also initiated periphery capitalism, in the process negating indigenous social relations of production and rendering largely inert the cultural roots that shaped them.

Between the end of the slave trade and the beginning of the colonial period, there was a brief hiatus, during which time West Africa and the rest of the continent briefly thrived. Showing remarkable resilience and great ingenuity, many people in both rural and urban areas became involved in the export trade.

[B]y 1880....the mainstays of Africa's external economy were ivory, gum or copal, cloves, honey, wild coffee, peanuts, cotton, and above all, rubber. Indeed in Ghana not only had rubber become the second leading export - the first being palm oil - but by 1891 Ghana had become the leading producer of rubber in the British Empire and third in the world.⁶⁵

While Boahen is right in his assessment of the wealth generated because of shared access to export markets, his explanation as to why this access occurred is somewhat flawed. Granted, the end of the slave trade brought about renewed political stability, but according to Boahen, as West Africa became more integrated into the world capitalist system, the distribution of wealth became more equitable.

⁶⁵

Boahen, A. (1992). *African Perspectives on Colonialism*, p. 4. The John Hopkins University Press.

This interesting development led to the emergence of a nouveau riche, both male and female, in the rural areas; a great increase in the number of entrepreneurs in the former urban and market centers; and the beginnings of rural capitalism. ⁶⁶

In fact it was precisely the absence of structured colonial intervention that allowed the growing export trade in West Africa to flourish as it did. Interacting freely with external markets, it was the cultural imperative of communal ownership as it informed the social relations of production which provided access to both produce and markets to average Africans, who were then able to buy and sell as independent contractors. As stated in Chapter One, the impact of the slave trade, while devastating, did not in and of itself cause irrevocable damage. However, Colonial intervention, by imposing periphery capitalism, arrested indigenous responses which were up until that point slowly creating a basis for domestic growth that would have eventually allowed West Africa not only to get back on track and continue developing economically, according to its own cultural paradigm, but to eventually trade as an equal partner in the emerging world market.

The Fante Confederation

Before the formal imposition of colonization, which once again plunged the continent into chaos, West Africa was synthesizing a functional matrix for domestic production and development that retained the integrity of the region's indigenous cultural models, while allowing free and internally controlled access to both local and foreign markets. This phenomenon is perhaps most clearly

⁶⁶

Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism*, p. 8.

illustrated by the Fante Confederation, which was one of the earliest attempts at constitutional experimentation on the continent. Formed in 1868 in what is now Ghana, the primary objective of the Confederation was to provide a platform of unity and social reform through which regional planning could be coherently articulated. Its agenda included regional and national cooperation in education, the building of roads and other social infrastructure, as well as agricultural, industrial and mining enterprises which would facilitate commerce, both domestically and for export.

These provisions of the Constitution of the Fante Confederation [were] of great significance for four main reasons. First and foremost [was] the very progressive, modern and far-sighted nature of the objectives and plans of the confederation. This [was] evident from the plans to construct roads fifteen feet wide, to promote agricultural and industrial pursuits and 'to introduce new plants as may hereafter become sources of profitable commerce'. The second [was] the great importance attached to the promotion of education...not only of a literary but also of a technological nature....The third significant aspect of the Fante Constitution [was] the spirit of self-help and self-reliance underlying the proposals....The final and most innovative [was] the recognition of the importance of the harmonious cooperation between the educated [westernized] elite and the traditional rulers for national development.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism*, p.12

It seemed that it was recognized by both traditional and western educated leadership that centralization could not be achieved without cooperation. In short, a pooling of resources between the old and the new was necessary if the technological gap between West Africa and Western Europe was to be closed, at which point West Africa's equal participation in the global economy would be assured. These efforts and their early positive impact were not lost on the colonial powers. It is argued that their desire to retain West Africa's markets and resources for their own growth and development was a major impetus to formal colonization. Thus these unprecedented initiatives were quickly arrested, by imposing restrictions on indigenous development and restricting free trade, in this way maintaining a monopoly over the region's resources which would last as long as they controlled the economic base.

The colonial partition of Africa abruptly ended what was a slow but steadily growing free trade arrangement between this continent and the global economy. Free trade, within the context of capitalism, if access is indeed unhampered, is actually a very egalitarian construct. Paradoxically, this speaks rather eloquently of capitalism as a system of production having within it the potential to be inclusive and beneficial to the majority. However, the current euro-cultural paradigm, in which access is limited by a series of vertical hierarchies - color, caste, class, gender, ethnicity and religious affiliation -, restricts participation, which is therefore neither free nor equal. Full benefits accrue to only a relatively few depending on their placement in the system's hierarchical and overlapping structures. Everyone else is either excluded, or can expect only limited returns based on limited access.

The Capitalist Rationale for Colonization

By 1894-95, Africa was formally partitioned between the various Western European nations at the Berlin Conference. The colonial enterprise, which had been getting gradually more restrictive to Africans, was officially in place. Periphery capitalism in effect stagnated domestic markets, and thus inhibited indigenous development. Unencumbered by competition, the colonial trading companies were able to supply cheap raw materials and repatriate abundant profits to their respective industrial centers.

As mentioned, British and French West Africa each had different styles of colonial rule, albeit their ultimate objectives - appropriation of resources and labor for their own development - were identical. The British imposed a system of Indirect Rule, which simply meant that local governments were administered by various local chiefs; after they had pledged allegiance to the throne of course. It was decided by the Colonial Home Office that the natives would be less likely to rebel if a semblance of indigenous rule was maintained, at least superficially, through systems already in place.

The French on the other hand, opted for Direct Rule. French colonies became part of the construct referred to as *La Mere Française*; colonial subjects were taught that they were French. The administration of France's colonies, down to the smallest detail, was overseen by white French civil servants. The residual of these different styles of colonial rule can still be seen today; Francophone West Africans, even the less educated, are still more culturally bound to the concept of *La Mere Française* than Anglophone West Africans are to the former British Common Wealth.

...In British West Africa, the British always said they had a 'mission' to lead Africans to independence, though by immensely slow steps. The French also said they had a mission: not however, to lead Africans to independence, but

to lead them towards becoming citizens of France...; they could only become part of 'Greater France'. They could not rebuild their civilizations in the modern world; they could only join French civilization. ⁶⁸

In some ways however, the French were perhaps more forthright. Both administrations were undeniably racist; both believed in the inability of Africans to govern themselves. However, at least with the French there was no pretence regarding the time table for eventual independence, which was certainly not on African terms. Instead an open invitation to assimilate was made, even though in reality this option was feasible to only a very small segment of the colonial populations. In fact, by the mid 1920s, less than 50,000 'French West Africans' were also French citizens, out of a total colonial population of over 13 million on the continent. ⁶⁹

Colonial partition also placed Africans of different linguistic, religious and ethnic backgrounds within the same territorial boundaries. Carving up the West African sub-continent from north to south in this manner inevitably increased intra-ethnic and religious friction. The different ethnicities had formally interacted as quasi-independent regions, intermittently at war and peace, as is the norm with autonomous peoples who live in close geographic proximity and compete for limited resources. In conjunction, by playing favorites among the various ethnic elites who were striving for ascendancy, colonial administrators further pit the different groups against each other. The end result was that trite but true colonial maxim, 'divide and conquer'. Under these conditions, predictably, there was little organized resistance.

⁶⁸ Davidson, *Modern Africa*, p. 22.

⁶⁹ Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism*, p. 45.

This is not to say that there was no resistance, although, pro forma, the colonial elite were the first to acquiesce; they had the most to gain from the new system; they also had the most to lose in terms of political power and access.

One big response [by the elite], was, in short, adjusting to the system; what historians have called 'accommodation'. Having resisted the colonial invaders in vain, [the native elite] naturally looked for ways of getting a place inside the new systems, or even of turning these systems to African advantage. Some of these ways of accommodation...were to lead on to the later rise of modern nationalism...⁷⁰

While Davidson is right, his analysis is uncharacteristically optimistic. The West African elite's response to colonialism was largely inspired by their own budding class interests; this latter phenomenon was also evident in later nationalist movements which effectively negated the potential impact of decolonization. Thus, far from using the process of colonization to help Africans, the elite were more interested in helping themselves. Looking at the history of West Africa's elite in the context of the European contact, they have, by and large, shown a dismal pattern of co-optation since the beginning of the slave trade.

The resistance that the colonial administrations' did meet was largely spontaneous; those with nothing to lose and everything to gain. There were mass protests against the appropriation of communal land, the imposition of taxes, low wages, forced labor and laws forbidding indigenous cultural and ceremonial practices. Most of the protests were peaceful; some were not. The response of the colonial

⁷⁰

Davidson, *Modern Africa*, p.38

administrations was always the same however, regardless of the size or nature of the rebellions.

To all these protests, whether violent or not, the colonial powers replied with some form of 'pacification'. No year in this period [1884-1930] passed without campaigns of 'pacification' in one region or another, and often in several. These campaigns were designed to repress, or to frighten... [showing] that the colonial powers...were always thinking that Africans might revolt and therefore needed to maintain a constant show of force. ⁷¹

Despite ongoing rebellion and internal dissent, Western Europe continued to enjoy the largesse of Africa's wealth until the end of World War Two and its subsequent decline as the solitary global power. At this juncture it was obliged to relinquish overt and sole control of its colonial territories and share access to this continent's abundant wealth with North America, which had gained dominance in the global political-economy. In many ways, the U.S. ascension was inevitable, even predestined. Its marginal losses in World War Two, the economic revitalization it experienced because of that war and crucially, its Anglo-Saxon mainstream culture, translated into the U.S. having the means, the desire and the prerequisite support to be the new Super Power behind western capitalism and its community of interests.

Prior to World War Two, African markets had been largely closed to the U.S. However, a combination of the above mentioned factors and, importantly, a growing

⁷¹ Davidson, *Modern Africa*, p. 23

Russian influence on the continent, caused Europe to capitulate. The result was that a whole new arena of markets and resources opened up for U.S. goods and investments. Another reason was the financial cost of the war to Europe, which the U.S. had helped to defray, on the condition that with the implementation of the Marshall Plan, Europe would in turn, allow America access to its African Markets. At this historic juncture Winston Churchill was heard to state in the Houses of Parliament: "I did not become Prime Minister to oversee the dismantling of Her Majesty's Empire." ⁷²

The Rise of the U.S. to Super Power

To fully understand the cultural component of U.S. foreign policy and its impact in West Africa, it should be placed in a socio-historic context. For the purposes of analysis, North American foreign policy on the continent as a whole will be examined. This is to demonstrate that U.S. involvement in West Africa replicates a similar pattern of more or less benign neglect and containment throughout the continent; a general survey of U.S. foreign policy in Africa will perhaps make this more apparent. The general direction of U.S. foreign policy on the continent also suggests a lack of sensitivity that the U.S. has consistently manifested, by lumping the entire continent and its people into one amorphous mass, despite the many complex regional and ethnic differences. Two aspects of the American cultural reality that particularly demand attention are its fundamental, though now largely sublimated racism and its rigid, even rabid albeit now passé anti-communism, which was quickly infused into America's national consciousness at the end of World War Two.

Historically, North America's domestic policies are grounded in a culture that has historically designated non-whites inferior. The slave trade and the genocide of the

⁷²

National Public Radio (1996, Nov). *The Life and Times of Randolph Winston Churchill*. National Public Broadcasting System.

Native American population were rationalized by an ideology of racism that was institutionalized by the U.S. government and widely received by the general population. In economic terms, this translated into the exploitation of Black labor and the appropriation of Indian Territory, both of which contributed significantly to the emergence of the U.S. as a major economic power by the nineteenth century.

The U.S. government has the distinction of breaking every treaty it ever signed with the various Native American peoples. Population estimates differ considerably, but even taking the most conservative, the Indian population north of the Rio Grande was about thirty million when the May Flower first dropped anchor in the 1600s. By 1930, due to genocide, disease, war and forced relocation there were only about 3,000,000 Native Americans left in the continental United States. Vacillating between a racially inspired paternalism and an overtly virulent racism, the U.S. government, through the department of the Interior, violated the human rights of Native Americans in every conceivable way, systematically dispossessing them of their land, their wealth, their history and their culture.⁷³

One can argue that the native peoples of the Americas and the Caribbean might have survived had they been more advanced technologically. Certainly the decimation of these populations through conquest and disease also occurred in Latin America, where a lethal combination of the Roman Catholic Church and the Spanish and Portuguese Conquistadores sought to settle and secure these territories and appropriate raw materials, with little regard for the genocide this process entailed.

In North and South America, prevailing cultural norms of the colonizers portrayed Native Americans as savage, uncivilized heathens who needed to be shown the way to true salvation and civilization. This mind set was similar in many ways to the articulated

⁷³

Hunt, M. (1998). *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Harvard University Press, Second Edition.

perceptions of European colonizers in Africa. Documents from the U.S. Department of the Interior reveal that this particular branch of the government, unlike the military, was not committed to the physical extermination of Native Americans, but rather wanted to wipe them out culturally and assimilate them into white society as peons. Similar programs were implemented in Australia and other settler colonies.

The following are two excerpts of correspondence between bureaucrats at the Department of the Interior during the pacification of native peoples in the U.S. They clearly demonstrate the official attitude towards the welfare and education of Native Americans.⁷⁴

Sir:

I desire to call your attention to what I regard as a great hindrance to the civilization of the Indians, viz, the continuance of heathenish dances....These dances...ought, in my judgment, be discontinued....These feasts or dances are not social gatherings for ... these people, but are intended and calculated to stimulate the war-like passions of the young warriors of the tribe....The audience assents approvingly of his boasts of falsehood, deceit, theft, murder and rape....The result is the demoralization of the young, who are incited to emulate the wicked conduct of their elders....

⁷⁴

Hunt, Ideology and US Foreign Policy, p.67.

The Government having attempted to support the Indians until such time as they become self-supporting, it is in the interest of the Government as well as that of the Indians that every possible effort should be made to induce them to become self-supporting....I therefore suggest whether it is not practicable to formulate certain rules for the government of the Indians on the reservations that shall restrict and ultimately abolish the practices I have mentioned....

Very respectfully,

H.M. Teller,

Secretary

Dear Sir:

I take this occasion to give you my idea of the proper course to be pursued in the purchase of clothing, food, & c., and the general training of the children in your school....While...they should receive some instruction in book knowledge, I do not consider that the main object of their attendance at school.... He who can feed and clothe himself without the assistance of others is at least partially educated, whether he can read or not. The [white] boy that has seen his father plow, sow and gather ...will do it without special instruction; not so with an Indian. He must be taught ... a thousand things acquired by farmers' sons by observation....But above all, the Indian

boy must be taught the value of steady, continuous labor....I much prefer to know that he can sow, plow and harvest, than to know that he has made great attainments in a literary way....They should be accustomed to plain clothes and plain living, having only occasionally enough of the luxuries of life to stimulate them to endeavor to secure for themselves all the advantages of civilization.

Very Respectfully,

H. M. Teller,

Secretary

These letters, which typified prevailing mainstream attitudes, suggest that the U.S. government understood that subjugating the indigenous population would entail depriving them of their culture and substituting a more appropriate one; White supremacy. This was accomplished by denigrating their history, reducing it to one of savagery and barbarism, and replacing it with the colonial historical reality, primarily through the education of the young and the punishment of any who resisted.

Racism rationalized the slave trade in much the same way. Africans were deemed racially and culturally inferior; it was their destiny to serve whites. When they were finally freed, the motivation was to end the civil war not to change the status quo. Abraham Lincoln stated this clearly prior to the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, when he said that freeing the slaves was mandated by military necessity; if there was any other way to achieve unification, that would have been his first option.

I have no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the black and white races....There is a physical difference between the two which, in my judgment, will

probably forever forbid their living together upon the footing of a perfect equality; in as much as it becomes a necessity that there must be a difference, I am in favor of the race to which I belong having the superior position. ⁷⁵

The Legacy of the Caucasian Diaspora

Not so gradually, a hierarchy of race evolved, fed by both scientific rationalism and the Industrial Revolution. This latter demanded the expansion of markets both to absorb the increased production of manufactured goods and to access raw materials for North America's growing industrial base. In short, the rationalization and justification of U.S. territorial expansion was based on the assumption of White cultural supremacy. This sentiment is clearly captured in the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, which proclaimed the U.S. natural leader and policeman in the western hemisphere; that it was America's manifest destiny to extend Anglo-Saxon values and culture throughout the region. It is not surprising that in many ways this attitude mirrored the ideology that rationalized the colonial expansion of Europe. In fact the political and economic elite of the U.S. were of European, primarily English stock. In large part they inherited this notion of Anglo-Saxon superiority from their own former colonizers.

The popular vogue enjoyed by Darwinism further accentuated the tendency for Americans to think of themselves as a race in comparative and competitive terms and to locate themselves in an Anglo-Saxon community of interests. Given an optimistic twist, Darwinian notions served

⁷⁵

Jacobs, P., Landau, S. & Pell, E. (1976). *To Serve the Devil: Natives and Slaves*. Vol. 1, pp. 69-72. Vintage Books.

to reinforce pre-existing ideas of Anglo-Saxon superiority. By the standards of industrial progress, military prowess and international influence and control, Anglo-Saxons had an incontestable claim to the top of the racial heap. From that eminence they would point the way to an era of unprecedented world peace and prosperity. Lesser races, awed and grateful, could follow the lead of the Anglo-Saxon or drop to the bottom of the heap, to meet their fate, ultimate extinction...⁷⁶

This was the legacy that America's white immigrant population brought to this hemisphere and/or assimilated as part of the mainstream culture. It is the residue of this legacy that still informs U.S. foreign policy in Africa.

The racial hierarchy developed with the Anglos at the top - their claim to fame was a superior intellect, a penchant for hard work and morality and an innate ability for government....Together [the Americans and British] stood preeminent in world affairs. Already the British had achieved much: their empire embraced one fifth of the earth's surface and one quarter of its people, and its navy dominated the seas. Americans basked in the reflected glory of these accomplishments, but they also knew that they, the child and heir of imperial Britain, were well on their way to eclipsing the parent in wealth and power....⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, p.79.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.86

The non-white races were categorized in descending order; the darker they were, the lower their status. Africans and people of African descent were, predictably, at the very bottom. All this to say that racism has been firmly entrenched in American culture since the advent of Europeans to this continent and is manifest in the body politic, public and private institutions and the division of labor, which closely correspond to the hierarchy of race.

When the U.S. assumed the mantle of world Super Power after World War Two, it went from isolationism to internationalism with little or no transition. The underlying cultural forces that shaped its indigenous political-economy have remained substantially unchanged. Just as tangible and perhaps more immediately apparent, was America's reaction to the spread of communism. The Cold War and Russia's enthusiastic embrace of the newly decolonized African states were central to the formation of U.S. foreign policy on that continent, which for the most part, certainly until the fall of the Eastern bloc, was designed to do little more than thwart the spread of communism.

From the end of the Second World War until relatively recently, Africa was both literally and figuratively, a war-zone of conflicting U.S. and Soviet strategic, ideological and economic interests. Regarding U.S. foreign policy, this strategy involved supporting pro-western or moderate leaders with both economic and military aid in order to contain the spread of communism. Beyond this, other than a rather nebulous racism, its foreign policy was marked as benign, for the most part without aim or coherence, except to facilitate the appropriation of resources by Multi National Corporations. In short, the prevailing attitude was one of containment, not development.

Now that Russia is no longer a threat or a competing sphere of influence that could potentially capture the hearts, minds and raw materials of unwary African states, thereby reducing American political influence and economic access, U.S. foreign policy

is once again undergoing redefinition. An increasing percentage of the money and aid that in the past had been ear-marked for the many pro-capitalist dictatorships in Africa, are actually being redirected to help Russia and other countries in the former Eastern block, to build their budding capitalist economies. In short, there is no longer a perceived need to channel money to Africa, at least not south of the Sahara - the MNCs seem to be coping adequately. It is no longer necessary to woo client states to the western block because international capitalism now has unchallenged access to the continent's raw materials, so cheap and so important to Western industry and interests.

