

# Some Thoughts on the Connection between Demography and Development Dynamics

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## Development and the sub-Saharan situation in 1998

National development levels are still largely measured in terms of GNP per capita, the weak points of which relate to the fact that:

- substantial elements of life quality (levels of health, education and nutrition) are not included;
- nor are the environmental costs of growth;
- actual purchasing power is not considered;
- nor is social inequality within the countries; and
- economic activities that are not linked to the market are insufficiently taken into account (see Stiftung Entwicklung und Frieden 1993/94, p. 54).

This has resulted in the UNDP suggestion in 1990 to apply the Human Development Index (HDI) to determine development levels. HDI covers three "substantial elements of life": longevity, education and "adequate living standards". The image of African development in the past decades is even relatively positive when calculated on an HDI basis:

- Education: Twenty-seven per cent of the African population had adopted literacy by 1960, and 56.2% by 1994 (UNDP 1997, p. 195);
- Longevity: Infant mortality dropped from 165/1,000 in 1960 to 97/1000 in 1994, and life expectancy rose by approx. 30%, from 40.1 to 51.3 years, over the same period (UNDP 1997, p. 205);
- Living standards: Purchasing-power parity (PPP)<sup>1</sup> in sub-Saharan Africa has grown from \$934 in 1960 to \$1,346 in 1992 (UNDP 1995, p. 163).

In view of such success, it may be surprising to notice that the continent's development is increasingly described in the negative - in Africa as well as abroad. In 1986, Jacques Giri referred to *L'Afrique en panne*; the German *Spiegel* magazine (January 1994) wondered whether Africa would be in need of renewed colonization; and Rupert Neudeck gave his book the title *Africa: A continent without hope?* (1985).

What can actually be leading to such "Afro-pessimism" - which is even shared by many well-meaning commentators - in spite of an improving HDI? *E+Z*, a magazine specialized in development issues, concluded (10/1992) that: "A lost decade, and another, so it seems, will follow. Africa is the continent that does not develop".

Two important reasons are conceivable to explain such pessimism:

- Africa is developing - but much more slowly than other parts of the world; this means a step backwards in view of the worldwide competition under way in the global village;
- Africa is developing - but partly at the cost of burdens for the future, i.e. with structures that are not permanently sustainable.

## AFRICA'S SLOWER/STAGNATING DEVELOPMENT

Several indicators suggest that the continent is developing more slowly, for instance:

- Decreasing GNP per capita: From 1980-1992, developing countries in general showed a 4% average annual increase in GNP per capita, whereas GNP per capita in Africa fell by 1.8% per year (UNDP 1995, p. 194);
- Decreasing share in global GNP from 2% (1970) to 1.2% (1993) (Stiftung Entwicklung und Frieden 1996, p. 158);
- Economic marginalization: The continent's share in world exports dropped from 2.4% (1980) to 1% (1989) (Nohlen and Nuscheler 1993a, p. 22);
- Insignificant success in industrial progress: In comparison to the year 1985, the index of manufacturing production reached 54% in 1970 and 123% in 1990. Both in East Asia and Africa, 9% of the population were employed in the industrial sector in 1965; by 1990-92, the figure had climbed to 15% in East Asia but shrunk to 8% in Africa (UNDP 1995, p. 216);
- Insufficient success in creating jobs: The number of jobs rose by an annual 2.1% between 1960 and 1973, and by 2.3% from 1973 to 1987 (UNDP 1993, p. 35) - a much lower rate than the population growth of 2.8% (UNDP 1995, p. 187) and the requirements arising from urban migration would suggest. In addition, the internally and externally generated concentration on raw-material exports - on less know-how-intensive products, that is - has also been responsible for increasing unemployment, in spite of increasing qualifications among the population. The continent no longer lacks highly qualified people but rather the money to finance those people's jobs.

**Table      Unemployment according to quality of education (UNDP 1993, p. 38)**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>No education</i>	<i>Primary education</i>	<i>Secondary education</i>	<i>Tertiary education</i>
Ghana	1988	3.4	7.6	13.5	14.7
Kenya	1986	13.5	15.6	22.2	5.4
Zimbabwe	1987	1.6	6.8	11.6	
Côte d'Ivoire	1985	1.0	5.2	21.7	13.7

To compare Africa and Asia is no intellectual folly. Rather, such contrasts find their everyday expression when it comes to making decisions which are mostly settled to the detriment of Africa. Many of these decisions indicate that the continent is in danger, both of failing to follow up on general trends and of losing attractiveness: whether or not enterprises decide to invest in Eastern Asia or rather in the former East bloc; Africans lay out their capital in western banks; they purchase foreign rather than domestic consumer goods; the elites prefer to be treated in Europe when they fall ill; or finally whether or not students fail to return home after finishing their studies abroad.

## AFRICA'S NON-SUSTAINABLE / STRUCTURALLY ALARMING DEVELOPMENT

A number of indicators reflect the structures that in themselves are potentially problematic in terms of African development:

- Persistently low diversification of products and commercial partners: A 90% share of commodity exports in export revenue (Nohlen and Nuscheler 1993a, p. 25), alongside the low diversification of African exports in terms of products and partners,<sup>2</sup> make African economies highly vulnerable to losses of agrarian exports on foreign exchange markets. According to the Fraser Report (quoted by Nohlen and Nuscheler 1993a, p. 24), sub-Saharan real income from commodity exports was 26% lower in 1988 than in 1980 and 35% lower than in 1970. This fact is closely connected to declining of terms of trade, to Africa's disadvantage. Compared to 1987, the terms of trade for developing countries amounted to 99% - and 104% for the industrial countries - but to a mere 88% for Africa (UNDP 1995, p. 81). To a considerable extent, this fact has to do with the insufficient diversification of African economies and their raw-material orientations.
- Financial erosion of state and economic finances:
  - Africa's debt service totaled 4.7% of its export revenue in 1970 and climbed to 21.3% by 1993 (UNDP 1993, p. 175);
  - Intensive flight of capital:<sup>3</sup> \$148 billion<sup>4</sup> = 90% of African GNP in 1991;
  - At the same time, foreign investments are stagnating.<sup>5</sup> It is also barely possible to skim off more from the local economies, as the tax share in GNP was much higher than the 1990 global average (tax shares in GNP for 1990: 24%, worldwide: 23%) (UNDP 1993, p. 187).
- Declining ability for self-maintenance: Growth of foodstuff production decreased by 4.6% between 1982 and 1990 (Nohlen and Nuscheler 1993a, p. 21) due to soil erosion, dramatically decreasing soil fertility in parts of the continent (e.g. dropping by 54% in Kordofan between 1961 and 1973; see Timberlake 1988, p. 56), various human influences, occasional cash crops, changing eating habits (consumption of food imports, such as wheat products) and armed conflicts. This has resulted in a growing dependency on imported food. Six per cent of the total foodstuff were imported in 1969/71, ballooning to 10.2% in 1988/90 (UNDP 1993, p. 214). In 1993, FAO estimated that, under normal conditions, Africa could produce 1,600-1,700 kcal per capita, i.e. 80% of the required 2,100 kcal (FAO 1993, p. 93).
- Ecologically critical phenomena:
  - Arable land: Africa is losing 0.9% of its arable land each year (UNDP 1995, p. 217), mostly because of overexploitation (e.g. insufficient fallowing seasons due to lack of fertilizers);
  - Forests: Africa is losing an annual 0.9% of woodland which is insufficiently reforested: deforesting per annum in Nigeria between 1980 and 1989: 400,000 ha, reforested: 26,000 ha; 510,000 ha destroyed in Côte d'Ivoire, 6,000 ha reforested (UNDP 1995, p. 2077).

