

Mandela: Could he have Negotiated a Better Deal at independence?

Could Mandela have used his moral authority to usher a socialist revolution in South Africa? as some on the left appear to believe. I will come back to this later. It is a much bigger question than say, 'Could he have negotiated a better deal at independence?' The answer to the latter question I believe is, yes, he could have. On reflection, I am convinced that Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC) need not have settled for so little after 100 years of a titanic, heroic struggle of the people since 1912, the year the ANC was born. To be honest, the 1994 deal produced a little mouse out of a mountain of a struggle! And it is this little neo-colonial mouse that is roaring today while the mountain is levelled down. The people were depoliticized immediately following the 1994 agreement, a process I witnessed firsthand.

I have been engaged in the debate with many a South African comrade (including several leaders in the ANC, the South African Communist Party – S A C P , Congress of South African Trade Unions – COSATU, the Pan-African Congress – PAC and the Black Consciousness Movement - BCM) during my years at the University of Dar es Salaam (1973-79) and later in Zimbabwe (1982 to 2005). This was at the height of the South African armed struggle.

For a short spell, Ruth First was a tutor in a course I taught at Dar. Joe Slovo (her husband) was leading the *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, the military wing of the ANC and was soon to become the General Secretary of the SACP. We had discussions and differences over a number of issues – including, the nature and character of corporate capital in South Africa (see further below), and the role of the armed struggle. During the 1990-94 independence negotiations, Slovo broke a stalemate in talks with his idea of the 'sunset clause' and for a coalition government for five years following a democratic election. I was in Zimbabwe by that time, and I visited South Africa frequently. I had taken the view that the

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'sunset clause' was a mistake, a view I still hold. The ANC could have negotiated a better deal. The balance of forces had shifted significantly in favour of the freedom fighters, especially after the decisive defeat of apartheid South African forces at Cuito Cuanavale in 1988 at the hands of Cuban and Angolan forces. The ANC, in my view, missed an historic opportunity during the 1990-94 negotiations.

This point is a moot point now. Nonetheless, it is a significant point and historians will come back to it again and again. The issue will not go away.

Coming now to the bigger question: 'Could Mandela have used his moral authority to usher a socialist revolution in South Africa?' Here I believe that whilst he could not have ushered a socialist revolution, the ANC could have achieved much more for the people than what they have in the last 18 years.

I draw partially from my experience in Uganda. I was member of a movement in the struggle first against the brutal regime of Idi Amin (1972-79) and subsequently the regimes of Obote and Museveni (since 1980). Our movement – the Uganda National Liberation Front – formed the post-Amin government for the period May 1979 to April 1980. A conscious political decision by some of the leading forces of our movement was that time was not ripe to embark on a 'socialist road'; for us it was necessary, first, to secure national independence from the dictatorship of global capital. Applying our experience to South Africa, I would say that even today (let alone when South Africa had its first democratic election in April 1994) the struggle is for national independence from the domination of global capital. This is precisely one of the issues on which we had differences with

our comrades in the ANC and the SACP in the 1970s and 1980s. They argued that South Africa already had 'national' capital; which we said was an illusion. It is still the case that there is very little capital in South Africa that is truly 'national'.

The strategic and policy implications of the above point are enormous. Instead of consolidating national independence to build national capital, the post-apartheid government opened the doors to global capital. Where the apartheid regime was seriously trying to develop 'Boer national capital', the post-apartheid government opened up the gates to the free flow of global capital into and out of South Africa.

There is no space to elaborate on this point, but a few illustrative examples might help. One, the government deregulated the capital account resulting in massive capital exit. Two, it allowed, for example, Old Mutual (a dominant life insurance firm) to demutualize, and de facto converted over 100 years of workers' savings into share capital, and open to purchase in global capital markets. Three: it entered into a partial Free Trade Agreement with the European Union which opened South Africa (and almost by default, the Southern African Customs Union (SACU)) to European imports without very limited corresponding benefits, a situation that bedevils South Africa's relations with its neighbours to this day. Four: it committed itself to repaying the pre-1995 apartheid debt under the illusion that this would build confidence with the international financial institutions (the IMF and the World Bank) and the global market to attract foreign direct investment. It is my strong contention that South Africa ought to have unilaterally repudiated all apartheid-incurred illicit debts. I find it incomprehensible that independent South Africa should pay for debts incurred as a result of crimes against humanity. Five: the negotiations on the Bilateral Investment Treaty with the United Kingdom that preceded democratic elections. Finally: the 1996 GEAR – the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution – strategy. It set

the country, I believe, into a reverse gear: many of the gains of the struggle for independence were lost in the process. Evidence of this is visible all over South Africa today.

The views above are not the wisdom brought by hindsight. Indeed, many in South Africa had addressed these concerns at the time. But the ANC and the SACP were basking under the sunshine of the 'rainbow nation', and a few hard facts of life escaped their scrutiny. Actually, looking back I would go further to say that it would have been better for the independent government of South Africa to have made an alliance with Boer capital (for example, in the banking sector) than with global capital

(represented by the likes of the Anglo-American and the Old Mutual).

Let me return, briefly, to what Mandela might have done with his huge moral capital. In 1898, the Russian revolutionary, Georgi Plekhanov, wrote a famous book called *The Role of the Individual in History*. In it he subscribed to the 'great men' theory of history with a very important caveat. For them to change the course of history they must understand the underlying social and economic forces that define that course. Plekhanov argued that Marxism provided a good basis for understanding the movement of the forces of capitalism which is the dominant mode of production of the times.