This thesis contends that the primary objective of U.S. foreign policy in Africa until relatively which was to counter Soviet interests while carving out a sphere of interest for itself, was short-sighted and reactionary. It also tended to ignore, at times even blatantly override, the stated economic and political goals of many African countries. This so-called zero sum approach was often used by the U.S. government to rationalize its support of pro-Western leaders who were reviled by the majority of their people, not least because of their frequent violations of human and civil rights.

The United States in other words [was] isolating itself in its own ideological vacuum [by] approaching African states primarily from the stand point of cold war ideology. American insistence on cold war objectives - in opposition to Africans' priorities of national economic development - produced needless friction with African states. ⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Jackson, H. (2002). *From the Congo to Soweto*, p.284. William Morrow & Co., Second Edition.

The Communist Threat

The following reports outlining U.S. foreign policy in Africa demonstrate the above described fixation with communism. In each case cited, the common factor that shaped U.S policy was its reaction to cold war ideology; economic and political interests were not as important, although as stated, U.S. economic interests did not suffer in any appreciable way. In fact U.S. investment in Africa continued to grow significantly.

The Case of Zaire

In 1960, the Belgian Congo, now Zaire, in Central Africa was the first decolonized country in Africa to receive U.S. economic and military aid. Its strategic location - it is bordered by nine other African states - plus its abundance of natural resources, made it a very lucrative investment for the U.S. which was importing 80 percent of its industrial diamonds, 75 percent of its cobalt and 50 percent of its titanium from the Congo Basin. These last two minerals are essential to aerospace technology and are available in very limited quantities in the U.S. In addition Western Europe was importing 49 percent of its cobalt and 69 percent of its industrial diamonds from this country. ⁷⁹

Intervening in the civil war in Zaire was spurred in part by the desire to protect American economic interests. However of even greater import was the Soviet support of socialist Patrice Lumumba, who, of all those claiming power, was the closest to consolidating his leadership. In this instance there was a clear convergence of U.S. economic and ideological interests; America feared a communist takeover. A socialist orientated, Soviet backed government would remove Zaire from the western sphere of influence and with it access to its vast natural resources and geo-strategic location. The fact that Lumumba enjoyed overwhelming popular support seemed to be a mute point;

⁷⁹

Gavshon, A. (1998). *Crisis in Africa*. Penguin Books, 2nd Edition.

democratic ideals are not necessarily relevant in the greater scheme of capitalist expansion. There was also the very real possibility that U.S. investments, which were substantial, would be nationalized if Zaire joined the Communist Block.

Lumumba was portrayed not just as pro-communist, but as anti-white and anti-American; his removal from the political scene was actively sought by both public and private U.S. interests. One Colonel Joseph Mobutu, a pro-western leader of the moderate ANC (African National Congress) faction became the recipient of U.S. economic and military aid, because he was thought to be most likely to support U.S. economic and ideological interests.⁸⁰ In 1960 the United Nations, with the U.S. assuming most of the financial burden, sent a Peace Keeping Force into Zaire at the request of Lumumba, ostensibly to help re-establish domestic order. Nineteen thousand soldiers from thirty African, Asian and European countries were also sent in to provide the war torn country with whatever military assistance was necessary to restore political stability. U.S. involvement however, did not stop there.⁸¹

Through the CIA, a separate and clandestine American strategy developed in tandem with Washington's public and official policy towards the United Nations. This involved Washington's interest in reducing the influence of Lumumba. On December 1, 1960, Mobutu's soldiers apprehended Lumumba ... thanks in part to CIA surveillance reports. ... Because of these circumstances, Colonel Mobutu, and by

⁸⁰ Jackson, *From the Congo to Soweto*.

⁸¹ Ibid.

extension the CIA, were implicated when Lumumba was secretly assassinated on January 17, 1961.⁸²

At this point, the U.S. set about consolidating and facilitating Mobutu's rise to power. Lumumba's replacement was rationalized by the need to prevent a communist takeover, whatever the cost. U.S. intervention, it was argued, had not only preempted such a scenario, it also re-established political stability and provided a coherent framework through which a liberal democracy could eventually evolve. This underscored the conclusion reached by the State Department to justify their backing a military dictator, that 'democracy was not the solution'.⁸³

With the American aid he received, Mobutu developed a superior army. This preponderance of military power enabled him to dominate his political competitors and, in November 1965, to take control of the Leopoldville government....The leadership field was now open for Mobutu as he proceeded to turn the Congo into an American client-state. By mid 1964...the United States had delivered a total of \$6.1 billion in aid to Mobutu.⁸⁴

Ironically, in early 1997, Mobutu became the latest casualty of America's changing foreign policy in Africa. His fall from power and grace are indicative of the now

⁸² Ibid., p. 36.

⁸³ State Department Documents. (1960, Nov). J.F.K. Library, Washington, D.C.

⁸⁴ Jackson, *From the Congo to Soweto*. p. 45.

widely held belief by the U.S. State Department that having a particular individual in power is no longer necessary; U.S. investments are safe. It is also perhaps, a prime example of the new liberal discourse in action. After supporting Mobutu for over thirty years, despite his flagrant and frequent human rights violations and America's official commitment to liberal democracy, U.S. foreign policy makers did an abrupt about face. The American media was the conduit through which this change in attitude was disseminated to the general population; at the time there was barely a ripple of reaction.

When the rebels first tried to seize power, the U.S. response was reminiscent of its early Cold War rhetoric: Mobutu had to maintain control, or the country would slide back into chaos and anarchy; that the war was in effect 'a continuation of Rwanda's civil war in a new theater' and was 'an affair of outsiders'.⁸⁵

However, as the civil war progressed, with the obvious support of the masses, this rather dated Cold War rhetoric became harder to sustain. Gradually, there was a discernible shift in the tone of Western media, particularly in the U.S; the civil war was now portrayed as the result of Mobutu's repressive policies.

An African region rich in resources and tired of poverty....Whatever its original roots, people here say that the revolt has evolved into a general struggle for the heart and soul of their country, an attempt to end the corrupt leadership of Mr. Mobutu, who has driven this lush and mineral-rich region into abject poverty.⁸⁶

⁸⁵

New York Times, 1997, Feb 12; March 9.

⁸⁶

Ibid, 1997, Feb. 18.

Kabila, once insurgent rebel, thus becomes the new hope for peace and liberal democracy in Zaire. His political agenda, as stated by the *New York Times* reads like an American Civics course: free and fair elections, basic civil rights, freedom of speech, a free press, lower taxes, clean government and a military under civilian control. ⁸⁷

The unquestioning acceptance of this change in U.S. foreign policy direction affirms the phenomenon of spontaneous consent. It also conveniently distances the U.S. from any responsibility for the disarticulation and underdevelopment in Zaire over the last fifty or more years. Finally, it reaffirms the Capitalist Mission of liberal democracy, which now, perhaps, Zaire is finally ready for. In other words, the tradition of the 'Other' remains, but has been reconstituted in cultural, as opposed to racial terms.

When taken to its logical conclusion, the tradition of the 'Other' within liberal discourse has a very clear effect. It neutralizes European/American Bourgeois development, as the only path towards an objective good, by harnessing a long ideological tradition with which the American public is extremely familiar. It also provides an opportunity for Africans to once again mimic the mainstream development paradigm. This similitude is absolutely essential for maintaining the liberal discourse on equality and human rights; no recourse to biological inferiority is necessary for the argument to hold. Finally if the agenda fails, the media can always present the lingering danger of reversion to the 'traditional' path; cultural backwardness or 'Otherness'.

The original Zaire strategy thus became the essential blue-print for U.S. foreign policy in Africa from the early 1960s until after the fall of the Soviet Block. It is likely that this revised strategy in some measure continues to direct America's foreign policy on

⁸⁷ *New York Times*, 1997, March 21.

the continent in the new millennium. That being said, with the advent of President Barack Obama to the White House and his unique ties to Africa, there is renewed hope that U.S. foreign policy on this continent will become more effective; hope reigns eternal.

In essence, the Cold War Strategy was the practice by which the U.S. would intervene in an African country, carefully choosing a time of internal crisis, even sometimes creating that crisis, and then backing some moderate or pro-western elite struggling for power against local opponents who were either socialist, recipients of Soviet Block aid, or simply wary of capitalism. In this way the U.S. set the stage

.....for a whole series of bilateral relations between the U.S. government and the victorious African leader, who [then] sets about consolidating his personal authority over the new regime....Washington thereby obtains a new ally in the dominant personality, as opposed to the institutionalized government of the African nation. ⁸⁸

As already stated, this zero-sum game of cultural warfare between the U.S. and the Soviet Union at times took precedence over economic and political factors. This latter contributed significantly to a growing distrust of the U.S. by many leaders in Africa, who, regardless of political affiliation, often perceived U.S. actions as contrary to international law, hypocritical, or at best, fickle and arbitrary; certainly not in the best interests of Africa. Such sentiments, however, have not resulted in any collective or concerted effort on the part of said leadership to change the status quo.

⁸⁸ Jackson, *From the Congo to Soweto*, p. 42

The Case of Angola

Angola is another case in point, in that it clearly demonstrates the machinations of U.S. foreign policy in Africa. In the midst of its war for independence with Portugal in the early 1960s, it went to the United Nations to elicit support. Initially, it looked as though the U.S. would help this country's struggle for independence.

...Kennedy stunned African leaders by endorsing a 1961 resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, calling on Portugal to initiate measures and reforms preparatory to Angolan independence.⁸⁹

However, as it transpired, the Cold War conflict was strategically more important to the U.S. government's perceived interests than was honoring Kennedy's official commitment to support any nation struggling for independence. Because of increased tensions between the two Super Powers, specifically the Bay of Pigs incident, Portugal's air and sea bases on its colonized Azure Islands, regained strategic importance to the United States. Kennedy's promise to support all peoples struggling for independence made the Portuguese government very unhappy. From America's point of view it was in its own best interest to have access to these bases, which Portugal was threatening to deny unless Kennedy withdrew his offer to support ongoing struggles for national liberation. If that meant supporting Portugal's colonial war in Angola and its other African territories, thereby reneging on commitments made, this would just have to be contended with.

Paradoxically, America's obsession with containing Soviet influence opened the door for communist support in Angola. Denied aid by the United Nations, doubtless a

⁸⁹ *Gavshon, Crisis in Africa*, p 137.

response to America's suddenly tepid attitude, Angola asked for and took help from wherever it was offered; the Soviet Union, with great pomp and ceremony, filled the void. The U.S. reaction was immediate: it broke off diplomatic ties with Angola, citing the presence of Soviet and Cuban troops. The fact that Angola had appealed to the United Nations first, accepting Russia's offer of help only when western aid was withheld, did not seem to matter. Angola was viewed as a Soviet satellite and the U.S. initiated its usual Cold War policies, taking advantage of the ongoing internal chaos to sow seeds of dissent, in the hopes of subverting a growing communist influence in Angola.

Despite this setback, U.S. foreign investment still prospered considerably. By 1975, Gulf Oil had a \$1.1 billion annual investment, producing 150,000 barrels of high grade crude a day; American investors owned considerable stock in South African mining corporations that controlled much of Angola's diamond deposits; the world's fifth largest exporter of gem diamonds. The Angolan port at Lobito is the export point for strategic minerals coming from Zaire and Zambia; without its railways and shipping facilities the cobalt, copper, industrial diamonds and titanium produced by these countries would be unavailable to American industry.⁹⁰

The U.S. and South African governments ended up supporting Jonas Savimbi and the UNITA forces, while the Soviets and Cubans, until they pulled out not long after the Soviet Union collapsed, were supplying arms and soldiers to the MPLA, Angola's official socialist government. The U.S. was collaborating with apartheid South Africa and interfering in the internal affairs of Angola. Its ideological aversion to communism caused it to once again disregard international conventions regarding sanctions against South Africa's racist policies and the sanctity of the nation state.

⁹⁰ Gavshon, *Crisis in Africa*.

The irony is that it was primarily U.S. economic interests in Angola and neighboring countries that helped finance the socialist government. Obviously, hatred of communism was not enough to influence U.S. private interests to withdraw from Angola altogether; just enough for U.S. public interests to try, not so covertly, to topple the newly formed, Soviet-backed government. In this instance, as in others when there was a divergence of political and corporate interests, the latter prevailed. This is yet another illustration of the growing independence of private capital and its ability to transcend national control, even when counter to the articulated goals of its own government.

Consolidating the Western Hegemony

The U.S. government ultimately claimed a cold war victory in Angola; the Russians and Cubans withdrew. The point is that initially U.S. foreign policy in Africa was formulated solely on the basis of Cold War ideology; now it simply tends to reinforce western multi-national corporate interests and the new liberal discourse. As previously mentioned, there is no longer a need to compete with the Eastern Block; barring economic collapse, African resources and labor are there for the picking.

America's growing economic reliance on Africa, specifically Zaire and Zimbabwe, as well as South Africa, was pointed out by Representative James Santini, Chairman of the House Mining Sub-committee. In his 1980 report, Santini stated that cutting off the steady stream of essential and non-essential minerals imported from this continent to the U.S. would bring much of American industry to a stand still; over 30 years later, this reality is essentially unchanged. Southern African countries collectively own 86 percent of the world's platinum group metals, 53 percent of all manganese deposits, 52 percent of the cobalt, 64 percent of the vanadium and 95 percent of the available chromium. Aside from southern Africa, several other African countries - Nigeria, Libya, Algeria and Gabon, supply America with almost 50 percent of its petroleum needs. In addition, Africa provides an array of non-strategic minerals to U.S.

industries such as bauxite, gold and diamonds, as well as agricultural raw materials. All told, Africa owns about 30 percent of the world's known mineral deposits, which one would think, is reason enough for America to maintain mutually beneficial relations.⁹¹

Given Africa's importance to American and Western European industry, this might be a good time for the U.S. to reevaluate its policies towards this continent; not simply the cosmetic changes underway, such as President Clinton's visit in 1998, or media efforts to report news and events. This has been under- scored by the election of Barack Obama, which has deep seated historic implications. Many are also hoping that his presidency will create even more avenues for mutual cooperation between these two continents. It is quite clear that the economic well being of Africa and America are critically tied to the well being of the global economy. The former has many of the raw materials needed by western industry; the latter is the only remaining super power.

For these reasons, a substantive reassessment of the relationship between the two continents is long overdue, as evidenced by the Clinton administration's AGOA Act in 2000, the Millennium Goals 2000 and other global strategies that are slowly attempting to address the critical problems that impact the process of viable and sustainable development in Africa.

For most western countries, the only other region with these strategic mineral resources in such abundance is Russia. Realistically, even it had any surplus to sell to Western industries, certainly they would not make them available at the prices that historically Africa has sold them. Despite North America's continued and increasing reliance on African resources, including oil deposits recently discovered in Ghana, to date the stated political and economic goals of much of the continent are not being acted on. It is early days yet and one can only hope that when the smoke clears, the mutual and interlocking interests of Africa and the U.S. will prevail.

⁹¹ *Santini, J. (1980). Report of the Congressional Mining Subcommittee. Library of Congress.*

Chapter 3

MNCs and Cultural Hegemony in the Periphery

...As of 2000 there will be over 7,300 corporations in the capitalist world that have foreign subsidiaries, and some of them operate simultaneously in 100 countries.... [B]y 1975.... two thirds of the labor force and 70 percent of the assets and profits were concentrated in approximately 350 [of the] largest monopolies. There were over 23 million people employed... [and] total assets amounted to \$1.42 trillion....The international corporations [held] over 60 percent of their subsidiaries in the developing countries under complete control, and controlled 20 percent of them by over 50 percent...⁹²

Multinational Corporations, in the context of the third world, can be described as harbingers of continued underdevelopment in regions like West Africa. Given the historic tendency of capitalism to become more centralized and concentrated over time, their evolution is a logical manifestation of this particular system of production. Also, considering the reciprocal relationship between culture and political-economy, they can be viewed as yet another economic manifestation of Western European cultural dominance. Multi-national corporations evolved in response to the need for a restructuring in the process of western accumulation after the decolonization of much of the so-called third world following World War Two. In the West African context, as in

⁹²

Tarabrin, E. (1997). *Neocolonialism and Africa in the 1970s*, p. 53. Progress Publishers 2nd Edition, Moscow.

other previously colonized regions, their continued operation ensures Western European and since the end of this war, U.S. economic dominance. This in turn guarantees the concomitant political and economic dependency of the region.

Multi National Corporations (MNCs) are huge western monopolies and oligarchies that, backed by Western European, U.S. and Asian finance capital, through the auspices of mega financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, effectively control the bulk of world markets. They evolved from the old colonial Trading Companies - performing the same function in neo-colonial West Africa as did their colonial prototypes; conduits for the appropriation of resources and the transfer of wealth from the periphery to the metro poles.

West African states still supply raw materials to their former colonies and import food and manufactured goods. Since the Atlantic Slave Trade and the start of the Industrial Revolution this has been their primary function in the global capitalist economy. This thesis contends that the uninterrupted and inexpensive appropriation of resources into Western Europe and North America has further consolidated the western cultural hegemony, by allowing it to develop more rapidly, while becoming more powerful and centralized in the process. The end result is that its economic and political control of the global economy continues to grow.

The legacy of colonization and the process of neo-colonialism have greatly contributed to West Africa's underdevelopment. The region is still unable to compete in terms of trade and/or technology. Granted, at the time of decolonization, massive aid programs were set up by the former colonial powers, supposedly to help these new nation states achieve economic independence and initiate articulate planning and development strategies. However this did not happen. The center-periphery dichotomy remains in place; the region is still dependent on the west and perennially in debt.

In order to pay off the loans, or even the interest, West African states must keep exporting raw materials; what little foreign exchange is left goes to import what could

potentially be produced locally. Caught in the cycle of periphery capitalism, which seems to offer no opportunity for eventual parity or the transfer of technology, little or no meaningful development has been achieved in the last 50 years or more.

Problems with Mainstream Development

One of the problems underlying both mainstream and Marxist analyses of planning in general is what appears to be a fundamental economic determinism. In essence this postulates that the technological gap between the center and the periphery is the cause of underdevelopment. Once this is remedied, third world regions like West Africa will eventually achieve parity and become equal partners in the global capitalist system. However, this rationale does not appear to take into account that the ultimate success of capitalism as a system of production is precisely that it has maintained its essentially Eurocentric cultural uniqueness. Wherever it has been transplanted it has imposed its own specific social relations of production, in the process negating preexisting structures in so far as economic production is concerned.

In other words, for capitalism to develop with equity in third world regions like West Africa, it must first synthesize indigenous economic and cultural realities by infusing all strata of the social infrastructure. The problem here is that such a metamorphosis would irrevocably change the nature of the system itself. The multiple hierarchies of capitalism - race, class, gender, ethnicity and religion - would no longer be criteria for exclusion, limited participation or upward mobility. Critically, because the paradigm in place would in effect become multi-cultural, successful participation would no longer depend on a predetermined relationship between the periphery and the center. Of equal import, the western European hegemony would no longer be assured.

Transnational capitalism through the agency of transnational corporations causes a process of cultural and national disintegration....At the global level, certain activities, social classes and regions from different countries are closely integrated and constitute the developed pole of the international system. Other sectors, groups and regions are excluded from the developed pole and have no contact with similar sectors in other countries. Underdeveloped sectors are those in which the latter sectors, groups and regions predominate, that is to say [those] which are marginalized and excluded from modernity. ⁹³

Although their role will be examined in detail in the next chapter, suffice it to say that West African leaders, increasingly aware of the dynamics involved in the nature and scope of their economic dependency, are still for the most part unwilling, or if willing, unable, to break the cycle of dependency. Most have a western orientation and no vested interest in breaking from the capitalist hegemony, of which they are beneficiaries. To synthesize a paradigm for development that is internally, as opposed to externally, focused would entail risking loss of privilege and wealth, the maintenance of which is tied to the existing status quo.