## SOCIAL/POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN VIEW OF SLOWER PROGRESS AND NON-SUSTAINABLE STRUCTURES

- Increasing (temporary?) democratization: In most sub-Saharan countries, the cessation of the Near Eastern conflict has resulted in political liberalization, and often in multiparty systems as well.<sup>6</sup> Notwithstanding the question that these systems may or may not be

adaptable to African contexts, it is uncertain whether democracies can altogether survive the severe periods of economic disaster and mass unemployment. Already, initial signs are emerging, such as in the recent military seizures of power in Gambia, Nigeria (non-recognition of election results) and Niger, as well as increasing repression, even in Kenya, Côte d'Ivoire and other countries that were once considered as particularly "liberal".

- Increasing crime rates: Augmenting impoverishment/despondence among large groups of the population - and growing income differences between the poor and rich - have resulted in a clear rise of crime rates. Johannesburg, Lagos, Abidjan or Nairobi are presently judged to be extremely dangerous cities.
- Armed conflicts: While various year-long conflicts have faded and perhaps become permanently solved (e.g. in Mozambique, Eritrea, Angola), others have intensified (Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, i.a.). The Rwandan and Burundian crises, in particular, appear to derive from non-sustainable development (soil erosion, large-scale population pressure, etc.).<sup>7</sup> Social problems are aggravating religious conflicts to a hitherto unknown extent.<sup>8</sup>
- Retribalization: The power struggle for ever-barren resources has often resulted in increased solidarity among ethnically defined groups, which is in part utilized in election campaigns (e.g. in Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria).

## EXPLANATIONS FOR RELATIVE STAGNATION

What has brought about such relative stagnation in Africa? And what is making it so difficult for the continent to keep pace with global competitiveness? Are the Europeans the only ones to blame, on account of the brutal systems of European slavery and colonial interventions, as Walter Rodney suggests in *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*? Is it the fault of corrupt and dictatorial regimes, or rather a deficient will to develop, as Alexis Kabou (1993) claims? Or is the periphery given little chance by an unfair world trade, such as out-dated dependency theory once implied?<sup>9</sup>

For sure, slavery and colonialism were in many respects excessively destructive and traumatizing. But why is the Far Eastern region, parts of which went through similar experiences, developing on a completely different scale and so much more dynamically in spite of having been subject to similar global economic frame conditions? To explain such problems, African studies cannot but take a glance at Asia and investigate what structural peculiarities in the two large regions could have influenced such extremely different reactions to quite comparable challenges. The differences, already prevailing in precolonial times, include the following:

	<i>Sub-Saharan Africa</i>	<i>East &amp; Southeast Asia</i>
Population density	mostly very low	mostly very high
Written culture	not extensively applied	functional almost everywhere
Formation of states	only in few regions	mostly long-standing traditions
Ethnic structure of population	mostly no extremely dominant ethnicity	mostly one extremely dominant ethnicity
Innovations	predominantly in the fields of society and music	numerous innovations in technical, economic and political fields
Agriculture	predominantly fallowland economy	predominantly intense-land economy

Utterly different initial demographic situations are accountable for some of the above contrasts. The following is an attempt to show that Africa - on account of its precolonial demographic situation (comparatively low population density) - did not have to achieve high standards of innovation in such fields (economy, technology, politics) which have since become particularly significant in terms of competitiveness in today's global economy. The

question is to demonstrate that innovativeness is not a feature of culture but rather of fundamental socioeconomic and demographic conditions. The domain and speed of innovations are mostly determined by external constraints.

The following pages shall attempt to substantiate these hypotheses in statistical terms. The data underlying the figures presented are included in the annexed Comparison between indicators from sub-Saharan Africa and East/Southeast Asia, as well as those directly connected to the statistical figures.

## Comments on a once sparsely populated continent - An essay

Now, why do large empires emerge more frequently in some world regions than in others? This question has long been on many thinkers' minds.<sup>10</sup> Two thousand five hundred years ago, Heraclitus considered wars taking place at the outset of state formation as "fathers to all things". War does not, however, automatically result in states or other large units. Carneiro's theory of "environmentally conditioned delimitedness" (1973, pp. 160-175) attempts to show precisely when war becomes a trigger to form states. He argues that successful precolonial state-founding processes always showed two characteristics: Those states had arable land at their disposal<sup>11</sup> and were fenced off by mountains, oceans, deserts i.a. For instance, when groupings were defeated in the sparsely populated Amazon region, they were able to escape subjugation and tributariness by fleeing into unpopulated areas. Settlement units were thus scattered all over the Amazon. The situation was different in the "narrow valleys on the shores of Peru":

The villages, too, endeavored to grow. Since, in all likelihood, independent villages disintegrate when growing, as long as there is land for the splinter communities, such villages doubtlessly did split from time to time ... until all land was used in the valley that could be cultivated without difficulty. At this point of time, two changes emerged in agricultural technology: The cultivation of farmed land was intensified, and new unexploited land was made productive by setting up terraces and by irrigation. But the pace at which new arable land was created could not keep up with the increasing demand. There can be no doubt that villages were struggling among themselves to acquire land, even before land shortage ever became so acute that irrigation was systematically introduced ... With an increasing population pressure on the land, the main reason for warfare shifted from revengefulness to the necessity to acquire land ... In Peru, this alternative [of flight] was no longer accessible to the inhabitants of conquered villages. Mountains, deserts or seas - not to speak of neighboring villages - hindered escape on all sides ... The price of survival was political subordination to the victorious. Such subordination mostly resulted in obligations to pay tribute or taxes in kind which the conquered villages could only raise by producing more foodstuff. But subordination sometimes brought about a far-reaching loss of autonomy for the conquered villages - the incorporation into a political unit that was dominated by the victor ... The way of development in Peru [was] unmistakable: It started with numerous and simple, scattered and autonomous communities and ended with one single, gigantic, complex and centralized empire [the Inca Empire] (Carneiro 1973, pp. 161ff).

Carneiro has made it clear that the limitedness of living space is fundamentally crucial for larger political systems to unfold. From the rise of Europe, starting in the 15th century, Paul Kennedy (1991, p. 13) has shown, furthermore, how the competitive situation of empires mutually threatening each other encouraged military, economic and technical innovations:

At the beginning of the 16th century, it was not at all obvious that the latter region [Europe] was determined to eclipse all others. Yet, however impressive and well organized some of these oriental empires seemed to be in comparison to Europe, they all suffered from a centralized authority which insisted on uniform religious and social practices - not only with regard to state religions but also in the commercial and arms-development sectors. The lack of such a supreme authority in Europe, together with armed rivalries between the empires and city states, stimulated a continuous search for military improvements which interacted productively with more recent technological and commercial progress. In competition-oriented European societies, there were less obstacles for innovation than elsewhere. So those societies moved along an increasingly steep spiral of economic growth and growing military effectiveness which, in the course of time, was to let them overshadow the rest of the world.

## THE PRECOLONIAL SITUATION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Most of Africa was very sparsely populated until recently. The continent's population in 1900 has been estimated as having totaled 120 to 130 million - or four individuals per square kilometer. Even though one third of the continent consists of deserts, and another third experiences unsteady rainfall, the ratio of population density to productive land was still very low. There are several reasons for this fact, among them the presence of several tropical maladies (i.a. malaria, sleeping sickness, sickle-cell anemia), the loss of millions of human lives due to slave trade, etc. Sub-Saharan Africa had probably been sparsely populated already before the slave-trading period. Only seldom, e.g. in Southeastern Nigeria, were population densities somewhat higher. Tetzlaff suggests the following explanation for precolonialism in Africa (1991, p. 24):<sup>12</sup>

In the first phase - precolonial times - diverse ethnicities lived quite autonomously within a given political or cultural region - and they lived there together. For sure, wars were waged for pasturage, cattle, human labor, prestige and territorial expansion, but the basic pattern of interethnic communication can be considered as the more or less voluntary exchange of goods utilized in a complementary fashion. Valid principles of exchange included mutual benefits, reciprocity, voluntariness and direct negotiations in case of conflicts, without bringing in politically neutral (or even alien) third-party authorities. Each ethnoreligious group, inasmuch as it was politically organized and not conquered by neighbors, became active as a relatively autonomous polity; it was able to reproduce through its own labor. Even though long-distance trade (gold, salt, cloth, fruit) played a role - in feathering the nests of leading clans, that is - there was no such dependency on utilizing domestic labor, as is typical today, by selling at the world-market level.