To this, I would add a caveat of my own. Marxism is not a simple science. There are no ready-made answers to existential challenges. Leaders like Lenin, Mao and Fidel Castro made errors, for sure, but they learnt from practice as they went along, and changed the course of history for their nations, and for the world.

Mandela was a great man, a great humanist, may be even a 'saint'. But he saw his role as uniting his people across race and tribe, and left the nitty-gritty of state affairs to the ANC and the SACP. These, not Mandela, might be judged by history to have taken the nation to the depressing situation in which the bulk of the poor and the workers find themselves today.

Pratiques d'esclavage et d'asservissement des femmes en Afrique: les cas du Sénégal et de la République Démocratique du Congo

Sous la direction de Ndèye Sokhna guèye

Dakar, CODESRIA, 2013, 100 p., ISBN : 978-2-86978-559-5

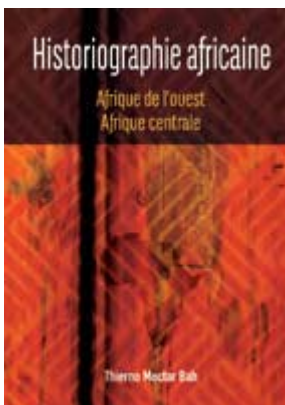
Ce livre est une sélection des communications issues du quatrième symposium sur le genre, organisé par le CODESRIA en collaboration avec le Centre de Recherche Afro-arabe au Caire en Egypte. La question de l'esclavage et de l'asservissement a été le plus souvent étudiée sous l'angle de la dynamique atlantique. Cette analyse prenait surtout en compte les différences liées à la race, à l'ethnicité, à l'âge, à la classe ou la religion. Toutefois, le rôle et la place des femmes ainsi que les hiérarchies de genre, compris dans le sens de rapports sociaux de sexe, étaient très peu abordés. Les travaux présentés dans cet ouvrage, poursuivent la réflexion de plus en plus engagée, sur l'esclavage et l'asservissement des femmes, surtout contemporains, pour en saisir la complexité et exprimer la pluralité des expériences et des contextes, notamment à travers des exemples tirés du Sénégal et de la République Démocratique du Congo. Les différentes contributions dans ce volume proposent une nouvelle production de connaissances sur la question de l'asservissement des femmes, en démontrant les logiques sociales et les systèmes de représentation qui le sous-tendent. Il en ressort une image plus complexe des interactions historiques, socio-économiques, politiques, culturelles et religieuses complexes à l'origine de la persistance de l'esclavage et de l'asservissement dans certains pays africains.



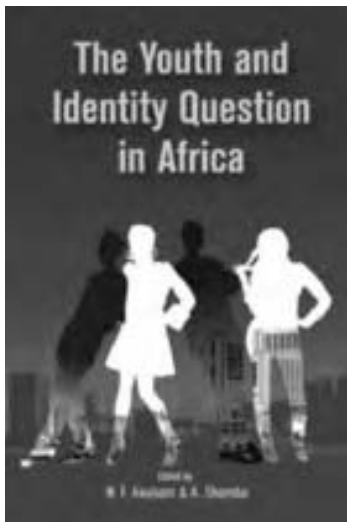
Historiographie africaine, Afrique de l'Ouest - Afrique Centrale

Thierno M. Bah

Dakar, CODESRIA, 2014, 288p. ISBN: 978-2-86978-599-1



Le contenu du manuel est avant tout la synthèse de lectures d'ouvrages variés, de revues spécialisées et de thèses qui permettent un regard à la fois panoramique et précis sur la production historique et la pratique du métier d'historien. Ce manuel est aussi une mise en cause inspirée d'un point de vue personnel, et se veut un témoignage de la génération d'historiens africains formés, dans les années 1960, au sein des nouvelles institutions universitaires créées en Afrique. Enfin, ce manuel veut être autre chose qu'un bilan ; il est un questionnement sur la manière dont l'histoire se fait et il permettra aux étudiants de comprendre le processus de production du savoir historique, en Afrique et sur l'Afrique, les conditions et modalités de cette production, les thématiques et éventuellement les controverses.



The Youth and Identity Question in Africa.

Edited by nicodemus Fru Awasom and Almon Shumba

Dakar, CODESRIA, 2014, 264p., ISBN: 978-2-86978-598-4

This book demonstrates new ways of conceptualising youth in Africa and presents African youth from different African countries as a social category that has confronted and combined the global and the local with a variegated strategy based on their particular circumstances. In essence, contributors to this volume, have reconceptualised African youth with more methodological rigour and presented them in multiple spheres as a strong social group and social symbol, and as both expressions and agents of social innovation and creativity against multiple challenges in their everyday lives, particularly against a backdrop of seismic global socio-economic transformations.

Post-Referendum Sudan: National and Regional Questions

Edited by Samson Samuel Wassara and Al-Tayib Zain Al-Abdin Mohammed

Dakar, CODESRIA, 2014, 228 p., ISBN: 978-2-86978-588-5

The fate of Sudan, by then the largest country in Africa, was clearly decided when results of the referendum vote were announced in February 2011. Policy makers, scholars and the international community began to grapple with critical issues that might arise after the independence of Southern Sudan. Particularly, this book sought to examine and analyse future relations between the two countries that emerged as consequence of the referendum result in 2011 and how their neighbours would be affected by complex relationships once Southern Sudan declared independence. Frameworks for analysis are drawn mostly from economic, political, social and peace analysis. Studies draw on historical, cultural, economic and geopolitical contexts. The book sheds light on potential explosive issues that, if badly managed, would escalate into violence and would destabilise the countries having common borders with Sudan. The studies that scholars have contributed to this book are the way forward for helping the two Sudans to cope with the results of the 2011 referendum vote.