The global economy today is in the most advanced stages of capitalist accumulation. The world's resources are virtually monopolized by the concentration of finance capital and technology owned by western European, Asian and U.S. MNCs. These few players control the global markets and financial institutions

⁹³

Larrain, J. (1989). *Theories of Development*, p.152. Polity Press and Basil Blackwell, Inc.

MNCs: Outposts of Imperialism

Empirical data suggests that West African states will never regain control of their resources until they regain control of their economies. Thus MNCs can be seen as outposts of imperialism; maintaining the balance of wealth and power by ensuring the process of accumulation at the periphery. This is achieved by exerting monopoly control over the economies of host countries, effectively negating the potential for indigenous competition. In addition, their virtual lock on technology virtually paralyses indigenous social relations of production, rendering them redundant to West Africa's externally controlled economies.

[T]his influence manifests itself at the level of the production structure, by the massive penetration...of the transnational conglomerate...; at the technical level, by the large scale introduction of capital-intensive and labour [sic] saving techniques; at the cultural and ideological level, by an overwhelming and systematic publicity for the model of consumerist civilization....; and at the concrete level of policies and strategies of development....⁹⁴

The Stated Function of MNCs

It has been stated by adherents of mainstream development theorists that MNCs raise the standard of living where they locate by creating employment and increasing the inflow of foreign exchange which allows for the development of local industries and social infrastructure. While it is true they have the potential to do these things - in fact this was the original rationale offered to host countries - without exception such

⁹⁴

Larrain, *Theories of Development*, p.153.

philanthropic goals have not been realized in the last five decades or more. The industries that MNCs generate are mostly capital intensive and do not create either a skilled labor force or much additional employment. Further, as previously stated the monopolistic tendencies of MNCs exclude competition from potential domestic producers, which further reflects negatively on employment and the development of social infrastructure.

The Vertical Hierarchy of MNCs

A primary *raison d'être* of MNCs is to accumulate profit for the metro poles. Another is to provide a steady supply of raw materials for western industries, which assures continued development at the centers. The problems of development, or more precisely underdevelopment, in West Africa, are thus not a major concern of MNCs, as long as they do not interfere with these stated goals. The vertical hierarchy associated with MNCs is such that technology and information tend to stay in top management, which emanates from the metro poles. Aside from the efficacy of using culturally discrete technologies to generate a workable paradigm for economic development in West Africa, precisely because Western technology is a closely guarded monopoly, West Africa cannot hope to compete with it either domestically or on the world market.

...The higher up the ladder, the higher the wages and status, the more abstract the level of planning. At bottom one supervises a few people, remains rooted...and deals with narrow specialties.....Operating activities (level three) spread themselves widely over the globe....Coordinating activities (level two), because of the need for white-collar workers, communications systems, and information, tend to concentrate in large cities....The general offices (level

one)...must be located close to the capital market[s], the media and... government....The centralizing tendencies of multinational capital implies a world hierarchy of cities. High level decision making will be centralized in a number of capitals - New York, Tokyo, London, Frankfurt, Paris... the...radial points of strategic planning.....The new international economy will be...a division of labor based on nationality.... Latin Americans, Asians and Africans will at best be able to aspire to a management position in the intermediate coordinating centers at the continental level....The higher one gets to the top, the more important is a 'common cultural heritage'...⁹⁵

The Common Cultural Heritage of MNCs

This 'common cultural heritage' at the top is instrumental to maintaining the Western cultural hegemony. Those who are in control of the global hierarchy share a similar world view; their class orientation, education, race and often ethnicity and religion tend to be homogeneous, which generally translates into consensus regarding decision making processes.

In other words there is a centralization of power at the metro poles - a small group of Caucasians/Asians who make the decisions which are then translated to the periphery. This hierarchy in management is in fact a microcosm of the structure of western bourgeois society generally and in many ways replicates the cultural conditions which gave rise to it. These same cultural imperatives shape the world labor market

⁹⁵

Hymer, S. (1973). *Multinational Corporations in World Development*, p. 36. U.N., Geneva.

which until recently at least, was progressively defined by ethnicity, class, and gender; and perhaps just as importantly in the contemporary context, race and religion. As part of the international division of labor, West African economies are also subsumed into this reality.

... [M]ergers which produce giant world conglomerates ...blur the distinction between allegedly 'competitive' firms...not only among firms from the same home country but ...increasingly firms of different 'nationalities'....Their huge size, diversified production, technological dynamism and centralized global control ... [as well as] the enormous concentration of economic power ... by this growing sector of the world economy...[becomes apparent.] ⁹⁶

The New World Order

The control of West African economies by MNCs suggests another trend: bypassing the authority of the third world nation state by subjugating it to the whims of international capital. The ramifications of this are already becoming apparent in a rapidly globalizing economy. If current trends continue, MNCs may well be the prototype of a new world order in which the nation state, at least at the periphery, will no longer have relevance.

⁹⁶

Amin, S. & Widstrand, C. (1975). *Multinational Firms in Africa*, p.32. Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala and New York.

What is important about the new trans-nationalized economy apart from its size...is the high and unprecedented concentration of raw economic power...of its basic institutional unit, the multinational corporation....It has become common place to compare the economic size of companies with that of countries....The \$36 billion-per-year turnover of...General Motors is larger by far than the GNPs of the majority of member states of the United Nations....Of the 99 largest economies of the world in 1970, 40 of them were multinationals...⁹⁷

As of 2007, this number had grown to over half. As mentioned previously, a primary dynamic of capitalism is its tendency towards centralization. With this in mind, the ongoing transition to a global economy that would eventually bypass individual nation states, which could, de facto, be subsumed by the corporate structures of MNCs, is not an unlikely scenario. The concentration effect, another dynamic of capitalism, can be clearly seen in the current global distribution of wealth. A survey conducted by Adelman and Morris on global income distribution and the dominance of MNCs, showed that, on average, the income of the top five to ten percent of the population in West Africa has increased dramatically, while the bottom forty percent, whose real income has dropped in the last thirty five years, live in dire poverty. The average income of the median population is about \$800 a year, plus or minus. ⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Amin & Widstrand, p. 30

⁹⁸ Wilber, C. (1999). *The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment*. Random House, 2nd Edition.

Thus it is argued that the cultural replication of capitalist institutions is essential for its economic survival in periphery nations, such as those in West Africa. Ironically, capitalist culture, and its attendant ideology, which among other things nurtures a consumer market for western goods has, to a large extent, also been internalized by the poor, who are excluded from participation. Realistically speaking, less than 20 percent of West Africa's population actively participate in, and benefit from, global capitalism. The thwarted desire to share in the wealth and the ensuing frustration of being excluded and doomed to poverty pose a constant threat to the political stability that is a necessary criterion for multinational investment.

The Dilemma of Periphery Capitalism

At this point, one could argue that if MNCs created an environment that allowed a more equitable distribution of wealth in the periphery, this would stimulate domestic spending, as it has at the centers. They could thus increase their profits by expanding the base of a growing consumer market. However, the counter argument to this is that increased wealth in the general population will eventually raise the standard of living as domestic savings and social development increase over time. The down side to this scenario is that as people become more educated, the possibility of organized uprisings would inevitably increase; a much more serious threat than a spontaneous revolt which at worst could topple a government. Governments can be replaced - from the same group of bourgeois elite whose interests are tied to those of the Western cultural hegemony. However, an organized takeover by people who are committed to restructuring their political identities as a first step to regaining control of their national resources, would be at the very least, disruptive and could potentially initiate a chain of events that could end the dominance of MNCs and by extension the cultural hegemony of western capitalism. This thesis contends that even if it were possible for West Africa

to follow the same processes of development that have enriched the west over the last three centuries, economically, this is not a feasible option for global capitalism as it now operates. Western Europe and America developed by colonizing other lands and appropriating the resources and labor of the indigenous people; there are no new frontiers to conquer.

[T]he reasons for the weak links in the process of developing [and] integrating development components and some of the causes of the false starts of the development process [are based on]...the erroneous assumption that the development of...African states can be predicated on the same conditions as that of the developed nations[For instance] Britain was able to export its surplus labor to its colonies in North America, Canada, Australia, Africa and Asia. At the same time its mercantile class which waxed rich overnight was able to export slaves, minerals and agricultural products to the metropolitan centers and other colonies. This formed the basis of its industrial development. At the same time as industrialization got off the ground, Britain could sell its products in both the European markets and its colonies. ⁹⁹

This analysis is predicated on the hypothesis that West Africa's elite are attempting to legitimize and implement a development paradigm which is not culturally and economically viable in the context of global capitalism. The West African ruling elite are painfully aware of their precarious situation; repression is the means by which the

⁹⁹

Kinfe, A. (1995). *The Missing Millions: How and Why Africa is Underdeveloped*, pp. 210 -11. World Press Inc. Trenton, New Jersey.

vast majority maintains order; military dictatorships are the norm. In fact they have been encouraged and even actively supported by many western governments, which readily supply arms when the need arises.

The reasons for this are two-fold. As mentioned earlier, supplying military hardware to pro-capitalist regimes allows them to maintain a semblance of political stability so that MNCs can get on with the business of accumulation and repatriation without being unduly concerned about the possibility of political unrest. Another reason is the huge market for the military industrial complex. The sale of military equipment is the largest single enterprise in the world, after the sale of food products. ¹⁰⁰

It is probably safe to assume that as long as the majority of West African leaders remain culturally orientated to a pro-western ideology and continue their acquiescence to current development policies and programs, there will always be a pool from which western interests can draw. This will assure a relatively stable political climate which will facilitate the continued siphoning of wealth from this region, thus effectively preventing indigenous development and maintaining western economic dominance.

When MNCs decide to locate in a West African country, as a rule the majority of the initial investment costs are paid by the host country. In other words they do not bring in finance capital, but rather compete with domestic industries for local funding. Given their superior credit rating and global financial affiliations, local entrepreneurs really do not stand a chance, especially when the local bank is a subsidiary of a multinational bank, which is often the case.

...

¹⁰⁰

Parenti, *Democracy for the Few*.

These banks are playing a powerful role in the financial structures of the third world where in many instances they control close to fifty percent of the private deposits of a country....It is a well established fact that the world wide parent networks of banks and corporations are not two distinct entities, separated at 'arm's length', by a competitive market in which one is a seller and the other a buyer. Instead there are interlocking interests of common ownership, management, and technical personnel in the groups that control banks and corporations. ¹⁰¹

Once the MNCs are established in a host country, they seek to buy out existing competition as opposed to creating new businesses. This can be seen especially in the manufacturing sectors, not just in West Africa, but third world countries generally, where manufacturing tends to grow at a faster rate than extraction or cash crop sectors.

...In Latin America manufacturing is currently the most important sector of Latin American economies; 78 % of MNC foreign investments are financed from local savings. Of this finance capital, forty-six percent is used to buy out existing locally controlled firms, whose profits would otherwise be retained domestically...¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Wilber, *The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment*, p.149.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 149.

Another factor that seriously hampers development in West Africa and other third world regions is the lack of technology and managerial personnel. Virtually all the advanced technology is owned by MNCs, which perpetuates monopoly control over host economies. By restricting the spread of technology towards the periphery, local industry is once again locked out; it does not have the resources, the capital or the technology to compete with international finance capital.

Typically, if a West African country wants to import technology, it is generally only made available as a 'package deal' - that is, managerial and marketing know-how are included with the machinery and/or services. In effect these countries end up paying for technology without being able to utilize it for their own particular needs. In addition, monopoly control is further reinforced by multi-national corporate ownership of most of the patents and trade marks, which ensures a monopoly on finished products; extensive use of cross licensing by MNCs further consolidates this monopolization.

[T]he international law system of industrial property rights - patents and trade marks - assures that the monopoly on technology becomes a monopoly on production and thereby a monopoly in the world market for the finished products....In this way the increasing significance of technology in industrial production has strengthened the monopolies... ¹⁰³

Nigeria, the Rentier State

The following is a case study of the Nigerian economy, which is virtually controlled by the world's largest oil conglomerates. Nigeria was chosen because it seems to clearly demonstrate the reciprocal relationship between underdevelopment in

¹⁰³

Amin & Widstrand. *Multinational Firms in Africa*, p.365.

West Africa and development in Western Europe and North America. Nigeria is also a particularly good example, not only because the oil conglomerates control its export economy, but also because statistically speaking, it is not a 'poor' country, although its economy is in a shambles and most Nigerians are wretchedly poor. While Nigeria has certainly demonstrated growth within the capitalist paradigm, it has not developed an autonomous industrial base, or generated comprehensive social planning or significant backward linkages into local economies.

The disarticulation of the Nigerian economy, evidenced by a marked absence of coherent regional planning, is a phenomenon apparent, to some degree or another, in practically all third world countries. In essence, disarticulation in this context is defined as a lack of integration between the different sectors of the economy, with little or no forward and backward linkage. While the dramatic growth of the petroleum sector has greatly increased government revenues from exports, there has not been equivalent growth in other sectors, which in fact have declined significantly since the discovery of massive oil reserves in Nigeria.

The Economic Repercussions of Disarticulation

The overall effect on the Nigerian economy has been disastrous. Export revenues, instead of being used to develop social infrastructure and the private sector, are used to import food and manufactured goods to supplement products that were once produced domestically. There is soaring unemployment and increasing rural to urban migration as small farmers leave the land in search of more profitable employment. In fact the agricultural sector has declined substantially; many farmers can no longer both subsist off the land and supply domestic markets because of the high costs of production and an inability to compete with cheaper imports.

[In 1960] Nigeria was largely self-sufficient in foodstuff. Agriculture contributed two-thirds of the GDP and accounted for over 60% of the total exports. However, after the Nigerian civil war agriculture was completely outstripped by petroleum as the main agent of growth. By 1978/79 agricultural contribution to the GDP had declined to only 18.4% even though that sector provided jobs for over three quarters of the population....¹⁰⁴

Lagos: Nightmare at the periphery

Lagos, the capital of Nigeria, graphically demonstrates the effects of a third world dislocated economy - inhuman conditions. Literally bursting at the seams, it is a squatter's haven; millions of people living in cardboard and tin shanties. The government, unable to generate employment, cannot even provide the most basic services, such as sanitation and drainage, transportation, electricity and running water, to the vast majority. Unemployment has been estimated at over 60 percent and crime is increasingly an alternative means of survival to those who would otherwise starve. Planning to alleviate this urban misery cannot be effectively implemented until the reasons for Nigeria's economic disarticulation are identified and addressed. In effect the planning process itself must generate solutions; this country's dependency on western capitalism is at the crux of its economic problems.

¹⁰⁴

Madaganu, E. (1995). *Nigeria, the Economy and the People*, p. 14. New Beacon Books.

Nigeria: One among Many

While it is impractical and even dangerous, to categorize the third world into one amorphous entity for purposes of analysis, the temptation to do so is easy to understand: there are many points of similarity in the economic disarticulation evident in most periphery economies. Not with-standing, in order to decipher in a rational manner, the particular concerns of a particular country, as a means of developing viable planning strategies to redress concrete and specific problems, it is essential that each country be analyzed individually. Variables such as size, population density, natural resources, the dual impact of colonial rule and periphery capitalism on pre-existing cultural, economic and political formations and the ideological orientation of the ruling elite, are all critical factors that uniquely shape and define each third world nation's structural dependency to global capitalism.

Nigeria, on the coast of West Africa, is the twentieth largest country in the world, covering an area of 357,000 square miles, with a population of over one hundred and twenty million. It is the tenth largest oil producing nation in the world, and has an average per capita income of about \$287. Between 1958 and 1974, oil production increased from about 5,000 barrels per day to over two million. There has actually been a gradual but continuous decline in oil exports from Nigeria since 1975 (other than in 1979 because of a crisis in the Middle East, when the OPEC nations, of which Nigeria is a member, increased their prices by 251 percent.¹⁰⁵

Although perhaps tangential, it is interesting to note that it was when the OPEC nations started increasing their prices that the trend towards oil conservation and exploration started in earnest among western consumer countries, notably Britain and

¹⁰⁵

Amu, L. (1994). *Oil Glut and the Nigerian Economy*. Nigerian Petroleum Corp., 1994.

North America. The OPEC nations were seen at this point as politically unstable; an uninterrupted, cheap oil supply could no longer be taken for granted. Western technology thus applied itself to researching alternative technologies to counter its dependence not just on oil from these countries, but on other raw materials supplied by the third world collectively. While this research is still ongoing, a political détente was eventually reached, and despite a few major upheavals, the most notable of which resulted in brief but brutal encounters between the U.S. and Libya and now Iraq, unlimited access has been resumed and is more or less uninterrupted.

Decreasing Demand, Increasing Poverty

In spite of a slow but steady decrease in the demand for Nigerian crude - current exports are about one million barrels per day and comprise about 19 percent of American oil imports - this sector of the economy has continued to grow in relation to others. Currently it accounts for about ninety percent of total exports and over 80 percent of the Nigerian government's revenue, while employing only about 6,000 people.¹⁰⁶

As mentioned previously, there has been a simultaneous decline in production in other sectors of the Nigerian economy, notably light manufacturing and agriculture; the oil sector is dominant. Despite government planning ventures to counteract the horrendous poverty that is a direct result of the country's dislocated economy, the situation is worsening for the average Nigerian. In large part this has to do with a seeming inability on the part of the government to generate articulate rational planning. It is virtually impossible to conceive and implement coherent planning strategies when a government has no control over the price of its own resources on the world market. In

¹⁰⁶ Amu, *Oil Glut and the Nigerian Economy*, p. 36.

effect, this means that Nigeria cannot project, even from year to year, monetary outlays based on some semblance of a budget.

The Center-Periphery Dichotomy

This is not intended to be a diatribe listing the woes of a dependent economy. There is a common proverb in Africa: “When your house is burning down there is no point in sounding the tom-toms”. It is evident at this juncture that Nigeria is in a situation of economic dependency, despite the wealth being generated by its petroleum sector; the classic center-periphery dichotomy. It is also apparent that efforts to reverse this dependency have not been successful. In order to implement constructive rational planning that will not only provide adequate infrastructure and basic social services, it is necessary to lessen and ultimately break the ties that bind Nigeria to mainstream development strategies. It is these latter, this thesis contends, that are the root cause of its underdevelopment. It is therefore necessary to re-evaluate the direction in which the Nigerian economy is headed and the major factors that impact and control indigenous social relations of production.

Since colonial intervention, Nigeria's economy has been based on the export of primary products. As with other periphery economies, Nigeria's function was to supply raw materials to the metro poles, which in turn exported manufactured goods to Nigerian markets. In 1960 the country attained political independence from Britain, and was formally incorporated into the world capitalist system. It then embarked on a course that was supposed to achieve economic autonomy. This has not happened - today the Nigerian economy is as dependent on the western hegemony as ever.

West Africa, while a member of the world capitalist economy has little if any impact on its shape and direction. Thus while it is subject to the changes and fluctuations that occur in the global economy, it has no control over how this movement affects its own markets. Simply stated, Nigeria's economy, like others in the region, is

structured to respond primarily to the needs of western markets, not its own. Any planning within this context tends to be sporadic and isolated at best. In short, it can be deduced that the underlying reasons for underdevelopment, which is the cause of Nigeria's dislocated economy, are not being adequately addressed by development strategies currently in place.