Population growth also seems to have fostered the formation of hegemonies in precolonial Africa, as Ibn Khaldun, the medieval Arab historian and traveler once discussed with regard to the expansion of the Mali empire (13th-15th century): "Plus tard la population de Melli prit

un tel accroissement qu'elle se rendit maîtresse de toute cette région et subjuguait les Noirs des contrées voisines" (Ibn Khaldoun 1969, vol. II, p. 110).

As the Europeans completed the process of colonizing a large part of the continent by the end of the last century, they were confronted with few hegemonies and numerous relatively small political structures. Africa's conquest was encouraged by two hundred years of deterioration in the 17th and 18th centuries, but the number of large empires was rather insignificant already before that time.<sup>13</sup> Several large empires waxed and waned, leaving but insignificant marks on later-day empires, e.g. Great Zimbabwe. Others cherished more continuity: The Ghana Empire (7th-11th century) merged into the Mali empire (13th-15th century), in turn to pass into the Songhai Empire (15th-17th century). Slave trade, practiced by the Asante and Fon coastal cultures, had an additionally crippling effect upon those states and contributed to their downfall. Large empires and processes of urbanization alike<sup>14</sup> were mostly concentrated in West Africa.

According to Carneiro's and Kennedy's theories, the fact of underpopulation in precolonial times thus had the following negative impacts upon today's status quo:

- The formation of states and hegemonies was impeded to a considerable extent, as endangered peoples found space to escape to and avoid subjugation; and
- large empires emerged successively within individual regions - rather than simultaneously - and the lack of competition thus crucially reduced the necessity to innovate in arms technology, economy and technology.

## POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF UNDERPOPULATION

The relatively low-level necessity and possibility of emerging hegemonies - together with innovation in various fields, such as armament technology - has encouraged destructive external influences and impeded postcolonial political development. This is illustrated by the influence, deriving from a lack of hegemonies, exerted upon various decisive epochs of African history.

### *Lack of hegemonies and slave trade*

Slave trade cost Africa up to 8 million lives and seriously hampered its progress. It was probably facilitated by:

- Lacking identification with enslaved peoples: Due to the lack of a jointly construed history, the absence of hegemonies only led to little identification with neighboring ethnicities whose members could then more easily be sold as slaves;
- Little protection from enslavement due to deficient hegemonies: Small neighboring peoples who became victims of enslavement often lived in a "no man's land" as long as they were not protected against slavers by a hegemony;
- Frailty of manufacture in Africa: Individuals with interchangeable know-how are easier to replace and were more probably sold as slaves. In this connection, too, Africa's role as a commodity supplier had devastating consequences.

### *Lack of hegemonies and colonization*

Europeans were able to conquer Africa quite easily because they were faced with empires that were large but few in number, barely united, inferior in terms of armament technology (due to a lack of inner-African competition), and in part weakened by internal conflicts. Only one tenth of Africa had been colonized at the time the Berlin Colonial Conference convened in 1884/85, when the procedures according to which the continent was to be shared out were

decided. The remainder was subdued within a mere fifteen years - a historical process of unique velocity which can only be explained by deficient political unity in Africa.

*Lack of hegemonies and postcolonial formation of states*

Hegemonies allow for increased safety of travel and encourage professional specialization by enlarging markets. This circumstance is favorable to individual mobility, the development of urban and rural centers, the formation of large-scale *linguae francae* (and other languages), and, consequently, ethnic mixing. For sure, Africa's lack of hegemonies is in part responsible for its wealth of ethnic groupings.

The guidelines for the division of Africa established at the Berlin Conference resulted in colonial administrative units and borderlines that disintegrated many ethnicities. Most often imperceptibly, these colonial structures merged into postcolonial nations.

Upon arrival of the Europeans, the colonizers found few hegemonies on which to base their administrative structures. When they left some 60-70 years later, the areas which they had occupied had not yet been formed into nations with which the citizens could identify themselves.<sup>15</sup>

On the occasion of its first conference in 1963, the Organization of African Unity decided to maintain the colonial borders for reasons of stability and not endeavor African restructuring. The question remains whether it would have been possible to create ethnically homogeneous, and at once larger, administrative units with which the populations could now identify themselves.

Ethnically homogeneous populations, such as those typical of the Far East, can only be found in few large African regions. Most countries are characterized by several equally strong ethnicities.

The situation is often deceiving, even where larger ethnic homogeneity appears to be the case. The unification of African peoples has often presented itself in terms of external delimitation rather than internal unity, e.g. among the Somalis. Kenya's Luo or Sudan's Dinka populations could only consider themselves as unities after colonial times - and they called themselves differently up to then. The 100,000 Samos in northern Burkina Faso speak 4-5 languages, were never historically united, and they were locked in a state of permanent feud before colonialism.<sup>16</sup> Should one nation have been founded here with a population of 100,000, or rather four, each with 25,000 inhabitants? It is difficult to imagine solutions that would have provided the necessary economic (size and/or home market) and political facilities (acceptability) to survive. Yet some medium-size constructs would perhaps have proved possible. The Empires of Dahomey, Benin, Buganda, the Hausa States, the Amhara and Asante Empires, etc., could also have been set up as nation-states. The larger part of Africa, however, would have consisted of hundreds of small states facing less political crises, at the beginning, than enormous economic difficulties which would have eventually become political. Since precolonial interethnic borders were rarely established, frequent border disputes over resources would have arisen among those small states, unable to survive.

Somalia's frontier wars with Ethiopia over the Ogaden, populated by Somalis, are examples of conflict that originated in borders drawn up by the colonial forces. Today's civil war, however, has been caused by a lack of precolonial authorities and administrative structures across the country.<sup>17</sup>

The problems of state formation seem less crucial in some cases, such as in Swaziland<sup>18</sup> where relatively large ethnic homogeneity has coincided with later-day hegemonies.

The division of peoples into various nations has not necessarily resulted in ethnic conflicts. The Maninkas live in various West African countries, and often on both sides of a borderline (Mali / Côte d'Ivoire, Mali/Senegal, Mali/Guinea). Yet their division never was a

real problem, perhaps on account of their being accepted in all of those countries. Ethnic conflict seems to emerge more frequently when "disintegrated" peoples lack the feeling of sufficient political/economic participation, such as the Tuareg groups in Mali or Niger. But this certainly has to do with the ability of the local administration to provide all its peoples with approximately equal codetermination. Félix Houphouët-Boigny, for example, was responsible for exemplary ethnic policies in Côte d'Ivoire, letting its sixty peoples share the power in a relatively balanced manner.

## POPULATION AND POLITICS IN MODERN AFRICA

### *Fragility of newly founded states*

Already before the first coups d'état in Africa, Finer indicated the immediate connection between the developmental degree of political culture - in terms of the population's "adherence" (*attachement*) to constitutional institutions, and the probability of attempted coups (quoted in Nuscheler and Ziemer 1980, p. 132). This lack of citizens' identification with their countries and leaders has resulted in numerous border disputes, civil wars, military coups and repression. Between 1965 and 1991, 152 successful or attempted coups were triggered in sub-Saharan Africa. In contrast to the Far East (correlation: -0.40), no correlation could be established between the African states' ethnic inhomogeneity and coup probability, possibly due to the lack of precolonial hegemonies, even in ethnically more homogeneous countries.