An example of this is the enclave structure of the petroleum sector in Nigeria, which is dominated by the seven western oil conglomerates, or their subsidiaries, which collectively control virtually all the western block's oil reserves: Royal Dutch-Shell, British Petroleum, Exxon, Standard Oil of California, Texaco, Gulf and Mobil; commonly referred to as the Seven Sisters. The underdevelopment of Nigeria's oil sector is such that there is no backward linkage into the domestic economy, which would promote the growth of associated industries, and so distribute its very considerable revenues to benefit local populations.

The petroleum sector is controlled by the policies of the MNCs, which concern themselves with facilitating the export of Nigerian 'sweet crude' - the finest grade on the market- repatriating profits and retaining a monopoly on production. The entire third world's consumption of petroleum products is only about ten percent, while it supplies over ninety percent of the western alliance's demands. Thus it stands to reason that maintaining a monopoly on production in Nigeria and elsewhere, is crucial to western interests, given that oil is literally the fuel of western capitalist production and development. The domination of the Nigerian economy by these MNCs continues despite indigenization policies by the government aimed at increasing state ownership, which should logically, allow for some measure of control in the production process.

[The] Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree...was designed to transfer ownership of and control of the factors of production into indigenous hands. The decree specified

those areas of industry where government would take over part of the equity of foreign owned companies. Twenty-five activities were specified in which Nigerians must henceforth have equity participation of not less than 40 percent whilst 28 industrial and commercial ventures were reserved exclusively for Nigerians....[This decree] to take effect from October, 1978.¹⁰⁷

Even though this and other policies were implemented, a lack of managerial skills in the local population and a reticence on the part of expatriate management to rectify this, still precludes participation in top and even middle management, by most Nigerians. In short, the MNCs vertical hierarchy of production is maintained; technology and information essentially stay at the top in the metro poles. As mentioned, this management hierarchy reflects the current structure of the international division of labor: a global economy with a production hierarchy still largely defined by culture, race and nationality, at least at the top.

Maintaining the Western Hegemony

This thesis contends that the western technological and information monopoly ensures the continued economic and cultural hegemony of western capitalism. This is because those who control the technology and information control not just the markets, but the distribution of resources and information as well as the composition of the international capitalist economy. Again, the influence of culture on political and

¹⁰⁷

Uchendu, V. (1980). *Dependency and Underdevelopment in West Africa*, p. 59. E.J. Brill.

economic systems is at the core of this perspective. In essence, the problem has less to do with the transfer of technology to periphery regions like West Africa, or even the ability to produce equivalent technology locally, than the nature of western capitalism itself. In essence, this system precludes equalization at the periphery, given that this eventuality would ultimately bring to an end the specific cultural imperatives that currently maintain the western global hegemony.

The rigid hierarchy of the western cultural matrix, which is replicated by all political-economies that participate within the capitalist sphere of influence, precludes equal access by the Nigerian economy; or any other economy in the region. Simply stated, access is limited by its periphery status. In essence, this simply means that the sole function of capitalism at the periphery was and is to develop the centers. The fact that traditional economic systems are not geared to produce western technology is not really the point; that the indigenous cultural base is redundant to the economic process, is precisely the point. If capitalism in peripheral regions like West Africa was intended to stimulate development, its transfer would have entailed the incorporation of pre-existing socio-economic structures. From this synthesis, a new paradigm for development would have emerged which would not only reflect and encompass the indigenous cultural reality, but which would also benefit the majority of the population; they would be actively participating in and benefiting from an inclusive process of development. In other words, the monopoly on technology and information and thus production, are maintained by the euro-cultural nature of capitalism itself.

Nigeria Today

The control that MNCs exert on the Nigerian economy has also tended to inhibit the growth of an indigenous business class which could potentially access domestic resources for internal development. Today, Nigeria is tied to an even narrower resource base than it was during the colonial period - petroleum, instead of tin, groundnuts and

palm-oil - and local entrepreneurs cannot compete in a global market controlled by western technology and finance capital. Further, its incorporation into the world market from a position of weakness, coupled with an inherent inability to improve its position because of external controls, means that it cannot hope to compete effectively and achieve upward mobility and eventual parity in the international capitalist power structure. Imperialism, or monopoly capitalism, would by definition, seem to preclude such a scenario.

The inability of indigenous entrepreneurs...to invest in undertakings which require advanced technology results from externally imposed constraints....The absence of a broad scientific base...and the frailty of the existing legal framework in Nigeria have been additional constraints on technological development....[S]ubstantial evidence exists to support the thesis that dependency on expatriate executive management will continue...mainly due to [the] policies of firms who appear to deliberately avoid the process of Nigerianization. ¹⁰⁸

In effect Nigeria is in the position of paying for the use of western technology, without having direct access to it. The revenues the government collects from the sale of petroleum can thus be described as a form of rent. This is because the technology used in the process of production is owned and operated by foreign concerns. In addition, as previously stated, the economy is disassociated from indigenous historical and cultural realities, which under normal circumstances, inform economic processes.

¹⁰⁸

Amin & Widstrand, *Multinational Firms in Africa*, p.367.

Given the historic development of capitalism and its increasingly monopolistic tendencies, it would tend to go against the established grain for it to invite competition from periphery countries like Nigeria. This state of affairs, it is argued, is compounded by the general acceptance of mainstream planning techniques as a viable vehicle for development. This is because any solution articulated within this paradigm is an expression of the underlying western cultural motif and thus part of the essential problem; Nigeria has to get off the capitalist grid.

Cultural Repression and Economic Paralysis

The steady atrophy of indigenous cultural realities in relation to Nigeria's political-economy further hinders the struggle for economic autonomy and meaningful development. It can be empirically argued, using history as a primary source of data and information, that this is why the dominant culture requires subjugated peoples to accept the cultural reality of the dominator. This means by inference, accepting their inferior status and relative weakness.

History teaches us that, in certain circumstances, it is very easy for the foreigner to impose his domination on a people. But it likewise teaches us that, whatever the material aspects of this domination, it can be maintained only by the permanent and organized repression of the cultural life of the people concerned....In fact, to take up arms against a people is, above all, to take up arms to destroy, or at least to neutralize and to paralyze their cultural life. For as long as part of that people can have a cultural life, foreign domination cannot be sure of its perpetuation. At a given moment, depending on internal and external factors determining the

evolution of the society in question, cultural resistance may take on new forms in order fully to contest foreign domination....The value of culture as an element of resistance to foreign domination lies in the fact that culture is the vigorous manifestation...of the material and historical reality of the society that is dominated. ¹⁰⁹

Towards a More Multicultural World Economy

This thesis maintains that if global capitalism had evolved along more multicultural lines, its Eurocentric origins would have eventually been subsumed into a more heterogeneous reality. According to this logic, its markets would increase, not by domination, but through adaptation and truly free competition and equal access. The material base in regions like West Africa would expand in response to the transfer of appropriate technologies. This process in turn would stimulate economic growth and the development of social infrastructure. In the short term, there would be tremendous profits for the western alliance generated by this transfer. The long term results would be a better educated, more highly skilled labor force which would be able to participate more fully in consumer markets and the global economy. Logically, as personal wealth increased so would consumer demands for an increasing range of goods and services.

What prevents this scenario from developing at the periphery is the essentially hierarchical structure of international capitalism. The western cultural hegemony needs to maintain its monopoly on the world market, so as to ensure not just its own development and wealth, but its position at the apex of the global market. If the system in place had developed more according to the theory, as opposed to the praxis, of capitalism, much of what is now the periphery would eventually achieve parity with the

¹⁰⁹

Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*, p.141

metro poles. The western alliance would no longer have access to cheap, abundant raw materials and labor at the periphery; lastly development at the centers would no longer be at the financial detriment of the periphery. Should this transformation occur, it would seem logical that the workings of global capitalism, minus its western European cultural imperative, would eventually end Western dominance of the global market.

The ultimate impact of such a scenario would be detrimental to the entire western block. The U.S. alone, which comprises barely five percent of the world's land mass and six percent of its population, consumes over seventy percent of the planet's resources. The immediate effects of any significant shift towards global parity would be shortages of raw materials in the west, which, as Congressman James Santini pointed out three over three decades ago, would result in production cut-backs and mass unemployment. This in turn would lead to sky rocketing prices, even rationing, followed by decreases in the standard of living and sharp increases in demands for welfare and other entitlement programs. Inevitably, labor riots and the sharpening of class antagonisms would threaten social stability. In a word, chaos, would, more than likely, ensue. Thus it seems that western capitalism cannot maintain either its global hegemony or domestic tranquility, without the structural dependency of West Africa and other third world regions. In short, the dependency of peripheral nations such as Nigeria is a prerequisite for continued western cultural, economic and political dominance by the west.¹¹⁰

The role of MNCs in Nigeria and elsewhere, as sentinels of western culture and accumulators of raw materials and profit is, perhaps, scientifically almost perfect - capitalism at its zenith. Their corporate capacity for economic expansion as well as political and cultural dominance, are also admirably documented. However, the human toll of this perfection - such as at least 90 percent of West Africa's population living in

¹¹⁰

Parenti, *Democracy for the Few*.

abject poverty, less well and less well fed than the average western pet, must also be contended with.

The New World Proletariat

Nigeria, like the rest of West Africa, is striving for a reality from which, by definition, it seems to be excluded; beyond the pale, so to speak. In the emerging international division of labor, Nigeria is part of the new proletariat. By the same logic, the first world is the new bourgeoisie, dependent on the third world proletariat for its wealth. Unless there is a major restructuring of international capitalism, the prospects for West Africa appear grim, to say the least.

The emerging trends in international capitalism suggest that the new highly technical industries, such as computers, nuclear energy, telecommunications, fiber optics and information services, which are extremely capital intensive, will continue developing in the west. After the initial construction and growth period, they will employ a rather small though highly skilled labor force. Employment for those outside this group will be generated by a major expansion of the service sector. In conjunction, an increasingly welfare state apparatus will emerge to support the growing numbers of permanently unemployed at the centers.

By the same token, as MNCs seek cheaper labor there is a growing tendency to relocate many industries and factories to the third world; in these regions corporations pay dollars per day, as opposed to dollars per hour in the west. In fact the recent trend of outsourcing clerical work to Asia by many American corporations is yet another indicator of this ongoing trend.

The center [is reserving] all the new [technological] industries for itself, and...[throwing] out to the periphery all

the standard industries, that is the polluting industries...iron, steel metallurgy, chemicals, light industries...¹¹¹

If current trends continue, it would appear that the logic of capitalism itself will eventually deny to most Caucasians what has been historically denied to most Africans: the assurance, at the very least, of a minimum standard of living. Perhaps if western populations, especially Americans, were more aware politically, and better understood the fundamental workings of the system that they seem to cherish so deeply, they would look with renewed horror at what is happening in the third world, where the masses are living in poverty and deprivation. As the internal dynamics of the system unfold, continuously centralizing and concentrating, it appears inevitable that the poverty so long associated with the third world, will eventually also become a first world reality. The shrinking of the middle class in the US and Europe already evident since the new millennium, is, some would argue, the new norm for most westerners.

At the same time, as the middle class continues to shrink in the west, the gap between rich and poor is becoming more visible. Given the ideology in place, it will only be a matter of time before people rise up; historically, this has been the western response to tyranny from above. In turn governments will have no choice but to become more repressive; civil liberties will be incrementally suspended. In the long term, if domestic stability is not restored and maintained, eventually martial law will have to be imposed; capitalism demands political stability in order to function uninterrupted. An immutable law of physics states that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Thus, as the center contracts, the periphery widens. George Orwell might have had the year wrong, but the vision he laid out in *1984* does seem to have a prophetic ring to it.

¹¹¹

Amin & Widstrand, *Multinational Firms in Africa*, p.10

CHAPTER 4

THE RELEVANCE OF CULTURE TO DEVELOPMENT

[There is] a close, dependent and reciprocal connexion [sic] existing between the *cultural factor* and the *economic* and *political factor*...The value of culture as an element of resistance to foreign domination lies in the fact that culture is the vigorous manifestation, on the ideological or idealist level, of the material and historical reality of the society that is dominated....Culture is simultaneously the fruit of a people's history and a determinant of history, by the positive or negative influence it exerts on the evolution of relations between man and his environment and among men or human groups within a society, as well as between different societies. ¹¹²

The Cultural Monogamy of Mainstream Development

It is argued by theorists such as Amilcar Cabral, Chiekh Anta Diop, Franz Fanon and Basil Davidson, that a principle characteristic of capitalist domination in regions like West Africa is the paralysis of the historical process and the ensuing cultural, economic and political disjuncture. As stated, the imposition of periphery capitalism upset the fragile balance between the region's cultures and political-economies; the former no longer influence development; the latter are now responding to external forces. The root causes of West Africa's economic dislocation is thus grounded in an externally imposed, culturally discrete paradigm of development; namely neocolonialism.

¹¹² Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*, p. 141.

It is important to understand, if not concede the centrality of the symbiotic relationship between culture and economic development. This is especially true for political economists and planners, many of whom still believe that regions like West Africa will eventually achieve parity if they are allowed to develop their resources according to the logic and rationale of mainstream capitalism. This attitude is reinforced not just by expatriate planners but also by indigenous planners who are trained in mainstream methods of development.

Replicating for Failure

As suggested earlier, periphery capitalism is not and was not designed to enrich those areas of the world which have historically financed development at the centers. Thus trying to implement development programs using mainstream planning methods has not and will not work. Essentially, this is because there is a fundamental failure of synthesis between the mono-cultural European roots of international capitalism and West Africa's indigenous cultures, which no longer inform the economic base; they function as dependent suppliers. For successful development to occur, the cultural reality of the environment in question must inform the productive processes. This thesis contends that the failure of mainstream planning and economic development is a logical outcome of the system in place; planning strategies are not grounded in, nor do they reflect, West African cultural realities.

To reiterate, capitalism in West Africa has from its inception, functioned primarily to appropriate resources to develop the centers. The very nature of the ideology that directs their implementation reinforces the original paradigm of production. Thus, given their essentially euro-cultural perspective, most planners in the development fields, even those native to West Africa, tend to exacerbate, as opposed to ameliorate, problems associated with social planning and infrastructure development. In part, this is because more often than not, they associate development problems in the periphery,

as revolving around issues of equal access, or lack thereof. It may be more helpful if planners, especially those in the field - as opposed to those who take a more theoretical approach - develop and implement planning strategies geared towards the creation of culturally centered economic and political structures at the periphery. Their ultimate goal should be to achieve equal access to world markets, through fair competition. The only logical way this can be accomplished is by interrupting the outflow of wealth which continues to develop the centers and impoverish the periphery.

This failure of synthesis between the development process and indigenous social norms, speaks to the ultimate failure of capitalism relative to West Africa and the rest of the third world. This system's rigid Eurocentric paradigm renders it unable to fuse with preexisting cultural norms that are fundamentally different. Ironically, it is precisely this rigidity which has maintained the cultural integrity of capitalism and with it Western European and American political and economic dominance in the world market. Thus its failure in West Africa is also the reason for its success at the centers. By the same token its failure in regions like West Africa is thus directly related to the planning paradigm currently in place.

We shall neither condemn nor excuse imperialism here, but merely say that, whether on the economic level, or on the social and cultural levels, imperialist capital has been a long way from fulfilling in our countries the historical mission carried out by capital in the countries of accumulation. ¹¹³

This would seem to be born out today by the living conditions of the vast majority of Africans, who are confronted with crippling poverty, widespread endemic disease and

¹¹³

Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*, p.127.

malnutrition – 100 million African children die every year from preventable diseases and malnutrition; that translates into about 30,000 a day. ¹¹⁴

The long-term impact of severe malnutrition, if one survives childhood, is usually some degree of mental retardation. This coupled with death from endemic disease including HIV/AIDS - seven out of every eight documented cases are in Sub-Saharan Africa - is having a disastrous impact on what should be the most productive segment of the population - those between the ages of sixteen and thirty five. ¹¹⁵

In any society, the function of politics is to provide security, wealth and power; to secure the people's well-being; to distribute resources so as to allow the majority the means to access for themselves and their dependents at the very least a minimum standard of living - food, shelter, clothing and education. Given this definition, it can be stated unequivocally that the system in place since colonization has not fulfilled these objectives in Africa.

When assessing why capitalism, seemingly such a raging success at the centers, has been such a dismal failure at the periphery, this thesis argues that the euro-cultural factor is primary, in that it shapes and directs economic and political structures. A good example of this is the model of the West African nation state itself, which as already mentioned is based on the European bourgeois model. A relic of colonialism, at the point of independence, each nation retained the boundaries and the state apparatus through which colonial domination was maintained. The neo-colonial model is virtually identical; it is the arena in which the political elite compete for and maintain power. In short, its physical structure is still a primary conduit for maintaining

¹¹⁴
Report from UNICEF (2009).

¹¹⁵
WHO Report. (1997, Sept.).

periphery capitalism, binding the region economically, politically, culturally and strategically to the western global hegemony.

As indicated, West African states never developed their own political institutions through which to redress their specific economic needs. During the process of decolonization, West Africa's emergent political frameworks were immediately absorbed into preexisting euro-cultural institutions which were internationalized to incorporate the rapidly decolonizing third world. It is suggested that the political ramifications of this reality explain both the bias of West African political structures to the western bourgeois state, and the inability of the various bodies politic in the region to constructively plan and implement development geared towards achieving integrated, functional domestic economies.

Given the western cultural grounding of the vast majority of West African leaders, the tendency to implement planning and development with a Eurocentric bias is understandable. The result, aside from the economic and political ramifications associated with the region's continued dependency, is that articulate rational planning is virtually impossible. This state of affairs will not change until economic development and production are once again realigned with indigenous cultural norms. In this context, any planning to regain control of West Africa's development processes, must translate into organized economic and political strategies that take the dominated culture into account.

Just as importantly, the leadership must be culturally reintegrated into its own historical reality. The impact of colonial and neo-colonial domination has been to not only repress West African culture and history, but necessarily, to culturally realign the ruling elite, that segment of the population who potentially, if not actually, control economic production and development. As previously stated, this class has for the most part, internalized the ideological and cultural norms of the dominating system. By and large they are predisposed to acquiesce to the western capitalist hegemony. They tend

to believe that mainstream capitalism can be a viable system of production in their countries; they correlate progress and development to western technology and industrialization. Most either naively assume that given time, diligence and replication, their countries will eventually achieve economic and political parity with the west. Whether they sincerely believe this, or are cynically reaping the benefits that accrue to their class, is an open question. What is clear is that by imitating the dominating culture, they are preventing coherent planning and economic development. As long as the ruling elite agree to planning strategies which are based on the western cultural matrix, their countries will never achieve independence, let alone parity on the global market.

It [should be] understood why imperialist domination, like all other foreign domination, for its own security, requires cultural oppression and the attempt at direct or indirect liquidation of the essential elements of the culture of the dominated people. The study of the history of national liberation struggles shows that generally these struggles are preceded by an increase in expression [sic] of culture, consolidated progressively into a successful or unsuccessful attempt to affirm the cultural personality of the dominated people.... [It] is generally within the culture that we find the seed of opposition, which leads to the structuring and development of the liberation movement. ¹¹⁶

This thesis maintains that for successful planning to occur in West Africa, there is a vital need to redefine and synthesize the role of culture into the ongoing struggle for

¹¹⁶

Cabral, A. (1973). *Return to the Source*, p. 42. Africa Information Service.

economic independence. This is not to say that the influence exerted by external factors will suddenly disappear, or that the impact of imperialism will not leave an indelible mark; one cannot turn back the clock. The history and culture of West Africa has been irrevocably changed by slavery, colonialism and neocolonialism. The past cannot be reclaimed; any more than can water from the womb. The need is to synthesize a new cultural matrix and integrate it into a functioning workable ideology that will shape a political-economy designed to plan and build the infrastructure necessary for indigenous development. Cabral understood this with a searing clarity and worked tirelessly to make this a reality.