In Africa, however, the correlation is relatively less significant between the proportions of GNP and a decreasing probability of putsch attempts ( $r=-0.21$ ). While even larger Far Eastern countries suffer much less danger of coups ( $r=-0.40$ ), larger African countries are even slightly more endangered due to their greater ethnic inhomogeneity ( $r=0.06$ ).

### *Inanimate countries void of checks and balances*

Many of those countries born in postcolonial times first existed as mere notions, lacking a soul. The low level of identification with these artificial constructs frequently showed in deficient feelings of accountability on the part of many political rulers (who did not fail to exploit the state) as well as many of their subjects (who failed to call the former to account). In this connection, Tetzlaff (1991, p. 23) has suggested that

... The African "soft state" is characterized by deficient predictability and discipline in all political matters, as well as a chronic lack of publicly accessible know-how and resources to enforce authority. Laws and decrees are ignored (without consequences for those who violate them), bureaucratic processes are disturbed by incompetent politicians, the professional ethics of government officials is thus offended, those officials demoralized, and the utilization of public means is not regulated.

This lack of identification may have facilitated the "looting" of states.<sup>19</sup> Mobutu, Houphouët-Boigny and other leaders literally called out to their citizens: "Enrichissez-vous!" (Get rich!). "L'état, ce n'est pas moi!", as a variation on a familiar quotation could have gone. Meager state resources were often abused of overtly for purposes of personal gain, as Mobutu admitted later without the slightest feeling of shame.<sup>20</sup>

When I had to travel, I would tell my advisor that I needed one million dollars. My advisor would tell the Prime Minister to pass on two million dollars. The Prime

Minister would tell the Minister of Finance to give him three million dollars. The Minister of Finance would give the Director of the Central Bank the order to hand over four million dollars. The Director would withdraw five million dollars. And I would be given one million dollars. That's it!

I was personally surprised, on my first visits to Africa, to notice how little the local elites' wealth was taken into account. Some Africans belonged, and still belong, to the most affluent people on earth (e.g. Houphouët-Boigny or, until recently, Mobutu), yet only whites were considered to be rich. For a very long time, there was barely any call that wealthy locals should make a larger contribution to solve the nation's problems. The connection between some individuals' extreme richness and many others' extreme poverty was hardly noticed then, as if there were no common resources whatsoever. This has definitely changed since.

It is possible that African elites would have less exploited their countries had there been a larger number of wealthy individuals in the precolonial past. Long-standing rule tends to develop a specific relationship between the people and the mighty, a kind of unwritten social contract that differs from culture to culture. An attack on civil rights in the USA would be comparable to extremely risky action taken by rulers in China. Ideologies, such as Confucianism or Protestantism, develop both from this special relationship between rulers and their subjects and from the abundance or shortage of resources and other socioeconomic conditions. Such ideologies, which Max Weber and other writers regarded as the foundations of economic success, probably follow social dynamics rather than preceding them, whereas social dynamics is here defined as a change in the people's mind.

Both ideologies and religion are subject to continual selection. Whatever fails to offer answers to certain groups of people in given situations - or what does not correspond to the situation in those people's mind - is discarded. Confucianism has continued to prosper and assert itself because the necessity to give priority to society over individuals was recognized as the essential attitude for social survival.

## POPULATION DENSITY AND LINGUISTIC / CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The self-sufficient modes of production and settlement, which were predominant in Africa at one time, reinforced the identity of small groups and brought about large cultural and linguistic diversity. Some 800 to 2,000 different languages are spoken on the continent - the largest world-wide density of languages per inhabitant. Regardless of ethnological and linguistic enthusiasm for such cultural wealth, such diversity seriously complicated the beginnings of African countries. Nigeria has about 400 languages, and the small country of Gambia 15 for a population of one million. This makes it virtually impossible to do without the former colonial languages as official media and *linguae francae*.

People in Africa acquire communicative competence in several languages: one or two family languages, one for the marketplace, one for traveling, etc. Most of the Kambas in Nairobi speak Kikuyu, Swahili, English and Kamba; the Kanuris in Maiduguri communicate in Hausa, Arabic, English alongside their native tongue. Even though such multilingualism may seem impressive, the scope of those linguistic skills is mostly limited, and the energy used to acquire them could be invested differently.

Very few countries, Somalia amongst others, show one local language that the majority of the population understands and that can be applied at all levels of state. Elsewhere, two or more languages are equally powerful, and choosing one to be the national language has resulted in civil strife (in Nigeria, for example). It would appear practically unfeasible - in

both economic and administrative terms - to produce educational material in twenty different languages.<sup>21</sup> Almost all African schoolchildren are therefore educated in foreign (extra-African) languages, in spite of the corresponding disadvantages. For the most part, decrees, information, newspapers and brochures are published in colonial languages. But since only minorities are fluent in those languages, the information contained in such material is inaccessible to most people. This decelerates development dynamics by aggravating the autonomous search for better solutions. A gap also remains between the citizens and state in terms of understanding the colonial language, since emotions are much less easily expressed in a foreign language, and the people are thus less easily mobilized.

Hegemonies and/or stable living conditions are certainly beneficial to the development of *linguae francae*, since they foster mobility and exchange between people. In spite of colonial languages being introduced as national languages, precolonial *linguae francae* have been able to gain in importance in postcolonial times. For many millions of migrant workers, Hausa and Mandekan<sup>22</sup> in West Africa, or Swahili in East Africa, have become the most preferable contact languages. This is bound to continue and may, in some years time, allow for the use of further African tongues as national languages. At the same time, the extinction of more and more small linguistic variants has long been noticeable in Africa.

The relative degree of ethnic and linguistic homogeneity in other regions of the world is probably the consequence of historical developments and partially forced fusions. Among the peoples of Europe, surnames are often the only way to know which peoples once merged to the German, French or Austrian identities. In the 19th century, members of various and more closely interrelated ethnicities united in Swaziland and today consider themselves as Swazi. The same happened all over sub-Saharan Africa. Rapid urbanization in the past decades (5.1%) has contributed to dissolve ethnic boundaries, now indicated by a fast increase in interethnic marriages.<sup>23</sup>

Without the creation of colonial states, Africa's ethnic diversity would supposedly have been even greater. For political reasons, many peoples who conceived of themselves as different discovered a common identity with others. Others were only created "with force" by the colonial powers.<sup>24</sup> In Niger and Nigeria, for instance, this has in part aggravated prevailing conflicts.

## POPULATION DENSITY AND DOMINANCE OF ORAL LITERATURE

Africa has brought forth thirteen written, literary languages which have been little disseminated as yet, perhaps with the exception of Amharic and Ge'ez in Ethiopia. Underdevelopment, the relative self-sufficiency of ethnic groups, and lack of hegemonies lowered the need for widely applied techniques of documentation and formal agreements. This relates to the fact that the more autonomously people were living, the less important the role of treaties; and the smaller the societies, the better social control replaced formal control based on written documents. Therefore, it was more important in Africa to develop communicative techniques that could serve in emergency cases to quickly transmit information over large distances (e.g. the speaking drums frequently used in wartime). With the exception of the Hausa or Amhara ethnicities, African history had always been handed down orally. The lack of applied written cultures may have had an impeding influence on development, such as suggested by Uwe Simson (1991, p. 148):

Being reduced to writing has the same meaning for an entire culture as introducing money has in economy, i.e. a spectacular increase of efficiency by way of an

"emancipation of action from the immediate moment" (Max Weber), together with an expansion of the spatial and temporal framework as a precondition for the polynomial chains of action which Norbert Elias has repeatedly identified as the feature of complex converging-action societies.