Like the seed of culture which long awaits conditions favorable for germination, in order to conserve survival of the species and its evolution, the culture of African peoples flourishes again today across the continent in the struggles for national liberation. Whatever the forms of these struggles, their successes and failures, and the length of their development, they mark the beginning of a new phase in the continent's history and are in form and content the most significant cultural factor in the life of African peoples. As the fruit and proof of cultural vigor, the liberation struggle...opens up new prospects for the development of culture, in the service of progress. ¹¹⁷

117

Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*, p.148.

Amilcar Cabral: The Unknown Soldier

Amilcar Cabral was probably one of the most brilliant, albeit little known economic theorists that Africa has produced in the last century. Born in 1924, at the peak of European colonization in what is now Guinea Bissau Cabral went to University in Lisbon and returned home at the age of twenty eight, with a degree in Agricultural Engineering.

Rising through the ranks of the armed liberation struggle that was in place at this time, he became a leader of Partido Africano da Independencia da Guinea e Cape Verde (PAIGC). In those crucial decades between 1955 and 1973, he was a leading strategist and planner in the struggle against Portuguese colonialism. Cabral was, as Antonio Gramsci might have said, that rarest of human beings, an organic intellectual. He was a pragmatist whose planning methods were firmly grounded in constantly evolving theories that articulated African centered cultural, political and economic strategies, with a view to implementing constructive development on a continental scope. Cabral's position was that for Africa to play a more decisive role in the international political arena, as its resources and contribution to the global economy dictate that it should, the continent has to regain control of its economic resources. This is as true today as it was fifty years ago.

Although the focus of Cabral's struggle against colonialism was the Portuguese colonies in Africa, particularly Guinea Bissau, like Nkrumah, especially during his early phase, he was essentially a Pan Africanist. He recognized the need and sought for a broad unity between disparate African states, which, as previously mentioned, were reconstituted into small, ethnically diverse units at the Berlin Conference in 1894-95. He believed this process would entail a pooling of cultural, economic, political and intellectual resources, in order to dismantle the infrastructure of periphery capitalism and replace it with a newly synthesized model more aligned to indigenous realities.

Cabral's political strategies, while rooted in the local history and culture of his people, were also shaped by an intimate understanding of the intricacies of mainstream and Marxist economic theories. Cabral's philosophy of praxis can be perhaps loosely termed neo-socialist, perhaps even post-Marxist, *sans* the European cultural bias. Indeed, in many ways he reinterprets Marx, taking his theories out of their Eurocentric orbit and placing them squarely in the context of African history and culture.

Cabral believed that in the African context, capitalism is an entirely different entity; it does not respond to traditional theories of mainstream development which generates development at the centers, not the periphery. He theorized that this is precisely why the disruption of indigenous cultural norms, which normally shape and influence economic development, are so critical to successful colonization (and/or neo-colonization). Cabral insisted that regions like West Africa must be prepared to use every means at their disposal, including violence when warranted, to regain control of their economic resources, thus reclaiming their right, sanctioned by international law, to control their own destinies. As he also pointed out, the process of reclamation will necessarily involve a cultural revival from which political and economic strategies will emerge to realign production so that it responds to indigenous, as opposed to foreign, cultural imperatives. Cabral argued that the success of colonialism and neo-colonialism is predicated on the continued paralysis of West Africa's cultural and economic realignment.

If we accept the principle that the national liberation struggle is a revolution, and that it is not over at the moment when the flag is hoisted and the national anthem is played, we shall find that there can be no national liberation without the use of liberating violence, on the part of the nationalist forces, in answer to the criminal violence of the agents of

imperialism. Nobody can doubt that [this latter].... implies a state of permanent violence against the nationalist forces. There are no people in the world which, after being subjected to the imperialist yoke, has gained independence without [violence].¹¹⁸

Amilcar Cabral, as well as Franz Fanon and Walter Rodney, all maintain that a primary reason for the failure of decolonization is that it merely entailed a transfer of power; the indigenous elite took over where the settler colonial elite left off. There was no counter violence, no disruption in center-periphery relations, no restructuring of economic or political institutions and crucially, no renegotiation of terms of trade, or any transfer of technology. It seems inconceivable that a sovereign nation can be considered such, when its institutions are structured to maintain economic dependency. Such a scenario can logically only perpetuate disarticulation and underdevelopment. This thesis contends that as long as West Africa and by extension the whole continent, is subjugated culturally, politically and economically to a Eurocentric global market, articulate, rational planning cannot occur. Thus the top priority of indigenous leadership must be to regain control of their countries economic resources. It is argued that the most expedient way that this will be achieved, is by a collective strategy aimed at cultural synthesis and political reorganization.

Granted, at this point in time an all-out armed struggle for national liberation, at least in the conventional sense, is probably not a feasible option - the west owns over ninety percent of the world's weapons. While this in no way rules out direct confrontation, should it become necessary, it does mean that political alternatives must take precedence. Any re-channeling of West Africa's resources will more than likely,

¹¹⁸ Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*, p. 134

cause an eventual chain reaction throughout the continent and the rest of the world. The inevitable result of this dislocation will be major social disruption particularly at the centers; the inescapable consequence of a massive redistribution of wealth and power.

Global capitalism could not withstand such a restructuring without undergoing drastic change. It is therefore understandable that the western alliance and the West African elite are seeking to avoid such a scenario, albeit for different reasons. Western interests, both private and public, must retain control of global markets and just as importantly, maintain order and stability at the peripheries and the centers. The West African elite must collaborate with western interests in order to hold on to their wealth and power. From the preceding logic, a western cultural hegemony is crucial to maintaining western global economic dominance; also why the current system has been and will be maintained with violence when necessary.

This thesis also argues that Marx, despite his undeniably brilliant critique of capitalism, was nevertheless bounded by a very euro-centric, even racist world view, which while certainly not negating his analysis, does limit its applicability to regions like West Africa. His theory that the motive force of history is class struggle for example epitomizes this cultural bias. Cabral took serious contention with this particular Marxist hypothesis because as he correctly pointed out, it places virtually the entire non-White world outside of the historical process. Cabral suggested that a more inclusive definition of the motive force of history is the mode of production itself, of which class conflict is just one expression; reflective of the unique history and culture of western Europe.

[In] any given society, the level of development of the productive forces and the system for social utilization of these forces *determine the mode of production*. In our opinion, the mode of production...is the principle factor in the history of any human group, the level of the productive

forces being the true and permanent driving power of history. ¹¹⁹

Cabral's definition is universal in that it acknowledges that different cultural paradigms generate different types of economic production. He also stated that class conflict will have a greater or lesser impact on the social relations of production, depending on what segment of the population owns and/or controls the political-economy and how this influences the distribution of wealth. ¹²⁰

By contrast, Marx's definition negates the history of any people whose social relations of production do not reflect those of the Western European cultural matrix. As Cabral implicitly stated, this latter conclusion is irrational in that it presumes that class struggle, as generated by the capitalist mode of production, is the only viable expression of the historical process.

[T]he socio-economic phenomenon class arises and develops as a function of at least two essential and interdependent variables: the level of productive forces and the system of ownership of the means of production.....Once a certain point has been reached in the process of accumulation, it then leads to qualitative changes which are shown by the appearance of class, classes and class conflict. ¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*, p. 43.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid p.127.

It can be argued that paradoxically, it is Marx's reductionism which at the core of the European cultural hegemony and its supporting revisionist history, that rewrote West Africa's past, largely through omission, falsification and the destruction of documents and archaeological remains, as well as the proliferation of popular literature which reinforced the western cultural motif of White supremacy and Manifest Destiny.

As already referenced in Chapter Two, this latter ideology helped mold the European national consciousness into an unquestioning acceptance of its own cultural and racial dominance. Had it become common and accepted knowledge that West Africa, not to mention other regions of the third world, were major contributors to world culture prior even to the birth of Christ and that further, Western civilization itself owes a substantial cultural heritage to Africa, the myth of European cultural supremacy would self-destruct. The very premise on which the western hegemony is founded would crumble and with it international capitalism as it currently operates.

The time is past when it was necessary to seek arguments to prove the cultural maturity of African peoples. The irrationality of the racist theories of a Gobineau or a Levy-Bruhl neither interests nor persuades anyone but racists. In spite of colonial domination, Africa has been able to impose respect for her cultural values. She has even been shown to be one of the richest of continents in cultural values. From Carthage or Giza to Zimbabwe, from Meroe to Benin and Ife, from the Sahara or Timbuktu to Kilwa...the culture of African peoples is an undeniable fact.... In agreement with Basil Davidson and other researchers of African societies and cultures, we can say that the accomplishments of the African genius on

the economic, political and cultural levels, in the light of the inhospitable character of the environment, are an achievement to be ranked with the major historical examples of the greatness of man. ¹²²

The likelihood of a system similar to capitalism naturally evolving in West Africa, even had there been no traumatic intervention, is unlikely. As previously mentioned in Chapter one, pre-colonial indigenous social relations were diametrically opposed to those in Western Europe. However, as already suggested, just prior to the slave trade, they were also on the verge of collapse, or at least poised on the brink of major change. In all probability this was why after over twelve hundred years of uninterrupted African rule, they were so easily disrupted.

Certainly the prevailing cultural norms - non-ownership of the land, the primacy of the community over the individual, the integration of religious practices into political institutions and the accountability of leadership to those they served - kept the elite on a rather short leash. Perhaps they felt the people they governed had too much power; or that things would continue indefinitely; what is clear is that stagnation had set in. There was a growing lag between the social relations of production and the cultural base. All things being equal, indigenous initiatives would probably have materialized to restore the necessary balance. As it happened, the externally imposed European transformation further decimated a system that was already in flux.

Embryonic class antagonism, inherent to any social relations of production, became more sharply delineated with the advent of the slave trade, colonialism and more recently, neo-colonialism. Cabral and Fanon both saw the emergence of the

¹²²

Cabral, *Return to the Source*, p.50.

culturally moribund elite and the retinue of comprador capitalists as inevitable manifestations of periphery capitalism. Now, as then, the interests and survival of this class depend on maintaining structural dependency to global capitalism, as opposed to facilitating indigenous growth and development. In other words, to maintain their power and privilege they must

...[Give] free reign to [their] natural tendency to become 'bourgeois' to allow the development of a bourgeoisie of bureaucrats and intermediaries in the trading system, to transform [themselves] into a national pseudo-bourgeoisie, that is to deny the revolution and necessarily subject [themselves] to imperial capital.....[T]his corresponds to the neo-colonial situation, that is to say the betrayal of the objectives of national liberation. ¹²³

The process of decolonization was initiated by this class, who organized the largely rural masses against the colonizers. Once their objective - to take over the reigns of leadership - was attained, they distanced themselves from the very people who had secured their power and privilege. Ironically, a similar situation occurred in North America towards the end of the colonial period. The elite, who were spearheading the struggle for national liberation - the inalienable right of the U.S. to control its resources and direct economic growth for its own development, galvanized the masses with promises of liberty and justice for all. However, when the Revolution was over the elite found themselves in an untenable position; that of being swept away by their own rhetoric. Average Americans - white males anyway - started acting on the very

¹²³

Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*, p. 136.

principles on which the War for Independence was supposedly predicated. This movement towards leveling was swiftly and unequivocally halted by the Founding Fathers, who wrote the Constitution, which was hastily ratified. This had the effect centralizing federal power, severely curtailing states rights in the process.

The Constitution [is] the foundation for a system of government appropriate to a market capitalist economy and to the protection of a highly unequal class structure which prevails in such an economy. It was not intended at its creation, nor is it today, the foundation for a genuinely democratic political life; it is rather, the basis for a system in which those who own the main economic and productive assets of society are secure in their control, use and enjoyment of such assets.¹²⁴

Thus, even though the West African elite do not 'own the main economic and productive assets' of their countries they have a major stake in facilitating access to them by foreign conglomerates; it is the source of their wealth and power. Should an indigenous takeover occur, they, as did the early American privileged classes, would face the prospect of losing their status. In short, they are caught between the horns of the proverbial dilemma. As their acculturated condition dictates, they have put their class interests above the needs of their people. The inevitable result is a mutual alienation between themselves and the masses of poor. This translates into a growing rift in social perspectives, or class conflict. As Cabral correctly pointed out, to become

¹²⁴

Bocock, R. (1986). *Hegemony*, p. 37. Ellis Horwood, Ltd.

involved in the struggle for economic independence, the elite must realign themselves with the articulated goals of the masses and make these their own:

In order not to betray these objectives, the petty bourgeois has only one road...to identify with the classes of workers, not to oppose the normal development of the process of revolution. This means that in order to play completely the part that falls to [them they] must be capable of committing suicide as a class; to be restored to life in the condition of a revolutionary worker completely identified with the deepest aspirations of the people to which he belongs. ¹²⁵

Gramsci's Theory of the Organic Intellectual

Gramsci was another amazing intellect. He was jailed in fascist Italy in 1926 because although a Member of Parliament he was also head of the Italian Communist Party. A prolific writer even while in prison, when he was finally released his health had totally deteriorated; he died shortly afterwards. His voluminous notes were smuggled out of Italy and published.

Gramsci's definition of the role and function of intellectuals permeates all his writing and is central to his philosophy. He made a clear distinction between traditional intellectuals, class affiliated professionals whose exclusive education and training set them apart from the laboring masses with whom they have very little in common, and organic intellectuals. These latter, regardless of class origins or access to resources, function as focal points of learning and catalysts for change in their immediate environments. True intellectuals, Gramsci contended are of this second group;

¹²⁵ Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*, p. 141.

mediators par excellence between labor and capital. Organically fused to the environment in which they operate, they unabashedly challenge the status quo, in the process creating an environment conducive to constructive change.

[Effective leadership] is one of organic cohesion in which feeling-passion becomes understanding and thence knowledge.....{Then] and only then is the relationship between the ruler and the ruled one of representation. ¹²⁶

The Cultural Co-option of West Africa's Elite

In the context of neocolonialism, Gramsci's unique perspective on the role of intellectuals can be easily transposed to West Africa's elite, the majority of whom are westernized urban dwellers. The uninspired end product of generations of indoctrination these elite have for the most part internalized the culture of capitalism. Given that their cultural orientation, in the context of historical evolution, is based on an externally imposed reality, the void between them and the masses cannot be filled. The elite owe their cultural allegiance to western capitalism; they too are the oppressor. Their status and socio-economic well-being is derived from maintaining and sustaining structural dependency to the capitalist hegemony.

The repercussions and implications of this warrant close analysis. The elite control the political and educational infrastructure; they are the ones who mediate with foreign industry and acquiesce to terms of trade that result in overwhelmingly unequal exchange. In short their economic well-being is tied to maintaining international capitalism. All that to say their source of revenue derives from the state not the

¹²⁶

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Note Books*, p.143. New York International Publishers.

economy; they are the only class who benefit in any great measure from underdevelopment.

The popular element 'feels' but does not always know or understand; the intellectual element 'knows' but does not always understand and in particular does not always feel....The intellectual's error consists in believing that one can know without understanding and even more without feeling and being impassioned....[In] other words the intellectual [is not organic] if distinct and separate from the people-nation, that is without feeling the elementary passions of the people, understanding them and therefore explaining and justifying to them the particular historical situation and connecting them dialectically to the laws of history and to a superior conception of the world, scientifically and coherently elaborated, i.e. knowledge. One cannot make politics-history without this passion, without this sentimental connection between intellectuals and people-nation. In the absence of such a nexus, the relations between the intellectual and the people-nation are...reduced to relationships of a purely bureaucratic and formal order; the intellectuals become a caste or priesthood. ¹²⁷

¹²⁷

Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Note Books*, p. 98.

The Failure of the Post-Colonial State

The failure of West African states to operate in a manner even approaching adequate revolves around the fact that their essential function is severely constrained by their structure. As previously stated, this is because periphery capitalism was originally designed to accumulate resources and wealth for markets at the centers. The state apparatus is not therefore, the economic manifestation of indigenous cultural and social realities, but was transferred intact from an alien culture with an entirely different historical evolution and agenda.

One had hoped that the transfer of the reins of political powers to the native elite would minimize the psychological degradation and physical and material exploitation of the colonized. Thus in the heyday of African liberation the slogan which was popularized by Dr. Nkrumah and other nationalist leaders was 'seek political freedom and everything else will follow'.....[However with] the colonial economic structure and its modes of production and ownership essentially unchanged, very little, if any, of what was promised could be delivered. ¹²⁸

Thus the role of the West African state is still to facilitate the accumulation of capital for foreign markets. It accomplishes this in part by implementing development strategies based on western cultural constructs that created and imposed the current superstructure. In short the state apparatus itself tends to reinforce the superimposition

¹²⁸

Kinfe, A. (1995). *The Missing Millions: How and Why Africa is Underdeveloped*, p.124. World Press Inc., Trenton New Jersey.

of western cultural norms. This not only prevents articulate planning but benefits only that narrow segment of the population who control the state apparatus: the indigenous elite.

Workers...hold the values and political ideas that they have as a consequence of both trying to survive and of attempting to enjoy themselves within capitalism. These activities require money; the cash nexus therefore remains a major means of social, economic and political control. The control exerted by the cash nexus is mediated by ideological means, for people have to come to desire the goods offered for sale. Such desires are not natural nor inborn....[They] have to be constructed by ideological apparatuses, especially in the mass media, not only by explicit [advertising]...but more especially through the portrayal of lifestyles in stories, films, articles, photographs and television images....In order to consume it is necessary to earn money or obtain cash from the state. These exigencies produce conformity among most citizens in the modern states of capitalism. ¹²⁹

The Cultural Legacy of Mainstream Development

As previously mentioned, most of West Africa's population is excluded from participating in and reaping the benefits of international capitalism. At the same time, they are inundated with the culture of consumerism. Unfortunately, periphery capitalism does not include a 'cash nexus' for the majority. Without this buffer, another function of the bourgeois state, as an overtly coercive apparatus, used to quell insurrection by maintaining stability by any means necessary, is more clearly seen. Ultimately, one can

¹²⁹

Chicote, R. (1987). *Amilcar Cabral's Revolutionary Theory and Practice*, p. 5. West Port, Connecticut.

define the modern bourgeois state sociologically in terms of the specific means peculiar to it, as to every political association, namely, the use of physical force. ¹³⁰

This thesis argues that the economic disarticulation evidenced in West Africa is linked at least as much to the role of indigenous leadership as it is to exploitation by western capital. As mentioned previously, the class alliances of West Africa's elite are tied to international capitalism, which, albeit vicariously, is the source of their wealth and power. The end of economic dependency in this region will entail the breaking up of this class. Naturally enough most are not inclined to initiate social revolution and by extension, class suicide.

The Cultural Legacy of Periphery Capitalism

Thus the West African retinue of comprador capitalists and political and intellectual intelligentsia belong to a growing international bourgeois who are part of the ideological and political network that forms the hegemonic underpinnings of global capitalism. The co-optation of this class is thus a necessary criterion for continued domination by western capitalism. Their wealth and status and hence their loyalty, are tied to international capital. Building coherent regional economies using methods other than those prescribed by mainstream planning would entail breaking ranks with the system which defines their cultural reality and ensures their wealth and power.

To the extent that ideologies are historically necessary they have a validity which is 'psychological'; they 'organize' human masses, and create the terrain on which men move,

¹³⁰

Gerth, H. & Wright Mills, C. (1970). 'Max Weber' from *Politics as a Vocation*, pp. 77-78. Routledge and Kegan Paul.

acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc. To the extent that they are arbitrary, they only create individual 'movements', polemics and so on, though even these are not completely useless, since they function like error which by contrasting with truth demonstrates it. ¹³¹

According to Gramsci, hegemony entails more than Marx's notion of ideology or even Max Weber's concept of legitimacy. The Gramscian meaning of the term literally references an individual's world view; the matrix through which perception and understanding are filtered into consciousness.