In addition, literary cultures are also bound to a specific kind of democratization of knowledge. Even a revolutionist of the system can gain access to higher forms of knowledge, while he is excluded from comparable forms under oral traditions. Transferring knowledge to the young in secret societies is often linked to their subjugation to the old.<sup>25</sup>

#### *Dominance of oral literature and identity conflicts*

The process of becoming colonized is tantamount to a crushing defeat in war. Since a dominating class must at least guarantee adequate food supply, security and independence to its subjects, endured colonization is accompanied by devaluation of that class, its values and potentials. In Africa, identity conflicts and lack of confidence in indigenous cultures are found in many peoples and can be put down to "mental colonization". However, colonization did not always result in comparable losses of self-esteem. In 1836, the British governor Macaulay wrote that:

No Hindu who has enjoyed an English education will remain seriously attached to his religion. I am firmly convinced ... that thirty years after our educational concepts have been realized, no single idolater will be left in the respectable classes of Bengal ... (quoted in Ferdowsi 1992, pp. 12f).

While Hinduism is very much alive - and practiced by the elite in public and with great pride - most educated Africans tend to consider their traditional religions as backward.<sup>26</sup> Why is this so?

After losing wars, the leading strata in societies are devalued in both written and oral cultures. On the other hand, fundamentalism is more likely to emerge in written cultures.<sup>27</sup> In contrast to oral societies, the "losers" generations are functionally separated from the transmitters of the (glorious) past. Thus, the reputation of the past does not suffer from the devalued leading stratum, since one's own culture can be shown as superior or equal on the basis of written history, famous army commanders or artists: "Today's generation is useless, but our ancestors were grand". Fundamentalism is perhaps only possible on account of such a very separation. As negative, or even fascistic, as fundamentalism may turn out to be, its impact on cultural self-esteem can be positively stabilizing to some extent. Fundamentalism may perhaps represent more a feature of written than oral cultures. In the latter, "losers" generations mostly transmit knowledge pertaining to previous generations and history. With their defeat, their own history and culture are devalued, as their opinions have attracted mistrust and other accesses to tradition are lacking. Most probably, however, this diminishes respect for one's own culture.<sup>28</sup>

Oral societies in other parts of the world - such as the indigenous peoples of North and South America, the Papuas in New Guinea, or the Australian aborigines - often seem to show characteristics similar to those of all too many Africans: essential identity conflicts, resignation, occasional alcoholism, etc.<sup>29</sup>

The Mauka ethnicity in Côte d'Ivoire has a particular concept for an especially beautiful tomato: twàabu-tàmata ("European tomato"), not simply tàmata. The word twàabu is prefixed to every successful (cultivated) product. "European" goods are proprietary items and stand for quality, and African ones for second-rate products.

How many billions of dollars, and how many millions of jobs, has Africa been deprived of because European bicycles are regarded as superior, or foodstuff imported from the West seen as more modern, thus superseding African products (e.g. wheat replacing millet)? Or because the West is to be outdone in terms of status symbols - the cathedral of Yamoussoukro, the ice rink in Abidjan, or Gbadolite in Congo/Zaire - rather than economic output? Or because European suits are better accepted in many African countries than the local togas, and because people who sport such garments obviously need air conditioners?

It is often claimed that Africa has been producing what it does not consume, and vice versa, quite differently from the successful East and Southeast Asian countries where astonishing economic dynamics are linked to cultural chauvinism and pride for one's own culture. Many Japanese consumers refuse foreign rice which they consider as inferior to their own and are ready to pay much more in return for local rice.<sup>30</sup> The lack of pride in their own products exhibited by many Africans has a considerable share in the continent's economic problems.

## POPULATION DENSITY AND ECONOMY

With reference to 19th-century Southeast Africa, Nuscheler and Ziemer (1980, p. 17) have argued that

... As long as they [the peoples] were not exposed to population pressure and increasing heteronomy until the late 19th century, as long as their living spaces were sparsely inhabited by comparison, and thus relatively isolated, there was no need nor possibility to further develop their form of organization based on subsistence farming, nor to break it down by expanding their trade activities. They produced what they needed to live. Larger economic or social differences failed to emerge, mostly because the people had free access to land, the most important means of production. And since trading activities were geared to ensure their basic subsistence, and did not offer an incentive to expand production, those activities failed to become the starting point for specialization and social differentiation. Thus, the basic structure in those societies was egalitarian.

The unequal barter of goods between Europe and Africa (finished products for raw material) is often put down to global economic frame conditions. However, such exchange dates from precolonial times, when Africa delivered commodities and received overexpensive finished products from Europe.<sup>31</sup> In the 9th and 10th centuries, Egyptian merchants visiting the Ghana Empire offered the following products for sale (Ki-Zerbo 1981, p. 112): wool, cotton, silk and crimson goods, copper rings, blue pearls, salt, dates and figs. In exchange, they received gold dust, ivory, rubber and slaves. Ki-Zerbo has quoted Abbot Demanet with regard to early European-African trade:

Glass jewelry of all types was also required in all slave-trading stations. That was the cheapest kind of goods to negotiate with and the one that ensured the highest profit ... Much profit was also made with red-grounded handkerchiefs, both in trading captives and bartering the country's gold ... The slavers demanded furs, rubber, ivory, gold and especially Negroes for such poor-quality European goods ... This applied to barter where the blacks delivered precious products, such as gold, ivory and human beings, to obtain ridiculous or dangerous produce. Pigafetta (Description du royaume de Congo,

Paris 1963) is quoted as remarking that "to buy an old boat, one hands over an elephant tusk" (1981, p. 223).

In spite of Ki-Zerbo's complaint over unequal exchange, precolonial Africa already appears to have lagged very much behind Europe in economic terms. How else could an "old boat" represent such a high value? Here, overrated manufacture (from Europe) was obviously exchanged for (African) raw material, including human beings. Had African manufacture reached a comparable level, the law of supply and demand would have prevented most glass pearls or boats from ever making such equivalent amounts. Ki-Zerbo has probably underestimated the rationality displayed by the African rulers and merchants who agreed to such business. They were well aware that they were dealing with low-quality goods which nevertheless had some market value.<sup>32</sup>

Anthony Hopkins (1973, p. 76) has attributed the weakness of local trade in Africa to the size of its markets. Those markets were too small in terms of consumers and purchasing power, and their size prevented the introduction of cost-reducing innovations and more intensive specialization. Underpopulation further hampered market growth because of dispersed settlements and strong tendencies toward local self-sufficiency. Low-scale economic differentiation was also shown in the unevenly developed extent of local trade. In this respect, the West African Mande, the Hausa and very few other ethnic groups provided for dynamics and complexity. It is thus characteristic that immigrant groups would fill such a "gap in the market", still frequently dominated by small and medium-size enterprises run by Indians in East and South Africa, Lebanese in West Africa or Arabs on the East African coast.

## POPULATION DENSITY AND AGRICULTURE

### *Agricultural techniques and attitudes*

In some parts of today's Tanzania and the Empire of Zimbabwe, intensive terracing was already commonplace in precolonial times. More densely populated areas are still marked by the environmentally beneficial form of mixed agriculture, simultaneously cultivating several useful plants that supply the soil with, or extract from it, various nutrients. Except for some river basins and volcanic highlands, however, fallow agriculture was predominant, facilitated by the low density of population. For the most part, fertilizers and the search for optimal forms of fertilizing do not apply to this form of cultivation. It used to be possible to survive - and to feed an ever larger number of individuals - without increasingly exploiting the soils each year. Whenever the population increased, new fields were laid out. Only 4% of the Sahel soils were intensively cultivated by the mid-1980s. In 1982, FAO estimated that, over the past two decades, one fifth of agricultural surplus production in the developing countries had been brought in by expanding cultivated land, against four fifths by increasing productivity. In the Sahel region, this had quite exclusively been achieved by expanding the cultivated land (Giri 1983, p. 89). The same author has indicated that the per capita rate of cereal production in the Sahel amounts to one fourth of China's 2,000 kg (1983, p. 88). Typical Sahel soils, cultivated with traditional methods, can only feed up to 40 people per square kilometer, and this limit has long been reached in many areas. Taking into account the high level of population pressure, the necessary periods of fallow can no longer be respected, resulting in the loss of soil nutrients and dramatic soil erosion.

In more densely populated areas of the world, such as the Far East and Europe, people had for centuries been forced to generate an increasing output to ensure survival. Millions of Europeans died of starvation in the 14th and 15th centuries, as agriculture underwent a shift

from fallow to intensive production. This latter method required at least one additional month of work each year and was to disadvantage other, especially social domains. Such conversions - forcing people to temporarily invest much more labor to gain the same output - have hardly ever been carried out without necessity. Europe simply had no other alternative.

It is conceivable that a switch-over from fallow to intensive agriculture can indeed generate a tremendous change in attitudes: Year by year, people engaged in intensive production have to extract more and more from their soils. They thus go beyond the borders set by God, as it were, convincing themselves that they, and not only God, are the ones to take their own destiny into hand. They can develop a more strongly active, hands-on tendency. In extensive agriculture, people have less possibilities to determine the outcome of their crops, and efficiency is less differentiated from inefficiency. Those producers tend to minimize their input and employ their remaining energy in social matters. With intensive agriculture, people have to develop an output-maximizing mentality in order to feed ever more people from the same piece of land. This attitude presents considerable advantages in a globally competitive society.

### *The concept of "unlimited resources"*

Until recently, Africa was quite sparsely populated, featuring a dense fauna, and soil erosion was practically unknown. Old missionaries living in Kiembara in northern Burkina Faso have now been telling that, fifty years ago, they could still hear lions roar every day. This is surprising, taken into account that spotting a rabbit there today is a rare and quite delightful experience. Any given European forest has denser animal populations than most of West Africa.

People in Africa must have fostered the feeling until recently that the resources at their disposal were virtually unlimited: One could migrate to other areas whenever soil fertility decreased; populations of game were reproducing faster than the human need for meat; stocks of fish were practically inexhaustible. And since the resources appeared so abundant, the idea of preservation and maintenance was little developed - contrary to what "living in harmony with nature" may suggest.

Needless to say, the fact is indisputable that many of the environmental problems in Africa have been considerably aggravated by European intervention. The introduction of monocultures has resulted in a one-sided exhaustion of soils and the "extinction" of many locally adapted sorts of wheat. Modern methods of cultivation, not optimized for African soils, have often required to level down the surface vegetation - thus facilitating soil erosion due to wind and rainfall - as the layers of soil covering the African continent are exceptionally thin and vulnerable. Western hunters and trophy collectors have exterminated a number animal species. Well-intended boring of wells to increase water supplies has led to a multiplication of herds and overgrazing. But would Africa have otherwise been spared large-scale environmental damages without European influences?

"Third-world" publications are full of pictures giving an idealistic reference to an alleged harmony between "primitive" peoples and nature. Natural resources are certainly protected by religion, tabus and other conventions, yet my records of seven years spent in small African villages abound with contradicting examples.

The Maasai, the famous shepherds of East Africa, refrain from hunting game, since their religion teaches them to reject meat other than beef as inferior in quality. They hardly bag wild animals, with the exception of lions which are a threat to their cattle.<sup>33</sup> Can one speak of these norms as stricter in terms of nature conservancy?

The answer is No. Deficient attitudes toward protection emerge once nature - in the framework of its norm system - is suddenly used in a culturally uncommon manner. Thanks to

their knowledge of nature, many Maasais become poachers and sell elephant tusks and wild animal furs. No Western influence has ever aroused their wish to show off their purchase of western consumer goods in their villages. They usually invest their income from selling trophies to expand their herds of cattle in order to win prestige according to their own social norms.<sup>34</sup>

In 1989, the chief of a Bambara village, located in a Malian region practically void of game,<sup>35</sup> confided his greatest wish to me: to acquire a long-range rifle. I asked hunters from that village how they would react should they ever come across a roe deer with fawns and whether they would spare the animals. Their answer was negative, because they thought they would gain "twice as much meat". It should be mentioned that I saw only one deer and 4 or 5 rabbits during my two-month stay in that village, including everyday walks through the bushland.

In spite of the government's warnings, the Bozo fishermen in that country use such finely woven nets that the rivers are robbed of all young fish. As long as the Bozo population was less numerous, the stock of fish could regenerate. Due to lacking protective techniques, however, the considerable population increase in the course of the past decades has resulted in a strong decline of fishing output.

The land used by the Samo ethnicity in Burkina Faso is marked by extreme soil erosion. Regardless of this fact, a Dutch specialist in development assistance, a friend of mine, was desperately unsuccessful in giving local farmers an idea of soil-protection measures. After five years of work, he had convinced only four farmers to apply such measures as ground undulations in order to prevent rainwater from running off too rapidly.

Now, what has brought about this lack of concern for resource protection and preservation? When the Bamako museum at one time exhibited a secret mask of the Komo association in the mid-1970s, protest was so loud that the object had to be removed. Should comparable protest not also be voiced with regard to deforested jungles, perhaps with the exception of the people living in them?<sup>36</sup>

Lloyd Timberlake (1988, p. 104) has identified the reason for this lacking resource protection as being the absence of land property:

In some countries, such as Burkina Faso, the land is reallocated every few years, effectively destroying any incentive for farmers to invest in the long-term enterprise of tree-growing (or in other soil and water conservation efforts).

Furthermore, the lack of concern for preservation could be connected with the notion of "unlimited resources". Giri (1983) has described the general African view of life and belief in unlimited natural resources. Just a few years ago, Africa's population was but one third of what it is today. A small population with a low level of technology could afford to make generous use of environmental resources: not to replace felled trees with new ones - or not to protect animal and plant species from extermination (e.g. by introducing close seasons or similar measures) - in order to let nature take time to renew its resources. But once a population grows rapidly, century-old traditions often have a destructive impact.<sup>37</sup> In a first phase of change, one's own share of the blame for destruction is hardly perceived, seemingly because of the velocity of such change. Bozo fishermen believe that the Selingué dam is the reason for the absence of fish, and the Bambaras believe that all the wild animals in their region migrated to Kita. Both groups hope that previous conditions will reemerge without a change in their behavior and tending activities, and they only realize the consequences of their doing to a limited degree.

Yet, at times, such connections are more than obvious. The Mauka hunters in Côte d'Ivoire have for centuries been setting fire to napier grass in order to chase the animals living there. For the first time in the country's history, conflagrations ensued in 1983, since the humid forests - once preventing such forest fires from spreading - have largely disappeared due to human intervention.

I wonder whether a specific idea of preservation can develop before a dramatic destruction of nature, endangering one's own basis of livelihood, is painfully experienced. In Tullnerfeld, a region of Austria where I grew up, much woodland was felled at the beginning of the century to intensify agriculture. The result, of course, was that wind and rainfall increased soil erosion considerably. Characteristic shelter belts were planted only several years thereafter - an example of experiences acquired after playing with fire.

Awareness concerning resource limitations is rare in many regions of Africa. People often feel that environmental destruction would pass eventually, reminiscent of our ways of dealing with the ozone hole. Recall how Thomas Sankara tried to bring development even into the smallest villages of Burkina Faso. He suggested that all villagers meet once a week to perform reforestation activities or build dikes together. In Kiembara - in the northern region of that country, where ecocide is particularly serious (well water is 80m deep, with large-scale soil erosion) - I personally experienced how two villagers discussed such intensive pressure to cooperate and compared it to forced labor under European rule, clearly not taking the situation very seriously.