It is the sheer taken-for-grantedness of hegemony that yields its full effects - the 'naturalness' of a way of thinking about social, economic, political and ethical issues. This makes the theory of hegemony much richer or more encompassing than the restricted concepts of ideology and legitimacy, which are used to define either distorted concepts of reality or methods of inducing consent and acquiescence in a political system....Hegemony is [thus] linked with a complex set of claims about what could be a coherent viewpoint on the world. ¹³²

¹³¹

Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Note Books*, p. 377.

¹³²

Bocock, *Hegemony*, p. 8.

As previously stated, one of the most fundamental problems facing West Africa today is that de facto it never decolonized. Decolonization by definition entails the restoration of political and economic autonomy. It was not then and is not now possible, for the western conglomerate to meet this demand. The process of capitalist accumulation does not adequately meet the needs of populations even at the centers; it cannot, as structured even begin to address the needs at the periphery. In short, international capitalism cannot give meaningful aid and assistance to former colonial territories without jeopardizing its own economic and political stability.

As Cabral maintained, the process of decolonization is inevitably violent. In other words, without revolution, there is no transition, merely a substitution of species; in this case a takeover by the indigenous elite from the colonial elite. As long as this group believes that the western paradigm is the only way to enlightenment, civilization and eventual economic prosperity, it will continue to embrace the western hegemony. In doing so they are actually facilitating the genocide of their own cultures and condemning West Africa to perpetual economic stagnation and eternal poverty. While the motivation behind colonialism and neo-colonialism is in essence identical - variations on the essential theme of exploitation - Cabral, in his analysis of class structure made some crucial distinctions between them. In the colonial context, for instance, the more or less horizontal structure of most of the social groupings and the absence of any identifiable indigenous power base, made it possible for people at least temporarily, to put their ethnic and cultural differences aside and face the enemy with a united front.

[However], in the neocolonial situation, the more or less accentuated structuring of the native society as a vertical one and the existence of a political power composed of native elements - National State - aggravate the

contradictions within that society and make difficult, if not impossible, the creation of as broad and united front as in the colonial case.¹³³

However, it may be that the source of this fragmentation will eventually create an environment conducive to coalition. Despite age old ethnic and cultural differences, which have been further exacerbated by colonial boundaries and the tendency by MNCs and western governments to form alliances with specific ethnic groups - who are usually in the minority - there is increasing frustration among a growing cross section of West Africa's population. Potentially, this could create a basis for unity, as it did during the colonial period.

The necessarily repressive nature of the neo-colonial state against the national liberation forces, the aggravation of class contradictions, the objective continuance of agents and signs of foreign domination, the growing impoverishment of the peasantry and the more or less flagrant influence of external factors, contribute towards keeping the flames of nationalism alight [which will eventually] reunite the majority of the population around the ideal of national liberation.¹³⁴

¹³³ Cabral, *Unity and struggle*, p. 132.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

The Status of Women

The status of women in West Africa changed drastically with slavery and colonization. The pre-colonial cultural premise of gender differences with definite leanings towards gender equality, expressed in part through matrilineal kinship lines, informed both the division of labor and indigenous political structures. While it was certainly not an entirely egalitarian system, it at least tended towards gender parity and in some cases almost achieved it. In most instances, women played a rather muted, although often influential role in politics. However, they were also the main economic producers; their contributions were both recognized and celebrated. Women's behind the scenes manipulation of the political process and their overt economic contributions were constant reminders of their critical role in the social relations of production; they helped keep the men humble. In other words, social recognition of the interdependence of male and female at least to some degree, both shaped and influenced the region's relatively egalitarian gender relations.

The Role of Women in Pre-colonial West Africa

In Pre-colonial West African matrilineal cultures, much of the work done to sustain the family unit and therefore the larger community fell to women. More to the point, their contributions were recognized by society as a whole and translated into social, economic and political power. This was in stark contrast to pre-colonial Europe; the class structure there did not recognize the economic contributions of serfs. Regardless of gender, their labor did not translate into social power, of which the European masses had none. Upper class European women were placed on pedestals. They very rarely achieved power, let alone a voice, outside the immediate jurisdiction of

their homes. By law, they were totally subject to their husbands; a gilded cage is still a cage. It is a fact that until relatively recently, European cultural norms extended the notion of private ownership to marriage. Women of all classes were the property of their husbands. Even when high born, with very few exceptions they had no political or social power. Until less than 100 years ago, a woman could not even divorce her husband without his permission in North America. She signed over her wealth to him when she married; she could not travel without his consent; he could even have her committed to an insane asylum. He could also beat her with impunity - although not with a stick thicker than his thumb; a provision of English Common Law. Patriarchy has always been at the heart of western culture, which should perhaps give pause to those myriad who have blindly accepted the precepts of European democracy: the revised Greek model is hardly the epitome of gender equality.

The term matriarchy is still commonly used by western anthropologists, historians and social scientists, to describe gender relations in West Africa and other parts of the third world. However, as Amadiume points out, this may well be because of European cultural predilections, which often run the gamut from condescending patrimony to raging misogyny. Be that as it may, many continue to misrepresent the cultural dynamics they observe and document. As a result, consciously or unconsciously, they have tended to misconstrue West Africa's historical and cultural processes, to fit a predetermined European perception. ¹³⁵

For the record, it should be noted that pre-colonial West Africa was not matriarchal in the western anthropological sense of the word, which according to *The English Oxford Dictionary*, is defined as "a society completely ruled by women".

¹³⁵

Amadiume, I. (1987). *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*. Zed Books, Ltd., London & New Jersey.

Evidence of women's status was also demonstrated in West Africa's religious practices, which commonly initiated both male and female priests. There were even a few female cults, for instance the goddess Idemili in Pre-colonial Igbo society, where in legends surrounding the origin of the Nnobi town ship

...the female had the more prominent place in myth and indigenous religious and cultural concepts. [The Igbo were also female oriented because] their culture or principle derived from the female principle. ¹³⁶

West African societies were not divided by a sexual hierarchy, in that one gender was overtly subordinate to the other. Matrilineal structures did not eliminate men's relationships to other men, but rather also defined and reinforced them through their connections to women. In short, men and women had their respective roles in the various social formations. As a rule, this meant that no one was accorded status simply by virtue of gender. Even in pre-colonial West Africa, the chiefs and kings usually came from the mother's family. In the western tradition on the other hand, gender and sex until less than a century ago were synonymous, in that the role of women was historically defined by their reproductive organs.

In pre-colonial Igbo society for instance, both genders were equally recognized for their respective and distinct roles. Women made critical contributions to the subsistence economy while men, through ritual specialization, gained political dominance. That is to say women provided subsistence through agricultural labor which sustained their communities. Men, on the other hand, exercised political influence and

¹³⁶

Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*, p. 126.

social control epitomized by the ritual growing of yams, which while the most prestigious crop, was not grown in enough quantity to be a staple, year round food source. Thus while yams were vital to ritual and ceremony, it was the food that the women grew which was crucial to the physical survival of the family and clan. As reflected by their contributions, women's economic power extended beyond the household into the community.¹³⁷

The Exclusion of Women from the New World Order

It was the transference of western cultural norms which initiated the current gender imbalance in West Africa, evident in post-colonial West Africa. The imposition of Western capitalist social structures has challenged indigenous cultural norms to their very core. Women not only lost the status they held in pre-colonial society, they are still denied equality in the current reality.

Among the first European cultural norms transposed to West Africa during colonization, was Christianity. Its theology has a patriarchal, hierarchical structure that was antithetical to most indigenous religious practices. Christian worship centers around two male figures; its active participants are men. Women are merely supplicants, in that they obey what is dictated to them by the church, which is controlled by men. As Amadiume points out, in colonial Igbo society

....Christianity introduced a male deity, religious beliefs and practices no longer focused on the female deity [Idemili], but on a male God, his son, his bishops and priests. While women formed the great majority of the congregation - the

¹³⁷

Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*.

body of the church - a few men, the clergy, constituted the headship of the church. These new gender relations were also being generated through early patterns of Western education.¹³⁸

As the new system took hold the church and the schools, primary transmitters of culture in any society, set about indoctrinating the next generation of indigenous elite into the European cultural matrix. While the majority of schools established in colonial West Africa were mission in origin and scope, even the government run schools had a disincentive for girls to join. In both, education was directed towards the boys just as it was until after World War Two in Western European and American cultures. Male children were prepared for jobs in the colonial administrations, trade, industry, the church and the teaching profession, while females were prepared for domestic work and marriage.

Strong male domination was imposed indirectly, by new economic structures, and directly by the recruitment of only men into Native Administrations [and was] supported by the inculcation of sexist ideology in the mission schools.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Amadiume, I. *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*, p.134.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

The system of warrant chiefs and district heads in colonial Anglophone West Africa was also based on Western patriarchal, hierarchical cultural norms. Men were given or allowed to purchase political power, while women were systematically denied active participation. The sexist social structure that emerged was a colonial mutation of that found in Western societies; African women were thus subordinated and excluded from male dominated political institutions. Concurrent with these changes was the dismantling of the practice of polygamy. As detrimental as colonization was to the entire population, like most of the changes, the imposition of monogamy proved more disadvantageous to women because it removed

...[some level of] autonomy within marriage, especially for elderly women....[Also] the embedded supportive systems, in terms of childcare and domestic help which facilitated mobility and therefore encouraged women's economic and political activities, were also removed. ¹⁴⁰

The exclusion of women in Western societies until the early part of the twentieth century was systemic and extended to all facets of life, both public and private. Social systems that developed from nomadic cultures without the mitigating influence of matrilineal kinship lines have historically denied women equal status. The Middle East and North Africa are cases in point. When these societies became settled, women's increased economic responsibilities did not improve their social status. On the contrary,

¹⁴⁰

Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*, p.149.

as men's roles became increasingly public, they institutionalized their power, thus making it virtually impossible for women to challenge the status quo. ¹⁴¹ In West Africa, this same euro- cultural matrix was grafted onto the social consciousness of West Africa's elite and was reinforced by imposed colonial and neo-colonial realities.

Not only did women lose some degree of economic independence, they also lost their power of applying economic sanctions in both the domestic and the public spheres, as [West African] men found a new independence in work or trade relations with European firms and businesses. A process was thus set in motion which affected power relations in these communities. ¹⁴²

This phenomenon is evident today in the administration of aid and development programs in West Africa. As during the colonial period, the focus tends to be on men, while the importance and potential of women continues to be ignored. In all fairness however, there seems to be a growing recognition among development organizations, that focusing on the needs of women and children will ultimately improve development efforts in the long term. That being said, implementing this perspective into the planning process has been slow and sporadic. The overwhelming majority of planners operating in West Africa are male, either western born or western orientated. Because of their ignorance and/or conditioning regarding indigenous cultural norms, they fail to

¹⁴¹

Diop, *Civilization or Barbarism*.

¹⁴²

Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*, p. 141.

recognize the potential for female participation in the development process. It was documented that a certain Caucasian male planner complained that he could not get the men to dig wells deep enough to maintain a water supply during the dry season. To his dismay, they had simply refused to become involved in the project. It did not occur to him that the women should have been digging the wells because they did most of the farming and housework and therefore were responsible for water collection. This rigid euro-cultural bias among mainstream planners is another major reason for the failure of most development projects.¹⁴³

A logical supposition that can be inferred from this, and perhaps should not be disregarded out of hand, is that mainstream development projects are not necessarily designed to be successful. If they are then articulate, rationale planning would engender development and by redirecting indigenous social relations of production, would ultimately change the dependent status of periphery regions like West Africa. Likewise, the data that development agencies use to assess the financial state of West African countries is also culturally biased and often inaccurate.

GNP data which...reflect more than anything the wholesale exclusion of informal and non-cash output in Third World countries: the sector in which women are particularly concentrated... [This data is used to determine which countries and which sectors in those countries will receive aid which] is then concentrated on this 'least developed'

¹⁴³

Rogers, B. (1989). *The Domestication of Women in Developing Countries*. St Martin's Press, New York, third edition.

country to build up the cash sector at the expense of the unvalued subsistence sector.¹⁴⁴

Thus, the assessment of who works is gauged only by those who participate in the cash economy. This view of productive labor is quite ineffective; in both Western and African economies women's labor outside the formal sector is largely unpaid and uncounted. In the case of West Africa, where very few women participate in the formal cash economy, the labor contribution of women does not even show up on the radar. The devaluation of African women continues with neo-colonization. The cultural norms imposed during the colonial period persist even as western women are gaining some modicum of status and power in their own societies.

Western cultural bias also tends to prevent an accurate appraisal of the economic status of individual households in West Africa. When data is collected, it is automatically assumed that the man is head of the household. This is quite problematic, especially in polygamous households, which are still common particularly in rural areas and where each wife runs her own individual house.

In many cases where women are officially classified as 'dependents' of a household head, it is clear that in fact they play a crucial part in the maintenance of individuals in that family and that in some cases the man classified as the 'head' might more accurately be described as a dependent from the point of view of productive activity.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴

ibid., p. 161.

¹⁴⁵

Rogers, *The Domestication of Women in Developing Countries*, p.65.

It is further suggested that by failing to integrate women into the developmental process and ignoring traditional gender roles, mainstream planning strategies continue to undermine pre-existing cultural norms. Given that the paralysis of these latter are a necessary criterion for the successful maintenance of peripheral capitalism within the western hegemony, it is perhaps unrealistic to assume that mainstream planning would incorporate even a semblance of cultural sensitivity into its development paradigm. On the contrary, it is precisely the pristine nature of capitalism's cultural hegemony which maintains West Africa in a situation of dependence and poverty. Under these conditions, it is impossible for the region to reassert its cultural imperatives and in so doing start the process of regaining control of its economic destiny.

In our opinion, the foundation for national liberation rests in the inalienable right of every people to have their own history, whatever formulations may be adopted at the level of international law. The objective of national liberation is therefore, to reclaim the right, usurped by imperialist domination, namely: the liberation of the process of development of national productive forces. Therefore, national liberation takes place when and only when national productive forces are completely free of all kinds of foreign domination. The liberation of productive forces and consequently the ability to determine the mode of production most appropriate to the evolution of the liberated people necessarily opens up new prospects for the cultural development of the society in question, by returning to that society all its capacity to create progress. ¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Cabral, *Return to the Source*, p. 43

The Implications of Elite Collusion

This research contends that as traditional intellectuals in the Gramscian sense of the term, West Africa's elite provide a crucial link in the capitalist hegemony. Without their compliance and participation, periphery capitalism would no longer be a feasible option for the western alliance, at least not in this region of the world. Like their western counterparts, the primary function of the West African elite is to maintain political stability for MNCs, in this way facilitating western interests. Central to this function is legitimizing the social relations of production through the superstructure; passing laws and establishing social norms that reflect the ideology of the dominant culture.

The economic realities of capitalism do not operate in a vacuum. They are based on certain well established precepts which must be accepted by the majority if the system is going to work. While the cultural norms for the majority of West Africans are still those which were established during the pre-colonial period - communal ownership, matrilineal kinship and clan-based social systems founded on exchange value - for the most part, this segment of the population is marginally, if at all, engaged in global capitalism. Conversely, the cultural orientation of the petit bourgeoisie and the leadership who potentially if not actually control most of the resources, leans towards the western cultural motifs of private property, patriarchy, individual rights and consumerism. While these two realities are incompatible, the latter takes precedence, because even though a very small minority, it is this segment of the population that controls the physical infrastructure. In this context, they also provide the cultural conduit which legitimizes the role of international capital, thus allowing the western hegemony to remain active and dominant in the region.

As stated, the result of the superimposition of the western cultural reality in West Africa has caused the disruption of indigenous social systems. This has effectively undermined the ability of most West Africans to provide even a subsistence living for themselves and their dependents. As the new century unfolds, the results of this reality are devastating. There is a growing exodus to the urban centers as people, spurred by the ideology of consumerism and the need to survive, relocate from the rural areas in hopes of finding employment, or at least a means of surviving. The cities are already stretched beyond capacity and municipal governments, unable to provide even the most basic services, are swamped. Local food production is steadily decreasing as farmers continue to migrate to the urban centers in search of more profitable work. This in turn increases the demand for food as the population in the urban centers continues to swell. Unless this cycle is broken, the incidence of poverty and unemployment will spiral to a point where famine and economic stagnation will overtake the entire region; followed inevitably by population collapse.

In percentage terms, urban populations accounted for only 18.8 percent of the total population [in West Africa] in 1960 but by 1985, it had risen to 29.7 percent...32.2 percent by 1990 ...[and 39.4 percent by 2005]. The phenomenal growth of urbanization should also be seen against the backdrop of the rapidly growing number of unemployed....Governments will find it increasingly difficult to feed, clothe and shelter these people, let alone find work and provide social care for them. The situation is expected to go from bad to worse as the rural exodus continues... unimpeded. ¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Kinfe, *The Missing Millions*, p. 272.

CHAPTER FIVE

Strategies for Regaining Economic Control

A people who free themselves from foreign domination will be free culturally only if, without complexes and without underestimating the importance of positive accretions from the oppressor and other cultures, they return to the upward paths of their own culture, which is nourished by the living reality of its environment, and which negates both harmful influences and any kind of *subjection* to foreign culture. Thus it may seem that if imperialist domination has the vital need to practice cultural oppression, national liberation is necessarily an *act of culture* ¹⁴⁸

By way of conclusion, the major themes of this thesis will be briefly reiterated and some ideas for feasible and constructive change offered. This research study essentially postulates that by inverting the dominant European cultural paradigm, which whether mainstream or Marxist, holds that economic function is primary, one perhaps gets a clearer sense of the centrality of culture to economic development. With this in mind, it is easier to understand how the very different cultural imperatives in Western Europe and West Africa have historically influenced the political-economies of each region.

¹⁴⁸ Cabral, *Return to the Source*, p.43.

In Europe since antiquity, a series of vertical hierarchies have historically influenced the potential for individual upward mobility or lack thereof, within the system of production. The cultural constructs of patriarchy, primogenitor, private property and individualism, have collectively shaped political institutions and the division of labor. Because the majority of western populations did not, until relatively recently, participate in the political process, they have had little or no control over those who have governed them; in many ways, they still do not.

In West Africa on the other hand, while there was definitely a caste system, it was balanced by laterally integrated political institutions and participation by most of the population in the political process. Common ownership of the means of production and the sharing of surplus wealth maintained equilibrium between the rulers and the ruled. Cultural norms leaned towards gender equality because of matrilineal kinship lines and social recognition of women's economic contributions. Even nomadic clan groupings which tended to have more hierarchical social structures, were at least to some degree, matrilineal in nature.

As Western Europe moved out of the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance and mercantile capitalism, major changes impacted the social relations of production. The beginnings of mercantile capitalism generated further exploration in a global quest for raw materials and new markets. This in turn sparked the Industrial Revolution, which ignited the Atlantic Slave Trade and the subsequent colonization of Africa and most of the so called third world. As many as three hundred million people were taken to supply labor for the New World; mostly from West Africa. This region along with the rest of the continent was subsequently colonized, during which period an external cultural matrix was imposed and periphery capitalism established. West Africa's economic resources continued being diverted to expedite development at the colonial centers.

At the point of decolonization, the cultural co-option of the indigenous elite ensured a seamless transfer of power; the oppressors simply changed color. To date,

the center-periphery dichotomy initially established during colonialism remains in place. The internationalization of European political institutions and the incorporation of West Africa and other third world regions into them has further strengthened the Western cultural hegemony, which remains the corner stone of international capitalism.