Societies tend to act according to escape mechanisms when their usual living standards can only be maintained by way of substantial innovations and labor-intensive care and protection activities. Such tendencies become manifest, for example, in increased labor migration to secure living standards. Innovation is only carried out once all possibilities to escape are obstructed, i.e. all other alternatives are exhausted to solving the problem laboriously. These last resorts have increasingly been blocked in the past decades: Areas that have not been used for agriculture can barely be found to shift cultivation; urban labor markets are long saturated; and traditional host countries, such as Côte d'Ivoire, are increasingly closing their borders to labor migrants. At the same time, donor countries are suffering from budgetary problems that are leading to stagnating aid.

Wherever there was no way to evade change, however, Africans have always reacted innovatively. A study carried out in northern Cameroon<sup>38</sup> has indicated how one African people indeed developed the necessary, intensive methods of cultivation and environmental protection to facilitate higher population density. The Kirdi ethnicity live in the country's mountainous regions and for centuries were virtually surrounded by slave-hunting peoples - a situation that did not allow for emigration. They were thus forced to develop techniques to facilitate the survival of a large population in that area. Today, 200 people per square kilometer can easily survive there, with soils comparable to those of the Sahel showing a 40-60/km<sup>2</sup> density. They have introduced a number of tending and intensification techniques that would be difficult to implement elsewhere: a terracing system to counteract erosion and improve water infiltration; cultivation of specific plants to be used as fertilizers; intensive use of animal dung, and so on.<sup>39</sup>

Today, new lines of thinking are emerging and replacing the idea of "unlimited resources". Pradervand (1989) has pointed out to the far-reaching dynamism displayed by African societies in various fields, as a reaction to intolerable conditions.

The lack of concern for resource protection has also been frequently observed in terms of "modern" government resources. Within a few years, one of the largest mosques ever built was erected in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, regardless of the virtually hopeless volume of state indebtedness; then, the world's second largest cathedral was built in Yamoussoukro, a

practically deserted town; and expatriate "development experts" saw apartments set at their disposal in the best urban locations, free of charge (in spite of mostly overrated costs). Luxurious limousines are parked in front of the Côte d'Ivoire Government offices, like in most other countries, and to own an airplane is a matter of course for most African leaders.<sup>40</sup> In many countries, licenses are even granted to western importers of precious wood, but rarely are conditions set with regard to reforestation, nor sufficient efforts implemented for that purpose. Compared to students in successful Asian regions, African students frequently focus on subjects that neither ensure a job in their country, nor do they correspond to those countries' development priorities.<sup>41</sup> In the mid-1980s, government officials in African developing countries realized incomes that were 2.8 times as high as those of their colleagues in Asian developing countries; and Côte d'Ivoire paid six times - or Nigeria five times - as much for wages than Taiwan, measured in terms of GDP per capita.<sup>42</sup>

Due to the simultaneous cutback in internal and external funds (i.e. budgetary subsidies of donor countries), the idea of limited resources has also become perceptible in the African state apparatus. More and more pragmatists and resource managers have emerged at the top of African states, such as Thomas Sankara in Burkina Faso, Soumané Sakko in Mali, the World Bank top manager Alassane Ouattara in Côte d'Ivoire, to name a few. An increasingly careful management of resources also shows in the decrease in military expenses: 2.8% of GDP in 1992 against 3.0% in 1985 (UNDP 1995, p. 216).

## COMPARISON BETWEEN THE PRESENT SITUATION OF AFRICAN AND FAR EASTERN POPULATIONS

The size and distribution of populations in African countries show a number of particular features which most likely have a development-impeding effect.

*Relatively small populations per country: impeded infrastructures equal increased dependency*

The countries of sub-Saharan Africa often show vast areas but mostly small populations, their average being six million, as compared to an average of 44.1 million in East and Southeast Asian countries (see Annex: Comparison between indicators from sub-Saharan Africa and East/Southeast Asia, dimension figure: median). Only seven sub-Saharan countries have more than 20 million inhabitants, and this not only aggravates industrialization attempts considerably - due to small home markets - but also causes many other problems. Since establishing and maintaining universities is extremely expensive for those small countries, a large percentage of the young go abroad to study. In 1987-88, 5% of the students from developing countries - and 17% of those from Africa - studied abroad (UNDP 1995, p. 175):

Country	Percentage of students abroad	Population in 1990 <sup>43</sup>
Chad	50%	5.7 million
Sierra Leone	49%	4.2 million
CAR	45%	3.0 million
Cameroon	40%	11.7 million
Rwanda	37.7%	7.2 million
Nigeria	7%	88.5 million

The example of Nigeria proves how a country's size makes it easier and more profitable to set up larger educational structures and thus allow a larger percentage of people to study at home.

Studying abroad may facilitate the North-South transfer of knowledge, but it has definitely also caused additional problems, such as:

- The danger of "westernization" for those who study abroad. They take home and transmit their new consumption and living patterns after graduation - at times with negative economic consequences at the national level, when predominantly imported goods are consumed. Cameroon, for instance, was for many years the biggest importer of champagne;
- Increased danger of brain-drain due to better access to western labor markets and accustoming to western technologies;
- Rather high risk of getting an education which is not adapted to the needs and conditions of the students' native country.

#### *Ethnic inhomogeneity: impeded political volition*

While the largest ethnicity in sub-Saharan Africa shows a median share of 45% of the total population, the figure for Asia is 80% (*Fischer Weltalmanach* 1996). This obviously decelerates and impedes the autonomous political power of decision-making. At the same time, it can be assumed that identification with the state becomes less achievable for most of the population.

#### *Growing ethnic inhomogeneity and populations: impeded volition*

Ideally, large countries should be able to industrialize more quickly on account of their larger domestic markets and eventually require commodities and workers from neighboring countries. These would be economically supported by the agency of acquisitions and out-flow of wages abroad. Thus, large countries could become powerful economic poles and vehicles of development for their own regions.

It is striking that ethnic homogeneity in sub-Saharan countries decreases with their size (negative correlation: -0.49%),<sup>44</sup> i.e. large nations are generally less homogeneous in terms of ethnicity. This has contributed to the fact that Nigeria, Congo/Zaire, Sudan, Ethiopia and other large countries are paralyzed internally because political volition is rendered particularly more difficult.

#### *Only slight increase in ethnic homogeneity with population density*

Increases in population densities and agglomeration centers affect the processes of exchange between ethnicities, and also increasing ethnic homogeneity. This connection is relatively insignificant ( $r=0.15$ ) in comparison with the countries of the Far East ( $r=0.37$ ). Since dynamic population development is still a rather recent phenomenon in Africa - relatively recent urbanization in many countries must also be mentioned in this connection, aside from population density, which in many areas had been very low up to a few decades ago - ethnic homogeneity is also less significant, thus adding to the deceleration of political volition.

#### *Decreasing density with increasing sizes of population - impeded market development*

Africa's large countries are not only ethnically less homogeneous, they are also slightly less inhabited ( $r=-0.02$ ) than small ones - in the Far East, density grows with the population,  $r=0.37$  - thus contributing to an impeded home-market development.

#### *Synthesis and effects of statistically ascertainable demographic differences between Africa and the Far East*

The differences between the demographic situations in Africa and the Far East result in a number of indicators which tend to show impeded development in the African case and promoted development in the Far East.

African countries have much more serious difficulties in terms of political volition and utilize a larger proportion of their resources to maintain internal stability. The fragmentation of the continent into many ethnically diverse small states makes the establishment of infrastructures particularly costly. At the same time, it is precisely large sub-Saharan countries which could serve as vehicles of development for an entire region (such as Congo/Zaire, Nigeria) but which are put at disadvantage in comparison with their Far Eastern counterparts, either because of their greater ethnic diversity or lower population densities.