It has been empirically documented over the last two hundred years or more that the imposition of a western orientated, culturally discrete paradigm for development in West Africa has been a failure; mainstream planning techniques are just not working. What has allowed this ongoing fiasco to continue unabated is the pivotal role of the indigenous elite, whose wealth and power derive from maintaining the region's structural dependency on international capitalism. Any restructuring of the paradigm in place will occur only if the elite become re-Africanized, and/or a new brand of leadership, empowered by indigenous cultural imperatives, takes over.

Strategies for Change

Racism has been a part of capitalist culture since the European slave trade. Its residual effects still largely define the international division of labor. Despite the newly articulated western liberal discourse, which is seeking to transcend racial categorization with the more abstract and seemingly innocuous rhetoric of cultural 'Otherness', sublimated racism remains a much used political tool in the western arsenal; it is a visual aid to capitalism. Thus, even while the current liberal discourse is struggling to redefine the emerging New World Order, race is still very much part of the average Caucasian's national sub-consciousness; it has been part of that cultural matrix for almost half a millennium.

In addition most Europeans are unaware that there is an economic merging where the center and the periphery overlap; the shared limbo of the periphery at the center and the center at the periphery. This is the common arena of the European masses and the international black and brown bourgeois. Even though they are

interdependent and share a similar cultural reality - that is the first world bourgeoisie and the third world elite - they are poles apart politically. This is mainly because the European component is unable to make the quantum leap required to transcend the cultural/racial dichotomy which has irrevocably colored their consciousness (no pun intended) and attitudes towards those who are considered 'Other'. The result is an embedded intransigence, which effectively prevents Europeans from discovering the common interests that abound between themselves and the third world elite. This latter, whose reality is also vested in western culture, do not have this particular blind spot; rather, theirs is an unswerving loyalty to capitalism, despite the irreconcilable exploitation it has caused in their countries. Be that as it may, as long as these two groups remain politically isolated, the western cultural hegemony will remain unopposed, at least from these populations.

That being said there is paradoxically, a caveat that may well over time cause a restructuring of international capitalism. The growing diversity of the international work force and the scarcity of skilled labor necessary to manage and run the emergent information age market, is itself a force for change. The quest for profit is color blind and oblivious to gender differences. Even twenty years ago most companies could afford to exclude workers because they did not see the need to change the status quo. That was then; this is now. In today's global market place, competition is heightened and market shares are not guaranteed. Attracting and retaining the best employees with the best skills has become very important to companies that desire to maintain a competitive edge.

Hopefully the same mistakes will not be made again as the Information Age work force becomes more culturally diverse; there is no longer a single profile that fits skilled workers who collectively comprise the New World Order. Less than fifty years ago there was still a standard prototype, predicated on the erroneous stereotype of the White Anglo Saxon Protestant Male (WASP) and then female, who are becoming a minority in

North America. Certainly on a planetary scale this has always been the case.

However, as global competition becomes increasingly important to the success of international capitalism, it is becoming more evident that competitiveness depends on effective human resource development and management. Research shows that in the United States and other Western markets, globalization has further increased the need for a more multicultural perspective in order to compete successfully in foreign countries. Companies increasingly have to deal with culturally diverse workers both at home and abroad, both skilled and unskilled, who are entering the work force with different cultures and customs. Whether corporations are driven by resource needs, market demands or cost-efficiency objectives, an inevitable consequence of globalization has been greater cultural diversity in the work place.

Given the legacy of racism and sexism in capitalism and how they still impinge on the attitudes and perspectives of western populations, it is highly unlikely that the third world elite and European middle and working classes will ever unite. The European masses are too politically ignorant and culturally insulated - their sense of racial superiority is such that in all likelihood only the collapse of capitalism at the centers will remove the veils from their eyes.

Signs of The Times

If culture, as Cabral maintained, is the manifestation of the thought, history and productivity of a people, then its impotence in reference to development in West Africa and the rest of the continent must be conceded. Paradoxically, this very impotence sets the stage for potential change and a rebirth of national consciousness, with a concomitant resurgence of cultural awareness.

We believe that the conscious and organized undertaking
by a [neo] colonized people to re-establish the sovereignty

of that nation constitutes the most complete and obvious cultural manifestation that exists.¹⁴⁹

As Fanon also pointed out, just prior to the liberation struggle, or when rebellion reaches a flash point, insurrection takes on a more nationalistic edge. The redefinition of culture reignites revolutionary fervor, dormant but still smoldering. A literature of combat emerges, further molding the national consciousness, giving it form, direction and focus. Folklore and myth follow the same transition, updated and reinterpreted by griots and story tellers, to explain the current reality.¹⁵⁰ Culture is thus redefined through the arts, which become a call to arms, investing the fight for national liberation with a literature, both written and oral, of resistance and revolution; a concrete expression of a generally understood and accepted reality: the need for political and economic reconstruction.

A revolution is a rapid, violent and irreversible change in the political organization of a society. It involves the destruction of the existing political order, together with the myths that sustain it and the men which it sustains, and the creation of a new order, sustaining new men and sustained by new myths.... [But] what is central to revolution is its *political* element...the exercise of power and the ideas and institutions through which this

¹⁴⁹ Cabral, *Return To The Source*, p.243

¹⁵⁰ Fanon, F. (1978). *The Wretched of the Earth*, p.233. Grove Press, nineteenth printing.

is achieved.... [Without} this critical element...no revolution can be said to have taken place. [It] is made possible only by the prior conquest of political power and deliberate political decisions as to how that power is to be used. ¹⁵¹

Herein resides the perennial paradox of capitalism - that which it seeks to destroy has the capacity to rise up and wreak havoc. This thesis holds that the dominated cultures have within them the capacity to transform western capitalism. As previously stated, this is precisely why indigenous cultural realities must be rendered inert; it is the only way that any externally dominating system can control economic production.

The belief that South Africa will remain a white hostile enclave indefinitely, or that MNCs will continue to dominate African economies, should perhaps be reconsidered. Without a voluntary restructuring of the global economy, the NATO alliance, may very well find itself in an untenable situation, both politically and economically. South Africa has survived its first faltering steps towards political reform This, inevitably is leading to a redistribution of wealth, despite efforts and promises to the contrary. In a country where thirteen percent of the White settler population owns over eighty percent of the resources, any meaningful leveling will create shock waves throughout the west, given that, de facto, South Africa, certainly in terms of its political and economic affiliations, has historically been considered as part of the Western alliance.

As Black South Africans regain majority control of the region's economic base, there will be an inevitable shift in the country's cultural alignment. Many believe that

¹⁵¹ Clapham, C. (1995). *Third World Politics*, p.160. Croom Helm Ltd. London, 3rd Edition.

South Africa holds the key to the development of the rest of the continent. Not only is it resource rich, its fully developed infrastructure is geared to internal development and operates from a position of parity in the global market place. This capacity for backward and forward linkage can be expanded and adapted to industrialize the entire continent, spreading culturally relevant, Afro-centric forms of economic development and planning strategies throughout Africa, which the western block will have no choice but to contend with; they need Africa's resources.

This is not a pipe dream, but a very real possibility. It is what mainstream planning in the context of periphery capitalism at least, has thus far not been able to articulate, much less implement. It is a safe assumption that it is only a matter of time before South Africa's economy is once again controlled by the majority. When this happens, a chain reaction may very possibly be set into motion that will sweep through the entire continent; and then the world.

Designing a New Cultural Matrix

As stated, the West African elite have the potential to spearhead real revolutionary change. They will not accomplish this however, by joining forces with the western masses – a very unlikely scenario - but rather by consolidating their power with that of the region's indigenous rural leadership. Paradoxically, it was precisely political cooperation between the western acculturated and traditional elites that, for a brief period between 1868 and 1895 - the end of the slave trade and the colonial partition of Africa - which generated functional planning strategies that were working. If these early efforts had not been interrupted, they would have, more than likely, eventually incorporated West Africa into the global market as an equal player.

West Africa's elite, who facilitated the slave trade and caved in to colonialism, are pivotal to the continued excesses of periphery capitalism. They are also the only class which has consistently benefited from the European contact. Finally, it is time for

them to do the right thing; 'to commit suicide as a class', as Cabral put it; re-Africanize their cultural perspective and lead the struggle for economic autonomy and true political independence.

That being said, this segment of West Africa's elite are only one part of a crucial coalition; without them the currently disjointed and disorganized political struggles for empowerment will be unable to synthesize the necessary political strategies from which to generate articulate and coherent planning necessary for constructive development and change. They have the capacity to help end the exploitation and generate a functioning socio-economic base that will provide at least the basic necessities for the majority. They are the intelligentsia, the political leaders who are familiar, to some degree at least, with the intricacies of the global political-economy; they are positioned on the cutting edge of constructive change.

The other part of this alliance, equally crucial to the equation, speaks to the need for historical memory and cultural continuity that will provide the vision for change; this can only be provided by West Africa's indigenous traditional leadership. These are the political representatives of the rural and urban masses, who still retain the essential elements of the pre-colonial cultural reality. In other words, the new cultural matrix must be a fusion of these two components. The rural and western educated political leadership - backed by the retinue of comprador capitalists and the urban and rural masses - have the capacity to collectively create a new paradigm for development.

European values and skills [will be] absorbed into a new synthesis. This is possible because in embracing the indigenous historicity - in the very act of doing so - the western native purges himself of the Eurocentric frame that structures his consciousness. The return is thus a two way process of cultural filtration and [cross]

fertilization....Simultaneously, this process discards elements of the indigenous culture/history which are found to be antagonistic to the struggle. The ossified African past - embodied in the rural native - is thus not preserved intact, but is cut and cast to fit the historical requirements of the [present day]struggle for [economic independence].¹⁵²

However, these two critical elements must not only join forces, but a true synthesis must result from their combined knowledge and political power, if a platform for dynamic change is to be established and sustained. Clearly, it is not enough to break the choke hold of imperial capitalism. Economies must be rebuilt, services provided and indigenous cultural norms meshed into strong, local and regional political-economies, which can then be incorporated into the international system on their own terms, and stand or fall on their merits.

According to the theory of capitalism, the global economy should comprise of autonomous nations/regions, trading as equal partners in a system predicated on the norms of free trade and equal competition. Access by all participants should be determined by these conditions, as opposed to the current praxis; culturally skewed, externally determined categories, such as race, ethnicity, gender, class and increasingly, religion. This is probably the most realistic, perhaps the only feasible option, that third world regions like West Africa have, as a means of realigning their cultural and economic systems, regaining control of their resources and eventually achieving operational parity in the global political-economy.

¹⁵²

Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy*, p. 108-9.

In short, this thesis categorically maintains that waving the banner of national liberation has not brought closure, or united disparate groups. The context of neo-colonialism itself, which is a root cause of West Africa's continuing cultural and economic fragmentation, must be eradicated. This new matrix could serve as the foundation for a new cultural paradigm, through which it will be possible for the region to implement coherent regional planning and development.

Redefining Boundaries

While Cabral accurately postulated that any solution must entail returning to a more Afro centric mode of production, which logically, will realign economic development with the natural evolution of indigenous cultural trends, it is doubtful that this can be accomplished within the geographical boundaries presently in place; they tend to exacerbate the generally alienating environment of imperialism.

It is also clear that these first steps towards regaining economic control will require a pooling of resources. The best model, it seems, in tandem with implementing an indigenous cultural paradigm for development and planning, would be some kind of loosely federated government body or bodies, which would allow West Africa to deal with the MNCs and the NATO alliance from a position of relative strength; a collective strategy that will give the region a measure of bargaining power that it presently does not possess. In fact West Africa has already implemented a strategy with this design at its nucleus, namely The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This small but definite step towards regionalism is clearly a move in the right direction. Looking ahead to a possible United States of Africa - perhaps, using the United States as a model - current borders can delimit individual territories without restricting movement or commerce.

At a conference held in Accra Ghana in the summer of 2007, this was one of the major topics of discussion by West African leaders. Another possible step towards

realizing a Pan African reality as envisioned by Amilcar Cabral, Kwame Nkrumah, Malik El Shabazz, Marcus Garvey, Franz Fanon, Cheik Anta Diop, Ali Mazrui, Walter Rodney and many others, is that variations of the ECOWAS regional model can be replicated in other parts of the continent. Northern, eastern, central and southern Africa can all establish their own regional systems of government. Once this is accomplished and integrated, and regional government bodies fully functioning, setting coherent foreign and domestic policies and implementing articulate regional planning strategies to develop social infrastructure will be more coordinated. Once roads, schools, hospitals, running water and electricity are in place, if a more centralized political structure is deemed necessary and/or desirable by the majority, then, with the base in place, this option can be feasibly addressed.

This is not some ill conceived notion to return Africa to its pre-colonial glory days. Rather, it is a realistic solution to problems that have proven insurmountable to individual nation states. At this point in time, a collective response to the collective western hegemony is the only feasible option. This does not rule out the diversity that already exists, but certainly offers a more viable alternative to the one in place.

As Cabral stated, discounting or embracing the past without analyzing its potential for the current paradigm would be foolhardy. In this age of interdependence West Africa and the rest of the continent would do well to close ranks; certainly Europe and the rest of the NATO alliance has done so; the Pacific Rim and China are also moving in this direction.

Fanon made the same crucial point. He stated that looking to the past, the pre-colonial culture, in order to negate or ameliorate the impact of colonialism, is not enough. The reality of the present, as well as the past, must be used to construct the future.

We must not therefore be content with delving into the past...in order to find coherent elements which will counteract [neo-] colonialism's attempts to falsify and harm....A national culture is not a folklore [sic], nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover the people's true nature. It is not made up of inert dregs of gratuitous actions....A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence. A national culture in underdeveloped countries should therefore take its place at the very heart of the struggle for freedom. ¹⁵³

While recognizing the need for a continental culture, which includes the African Diaspora, Fanon and Cabral also recognized the diversity that exists not only nationally, but internationally. In other words, the impact of colonialism and neo-colonialism on preexisting cultural norms, as well as indigenous cultural differences, must be prefigured into the new cultural matrix as it is being synthesized. Africans, whether from the continent or the Diaspora, do not share a monolithic culture.

As Cabral pointed out, revolution is not exportable. The problems faced by present day Nigerians are different from those of African Americans, or Sudanese, or the people of the Caribbean or South America, or Algeria. Similarly, Fanon also stated

¹⁵³ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 236

that African culture is heterogeneous; what should be homogeneous is that the struggle for economic independence must be shaped by the cultural reality of the people.¹⁵⁴

As bleak as things are, a new awareness is slowly permeating the ranks of the West African elite; a level of consciousness that the African masses have known for a long time but, ground down by poverty and exclusion, they have been unable to articulate in any organized manner. This realization is that if current trends continue unabated, the survival of millions of people will be seriously jeopardized. Global capitalism as it currently operates precludes development at the periphery. It is also clear that mainstream planning is not working in West Africa; also that the western hegemony cannot be maintained without the co-operation of the indigenous elite. Finally, there is strength in numbers and a magic in boldness; to do nothing means things will only get worse.

For those who are running and/or benefiting from international capitalism, to wring their hands and deny responsibility for the global misery and deprivation that this particularly virulent system of production has spawned is naive, to say the least and tangential to the facts on the ground. Responsibility is not the issue - the need for change is. It is not even a moral issue, so much as one of survival. If the concentration and centralization effects of global capitalism continue and there is no reason to think they will not, regions in the third world, including West Africa, starting with areas that have no material or strategic resources to offer the western alliance, will be cut-off. Ignored by the MNCs and excluded from the international division of labor and by extension the world market, entire populations, unnecessary to global capitalism, will face mass starvation or extermination by a system to which they are either redundant or

¹⁵⁴

Ibid.

pose a threat; the people of Darfur are just one example; refugees in their own land being killed by their government and ignored by the international community.

It is up to West Africa and the rest of the continent to extract itself from the current dilemma; a difficult, though not yet impossible task. The West African elite must confront the critical situation that they helped create. Instead of seeing themselves as isolated and helpless, or afraid of losing their status and wealth, they, along with the traditional indigenous elite, must assume responsibility for the welfare of the people. They have the power.

Imagine if the entire continent, operating from regional federations, created a coalition for constructive and immediate change. Such a move would translate into tremendous bargaining power. Africa accounts for over a third of the world's natural resources. If it regains control of these resources, it will be in a position to demand change. Individual nation states do not have the technological resources, the institutional capacity or the financial capital to combat the western hegemony or the MNCs. Neither can they in isolation, force the western alliance into more mutual patterns of exploitation. As federated regions, however, with or without a centralized government, the continent's collective power would have to be reckoned with. The western alliance for its own survival would have to make some necessary concessions; enlightened self interest is a great motivator for constructive change. In the last few years, some positive changes have occurred, such as the AGOA Trade Agreements in 2000 and the Global Millennium Declaration, as well other indicators such as debt forgiveness by some of the former colonial powers; it is a start.

African regional governments would be able to make demands from a position of relative power when negotiating with MNCs. As part of this process, they could commission a study to better familiarize themselves with the intricacies and details of MNC investment patterns and patenting laws. The next step would be to lay down some basic ground rules that would diminish and eventually reverse the ongoing exploitation.

If all the regional governments refused MNCs access to resources unless they concede to certain demands, such as infrastructure development, sharing technology and training, they will either have to pull out or acquiesce. Should the IMF and World Bank threaten to cut off foreign aid as a punitive measure, Africa can, in turn, threaten to renege on its loans. The same mistakes that were made at the point of decolonization cannot be repeated; in the last half century or so, the true nature of global capitalism has hit home on many levels; clearly altruism is not a strong suit of this system. At the same time, the survival of resource rich Africa is critical to the survival of global capitalism. As Frederick Douglas said, "Power concedes nothing without demand".¹⁵⁵

The crushing need of the masses of the African poor must be a priority. Pragmatically, addressing this problem will entail the development of indigenous productive sectors, in both industry and agriculture, which will create employment and upgrade the general standard of living. To help accomplish this objective, MNCs must be forced to reinvest a percentage of their profits into developing social infrastructure; joint ventures with at least equal control by the various regional governments. This however is not enough. The MNCs must also agree to immediately start phasing in programs to transfer appropriate technology and implement high level educational

155

Douglass, F. (1962). *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. Reprinted from the Revised Edition of 1892. Collier and MacMillan, London, New York.

programs that provide managerial and marketing skills to the indigenous people. This is by no means an unrealistic goal. Immediately after independence, Tanzania implemented similar policies with great success.

Because operating knowledge.....is embodied in people, medium term quantitative high-level manpower plans are possible....Tanzania moved from 500 citizens and 4500 expatriates in 1961, to 5000/5000 in 1971 and [almost] 8000 citizens and 4,500 expatriates in 1974. ¹⁵⁶

The Case of Dubai

For the many who claim that a cultural synthesis of the paradigm in place is not a feasible option for developing countries, Dubai, of the United Arab Emirates, is an example of how a country or region can realign its political-economy using indigenous cultural norms as a framework for development and achieve parity in the world market. Granted, Dubai is oil rich and wealthier than most former colonies; on the other hand so is Nigeria. While this is only a very brief sketch - and without implying that all African states will fare as well - it does, hopefully, make the desired point.

Dubai is located on the coast of the Arabian Gulf; it has an area of approximately 4,000 square kilometers and is the business center for the United Arab Emirates. Dubai is oil rich and a member of OPEC. However, farsighted planning on the part of its government has sought to balance its dependence on oil exports, the price of which fluctuates according to demand on the world market. This latter predictably, is controlled by the world's largest oil cartel - the Seven Sisters - in tandem with the NATO

156

Amin & Widstrand, *Multinational Firms in Africa*, p. 46.

alliance. Planning in Dubai is conceived as a means of achieving diversification; creating linkages into the domestic economy to provide opportunities for commercial and business enterprises extraneous to petroleum because petroleum is a finite and depleting resource. With this agenda in mind, Dubai began reinvesting its oil revenues in domestic development. It established the Jebel Ali Free Trade Zone in 1986, which over the two decades has grown by leaps and bounds and is currently one of the most accessible tax free trading zones in the world.

Dubai looked to Hong Kong and Singapore as models for its own development, although the economies of the Pacific Rim were also studied, in particular the export processing zones of Malaysia, Taiwan and Thailand. "We are happy to learn from others," said Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayman. "We are not proud."

The Free Zone Complex covers 100 square kilometers in the south of Dubai; it includes Dubai Port Authority, the largest man-made port in the world. This massive structure was recently combined with the adjacent port of Mina Rashid and now provides over 100 deep water berths, which is expanding access to the Free Zone at a phenomenal rate. In addition, the development of Dubai's international airport, which opened in 1986 with only three leased planes, has greatly enhanced international business. The airport is competitive and has regularly scheduled flights between North Africa, Asia and Europe; it has become a stop-off point between these three continents. In 1996, it bought its first fleet of 747 airlines and will soon schedule flights on existing commercial routes to the Americas.

In addition, Dubai constructed an Aluminum smelter, as well as many manufacturing plants, factories and businesses. These have created backward linkages into the local economy from the oil sector. As a result Dubai now produces many petroleum products that it was previously importing.

This tiny country has the largest gold market in the entire Gulf Region, handling more than nine percent of the world's gold trade and nearly two thirds of all business

from the Middle East. Gold imports surged by 39 percent in the first three quarters of 1992, due mainly to a large increase in exports to India; imports reached over 22 tons, increasing trade by over a quarter of a million dollars. Government planners are in the process of recommending legislation to impose stricter regulations on the gold trade, so that commerce can be monitored more efficiently.

Dubai also hosts an array of international sporting events, including the International Golf Desert Classic, the World Karate Championships and International Powerboat Racing. There are a number of Five Star Hotels for those on business or vacation; it has become a favorite resort to visitors from all over the world.

The Free Zone attracted over one billion dollars in new investments last year; it comprises 123 operations from 27 countries. There are currently over 460 companies using the complex and its facilities, 22 of which are Indian. A growing number of household names doing business in Dubai include Citi Bank, Shell, Sony, Citizen, Reebok and Black and Decker.

Over the last five years, since the end of 1998, foreign trade and exports have been increasing by approximately 15 to 20 percent a year. In 2004 they increased by over 23 percent, grossing over 20.3 billion dollars.

The key to Dubai's success lies in its understanding and familiarity with international law, particularly as it relates to technology and capital markets. The successful application of these laws has allowed Dubai to protect itself against copyright and trade/patent infringements by, among other things, creating standard articles of incorporation for limited liability companies. These laws serve to regulate the activities of foreign agents and brokers, to ensure that Dubai maintains control of its economy and natural resources. At the same time, it has created a favorable climate to investors, big and small, which keeps business booming for everyone.

Most of the research done in Dubai that ultimately resulted in legislation passed by its government was initiated by planners in the Economic Department, in tandem

with Dubai's very active Chamber of Commerce. The laws in place prevent foreign takeovers, while affording investors easy access to tax free investments and protection for their investments. Planners here adopted a think-tank approach; they constantly peruse international law and the by-laws of major corporations to keep abreast of current legislation; ignorance of the law is no excuse. Africa's leadership would do well to learn this valuable lesson.

Critically, Dubai's planning strategies were influenced by indigenous economic and cultural imperatives. For hundreds of years before colonization, Dubai was a busy trading center and sea-port with connections in Asia, northern and eastern Africa, and southern and eastern Europe. It emerged from colonization in control of its own economic resources; it is once again a hub of international commerce and trade.

The government, much encouraged by its success, continues implementing planning strategies, and is, in particular trying to attract more high tech and electronics firms. The country also plans to have off-shore banking and create a stock exchange and a capital market. Legislation is in the process of being formulated which will allow Dubai to participate in these ventures, mostly reserved for the financial centers located in Western Europe, Japan and North America.

Dubai's culture is Islamic in origin, with a socialized means of distribution and free access to education and housing by the general population. Despite its very different indigenous cultural matrix and its history of colonization and economic exploitation, it has managed to successfully incorporate into the international economy on its own terms, with remarkable success.¹⁵⁷ It accomplished this by recognizing its problems as well as its potential, taking stock of its resources and investing in its

¹⁵⁷ The above information on Dubai was obtained from journals, newspapers and magazine articles down-loaded from the Internet: Martin, J. (1996-97). *Middle East Report*; Stuart, A. (1993). *Continuity is the Key; United Emirates Cosmopolitan, U.K.*; *Cosmopolitan Dubai* (1996, Dec.). *I.C. Publications* (2006); Fadil, M. (2004, July-August), Dubai, Glittering Underworld *Arab Journal*.

domestic economy. Planning for local development was carefully thought out and implemented based on its own specific cultural imperatives and indigenous social relations of production.

Planning for the Future

In the context of strong regional governments to initiate the process of unification throughout Africa, culturally centered, comprehensive planning for economic development that targets the hardest hit areas of the economy and population must be immediately implemented. Basic infrastructure such as a network of roads and telecommunications linking each region internally as well to each other must be constructed. Economic linkages between rural and urban areas, by way of international loans, grants and subsidies to initiate small-scale agricultural, technical and vocational projects, in order to increase local food production, manufacturing and small businesses. Such ventures will encourage free enterprise. The need for increased food production particularly, is of primary importance. Local plants selling organic fertilizer manufactured from throw away organic matter, by-products of the meat packing and cocoa industries can be set up at relatively little cost. It is a fact that cheap, organic NPK fertilizers can be produced in abundant quantities throughout Africa. Billions of dollars, now spent importing chemical fertilizers would be saved in foreign exchange. Within ten years, maybe even sooner, the continent could produce enough fertilizer domestically to grow all the food it needs. The cooperative use of tools and equipment to cut down on investment costs in cooperative agricultural ventures is also a good idea and will fit well with existing cultural norms. In addition, a nucleus of highly skilled personnel can teach management and vocational skills to the young. In short, the euro-cultural model of the state must be revamped to more closely reflect indigenous cultural realities. Stringent controls must be legislated to counteract conflicts of interest and rampant fraud.

The educational system must also be reorganized with a bias towards science and technology; the number of vocational schools must be increased to teach people skilled and semi-skilled industrial and agricultural applications. School programs and youth organizations should be set up to orient children to an indigenous cultural perspective; this will build incentive and commitment in the next generation.

In addition, as a means of truly returning to the source, as Cabral put it, or to use the Akan term, *Sankofa*, which literally translated means 'return to the source', the crucial need for a continental language or languages, must be addressed. Language, as a transmitter of culture, as well as a means of communication, is the conduit through which history is passed on to the next generation. Those who think that European languages will for ever dominate commerce and education in Africa are trapped by the Meta Language of the dominant culture; the languages brought by the Europeans will probably not leave; they are an irrevocable part of Africa's history and current reality. But Africa also has its own indigenous languages which will see resurgence once the process of cultural realignment is put into motion. While it is certainly appropriate that children be taught the European languages currently used, they should also know that literacy in their native tongue is also important. The use of regional languages will greatly enhance participation in political and economic processes; it will also allow many more people access to jobs that would otherwise be reserved only for the educated. A shared language will also permit a broader cross section of regional populations to participate in helping to create the new economic paradigm while it is still a work in progress.

Although this is for future discourse, it is also worth investigating the feasibility of perhaps teaching one continental language in all African schools; conducting business and politics in a common language will also facilitate interaction across regions. This is not to say that regional languages and dialects should be replaced or subsumed; simply that in addition there would be a common language that everybody speaks, similar to

the Pidgin or Creole that today allows linguistically diverse people to communicate throughout many regions of Africa. A natural choice for a continental language is Swahili, which is the most widely spoken language in Sub-Saharan Africa and is linguistically tied to both Hausa and Arabic.

In conclusion, as Africa moves into the second decade of the twenty first century, the situation on the continent though dire, is not yet irreversible; this might not be true 20 years from now. Careful comprehensive planning and the creative channeling of resources in terms of education, people-power, training and the allocation of resources, will be effective if implemented from culturally synthesized matrices geared to internal development and linked to the international economy on terms that will put the continent back on the road to parity.

REFERENCES

- Achebe, C. (1959). *Things Fall Apart*. Fawcett Books.
- Ake, C. (1981). *A Political Economy of Africa*. Longman Group, Ltd.
- Amadiume, I. (1987). *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*. Zed Books, Ltd., London & New Jersey.
- Amin, S. and Widstrand, C. (1975). *Multinational Firms in Africa*, Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala and New York.
- Amin, S. (1977). *Imperialism and Unequal Development*, Monthly Review Press.
- Amin, S. (1994). *Eurocentricism*, Monthly Review Press.
- Amu, L.A.O. (1984). *Oil Glut and the Nigerian Economy*. Nigerian Petroleum Corp.
- Bachrach, P. (1997). *Political Elites in a Democracy*. New York, Antherson Press. 3rd Edition.
- Bernal, M. (2004). *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, 19th Printing. Free Associate Press, London.
- Boahen, A. A. (1992). *African Perspectives on Colonialism*. The John Hopkins University Press.
- Bocock, R. (1986). *Hegemony*. Ellis Horwood, Ltd.
- Cabral, A. (1973). *Return to the Source*. Africa Information Service.
- Cabral, A. (1979). *Unity and Struggle*. Monthly Review Press.
- Clapham, C. (1995). *Third World Politics*. Croom Helm. Ltd. London; Third Edition.
- Chaliand, G. (1996). *Armed Struggle in Africa with the Guerillas in Portuguese Guinea*. Monthly Review Press, 3rd Printing.
- Chicote, R. H. (1987). *Amilcar Cabral's Revolutionary Theory and Practice*. Westport, Conn.
- Chinweizu. T. (1996). *Decolonizing the African Mind*. Pero Press, Trenton, New Jersey.
- Connors, J. E. (1993). *Lenin: On Politics and Revolution*. Pegasus, New York. 3rd Edition.
- Darwin, C. (1872). *Origin of Species*. London. John Murray (Second Edition).

- Davidson, B. (1973). *The Africans*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1973
- Davidson, B. (2004). *Modern Africa: A Social and Political History*. Longman Group, U.K., Ltd; fourth edition.
- de Graft Johnson, J.C. (1962). *An Introduction to the African Economy*. Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1962.
- Diop, C. (1991). *Civilization or Barbarism*. Lawrence Hill Books.
- Diop, C. A. (1993). *Precolonial Black Africa*. Lawrence Hill & Co.
- Douglass, F. (1962). *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. Reprinted from the Revised Edition of 1892. Collier and MacMillan, London New York.
- Dowling, M. (2006). Mr. Dowling's Ancient African Trade Page. Retrieved from <http://www.mrdowling.com/609-nok.html>; Internet; updated Sunday, April 2, 2006 .
- El-Khawas, M. & Cohen, B. (1976). National Security Study Memorandum 39: The Kissinger Study of Southern Africa. Lawrence Hill & Co.
- Edwards, A., & Townsend, J. (2002). *Interpreting Modern Political Philosophy: From Machiavelli to Marx*. Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills.
- Fadil, M. A. (1997, July-August). Dubai, Glittering Underworld. *Arab Journal*.
- Fanon, F. (1978). *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove Press, 19th printing.
- Fanon, F. (2006). *Black Skin White Mask*. Reprinted by Manchester University Press.
- Gavshon, A. (1998). *Crisis in Africa*; Penguin Books, 3rd Edition
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Note Books*. New York International Publishers.
- Hawthorne, Walter (2003). *Planting rice and harvesting slaves: Transformations along the Guinea-Bissau coast, 1400-1900*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann
- Hunt, M. (1987). *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Yale University Press.
- Hymer, S. (1973). *Multinational Corporations in World Development*. U.N., Geneva.
- Jablow, A. & Hammond, D. (1987). *The Myths of Africa*. Library of Social Sciences, N.Y., N.Y.

- Jackson, H. F. (1982). *From the Congo to Soweto*. William Morrow and Company.
- Jacobs, P. and Landau, S. (1971). *To Serve The Devil*, Vol. 1: Natives and Slaves. Random House.
- Kinfe, Abraham, (1995). *The Missing Millions: How and Why Africa is Underdeveloped*. World Press Inc., Trenton, New Jersey.
- King, Anthony, D. (1991). *Urbanism, Colonialism and the World Economy*. Routledge, N.Y. N.Y.
- Larrain, J. (1989). *Theories of Development*. Polity Press and Basil Blackwell, Inc.
- Leon, A. (1996, Dec.). *Cosmopolitan Dubai*. I.C. Publications.
- Manning, Patrick. (1990). *Slavery and African Life*. Cambridge University Press.
- Martin, J. (1996-97). *Middle East Report*.
- Nagle, John, D. (1995). *Introduction to Comparative Politics*. St. Martin's Press.
- New York Times*. (1997, February 12)
- New York Times* (1997, Feb. 18).
- New York Times* (1997, March 9).
- New York Times* (1997, March 21).
- Oliver, R. (1987). *The Middle Age of African History*. Oxford University Press.
- Nkrumah, K. (1975). *Africa Must Unite*. International Publishers, New York, 3rd Edition.
- Parenti, M. (1992). *Democracy for the Few*. St. Martin's Press.
- Parenti, M. (1993). *Land of Idols*. St. Martin's Press.
- Prewitt, K & Stone, A. (1997). *The Ruling Elite: Elite Theory, Power and American Democracy*. Harper and Row Publishers, 2nd Edition.
- Public Broadcasting Service (2005, Nov.). *The Life and Times of Randolph Winston Churchill*. National Public Radio.
- Report from UNICEF, 1994.
- Rodney, W. (1981). *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. London, Bogle L'ouverture Publications, Revised Edition

- Rodney, W. (1988). *West Africa and the Atlantic Slave Trade*. London, Bogle L'ouverture.
- Rogers, B. (1986). *The Domestication of Women in Developing Countries*. St Martin's Press, New York, 3rd Edition.
- Santini, J. (1980). *Report of the Congressional Mining Subcommittee*. Library of Congress.
- Said, E.K. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Said, E. K. (1994). *Culture and Imperialism*. First Vintage Books Edition.
- Semmes, C. (1996). *Cultural hegemony and African American Development*. University of Chicago Press.
- Serequeberhan, T. (2001). *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy*. Routledge, 29 West 35th Street, NY., NY.
- State Department Documents. (1960, November). J.F.K. Library, Washington D.C.
- Stuart, A. (1993). Continuity is the Key; *United Emirates Cosmopolitan, U.K.*
- Tarabrin, E.A. (1978). *Neocolonialism and Africa in the 1970's*. Progress Publishers, Moscow.
- Uchendu, V. (1980). *Dependency and Underdevelopment in West Africa*. E.J. Brill.
- Van Sertima, I. (1976). *They Came Before Columbus*. Random House, N.Y., N.Y.
- Wa Thiong'o, N. (1999). *Moving the Center*. James Curry Ltd., Islington, London.
- Gerth, H. & Wright M. C. (1970). *Politics as a Vocation*. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- World Health Organization Report. (1995). Published by W.H.O.
- Wilber, C. (1999). *The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment*. Random House, 2nd Edition.
- Willcox, W. F. (1931). International Migrations, Volume II: Interpretations. Volume Publisher: NBER. Volume ISBN: 0-87014-017-5.
- Zinn, H. (2005). *A People's History of the United States: 1492-Present*. Harper Perennial, 2nd Edition.

Appendix 1

Figure 2. Trade Routes in Pre-colonial West Africa

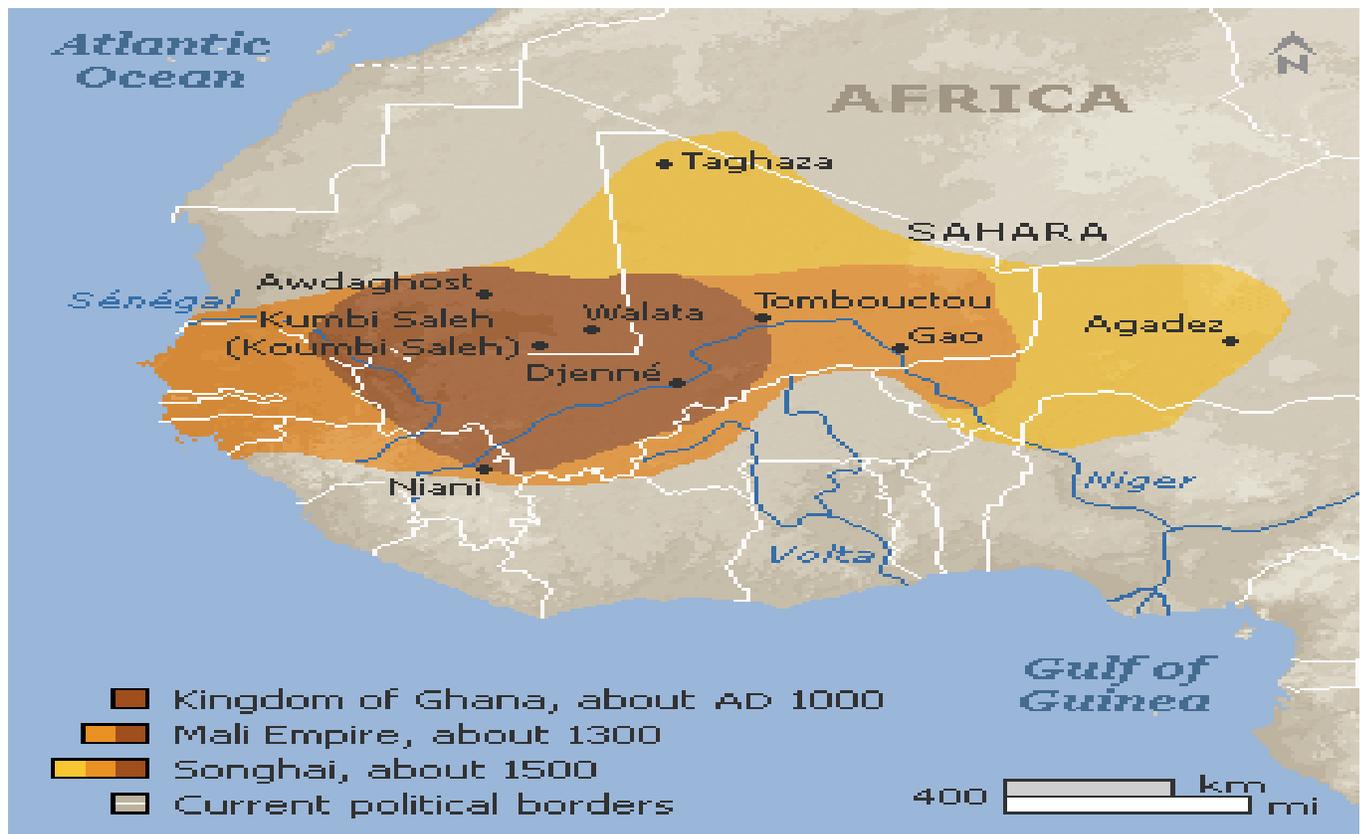


Source: ©2009, Mike Dowling. All rights reserved.

The map above shows the Pre-colonial Empires of Ghana, Mali and Songhai, which were well in place with established trade and diplomatic relations in North Africa, Asia and Europe.

APPENDIX 2

Figure 3. Map of Ghana, Songhai and Mali Empires



Source: Courtesy Africa Maps

Major exports included gold, slaves, iron, tin, leather goods, cloth etc. The majority of West African merchants did not participate in the Arab Caravan Trade, confining their trading activities for the most part to regional markets such as Djenne, Timbuktu, Gao and Waleta; many of the Arab traders were regular visitors to these markets.