Due to internal political paralysis and smaller home markets, GDP per capita is sinking in African countries as populations grow ( $r=-0.53$ ). And since the states with the smallest home markets show the largest densities in sub-Saharan Africa, the connection between population density and development dynamics - measured in GDP per capita - is lower in Africa ( $r=0.11$ ) than in East and Southeast Asia ( $r=0.43$ ) where larger countries show greater population densities and thus better initial possibilities for industrialization.

## AFRICAN SOCIETIES AND INNOVATION

Quite obviously, human societies are in a constant process of innovating. The speed and scope of innovation, however, are essentially dependent on social priorities. Societies whose models of living are endangered, e.g. through population pressure or onslaughts initiated by other peoples or states, give preference to innovation in areas which ensure survival, unless easier possibilities are seen in escape. In the case of increasing population pressure, escape may mean migrating to uncultivated areas or, conversely, resettling in other regions to avoid military threat. Innovation takes place if flight becomes impossible or brings on intolerable disadvantages. In the absence of threat, innovation mainly takes place where common power relations are not queried, for example in the vast creativity of African and Afro-American music (Jazz, Soul, Gospel, Blues, Rap, HipHop, Reggae, Highlife, Makumba etc.).

On the contrary, if innovation does become dangerous to political power (the example of Galileo Galilei), it may meet with resistance and be impeded. Societies undergoing slower technical changes are mostly structured as to age hierarchies, where the power of the old is based on their lead in various fields of knowledge. When young people in agrarian cultures continually achieve better results, by way of innovation, than their seniors, they may fear the revenge of older individuals who feel threatened in their position. In a peasant society in Mali, 29 out of 51 interviewees aged 16-49 once agreed that the elderly at times make the fields of successful younger peasants infertile through black magic.<sup>45</sup>

The scope of innovation in a given field barely allows for conclusions concerning innovativeness in other fields. European researchers have often shown some prejudice in believing that - in view of the continent's relatively weak economy and technology - other domains of African social life would certainly be equally simple and uncomplicated. One renowned scientist of African languages once wrote: "When I started my work on the Yoruba language, I thought I could put the words on one single page. I only came to notice later that it was an endless stream".

The Shona language in Zimbabwe shows 256 different forms of the genitive, of which only one applies in a specific situation. The Fula language in the western Sahel has 300 words to designate different kinds of cattle. Compared to most African languages, English, the language of global economy, is strikingly simple.

## Conclusion

Today, the unfavorable development of African populations - as compared to those of other world regions - has proven a disadvantage in the global competition between individuals and between countries alike, providing the frame conditions for individual progress. The low scale of population density has contributed to the fact that those basic conditions are little supportive of achievement in international comparisons and has delayed such processes as specialization and innovation in various political and economic key areas which are indispensable to efficient economies. The unfavorable distribution of population, compared to the Far East, has made it difficult to set up home markets and thus to support industrialization processes.

The African continent has experienced abundant innovation in some fields but rather little in those areas which bring advantages in the arena of international competition today. Innovativeness and productivity are most probably a feature of frame conditions - not of specific cultures - and particularly of historical necessities in societies or individuals struggling to survive. The large-scale economic, political and agricultural difficulties encountered in Asia and Europe in the past, however, have required both individuals and societies to develop attitudes and answers which now provide them with competitive advantages in global competition.

But the attitudes of African peoples are changing rapidly. After a long and unprofitable phase, during which both the origins of and solutions to problems were predominantly sought abroad, self-criticism and constructive action have increased noticeably. Politicians now tend to be pragmatic - in the aftermath of growing popular pressure - since resources have been recognized as limited. It seems that the times are over when, as in Moussa Traoré's Mali, anti-corruption campaigns were launched which amused rather than infuriated people called "sosotox" - a mosquito spray developed naturally by mosquitoes to prevent them from being harmed. This gives hope for a more economic and competitive African continent.

## Sommaire

### *Quelques réflexions sur la démographie et le développement de l'Afrique*

*Cet article passe en revue les différentes raisons expliquant la stagnation relative de l'Afrique, particulièrement si on la compare au développement survenu en Extrême-Orient. Après une brève description de la situation actuelle en Afrique et des raisons invoquées par la majorité des observateurs pour expliquer sa stagnation - colonialisme, dépendance structurelle, désavantages écologiques et mauvaise administration - l'auteur s'applique à démontrer comment la situation démographique de l'Afrique précoloniale, comparée à celle de l'Extrême-Orient, avait déjà préparé le terrain pour les causes déjà citées et leurs conséquences. Le fait que l'Afrique ait été alors peu peuplée a certainement joué un rôle dans l'ampleur que prit la traite des esclaves, avec la participation des Africains, dans le phénomène de colonisation mentale, de dépendance structurelle et même dans la dynamique industrielle. L'auteur appuie ses hypothèses sur des statistiques tirées de différentes corrélations avec l'Extrême-Orient.*

## Annex Comparison between indicators from sub-Saharan Africa and East / Southeast Asia

Country	Largest ethnicity	Share in population	Second-largest ethnicity	Population (million)	GDP per capita	GNP increase 1980-93	Density	Coups 1960-1991
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>								
Angola	Ovimb.	37%	22% Kimbundu	10.3	969	-0.9	8	1
Benin	Fon	39%	12% Yoruba	5.1	430	-0.4	45	7
Botswana	Tswana	80%	2.4% San	1.4	2,790	6.2	2.4	0
Burk. Faso	Mossi	48%	17% Mande	9.8	300	0.8	36	9
Burundi	Hutu	85%	14% Tutsi	6.0	180	0.9	216.5	6
Cameroon	Bamiléké	20%		12.5	820	-2.2	26	1
CAR	Banda	30%	24% Gbaya	3.2	210	-0.8	5.1	6
Chad	Sara	30%	15% Arab	6	210	3.2	4.7	4
Comoros	Comor.	97%		0.5	560	-0.4	253	4
Congo	Congo	52%	24% Teke	2.4	950	-0.3	7	9
Côte d'Ivoire	Baoule	23%	18% Bété	13.3	630	-4.6	41	0
Djibouti	Issa	50%	40% Afar	0.1	780	5.6	24	1
Equ. Guinea	Fang	57%	10% Bubi	0.4	6,540	1.1	13.5	4
Eritrea	Tigrinya	50%	30% Tigre	3.4	115		28	
Ethiopia	Oromo	40%	32% Amhara	53.6	100	-1.8	46	6
Gabun	Fang	32%	12% Eskira	1.0	4,960	-1.6	3.8	1
Gambia	Mandinka	44%	17% Fula	1.0	350	-0.2	92	1
Ghana	Akan	52%	16% Mossi	16.5	430	0.1	69	9
Guinea	Fula	30%	30% Malinke	6.3	500	1.3	26	2
Guinea-Biss.	Balanta	25%	20% Fula	1.0	240	2.8	28.5	2
Kenya	Gikuyu	21%	14% Luhya	25.3	270	0.3	43.5	1
Lesotho	Sotho	99%		1.9	650	-0.5	64	3
Liberia	Kpelle	20%	14% Bassa	2.8	200		26	5
Madagascar	Madag.	99%		13.9	220	-2.6	24	3
Mali	Bambara	32%	14% Fula	10.1	270	-1.0	8	2
Mauretania	Mauret.	81%	7% Wolof	2.2	500	-0.8	2.1	6
Mauritius	Indian	69%	27% Creole	1.1	3,030	5.5	535	0
Mozambique	Makua	47%	23% Tsonga	15.1	90	-1.5	19	1
Namibia	Ovambo	50%	9% Vango	1.5	1,820	0.7	1.8	0
Niger	Hausa	54%	21% Djerma	8.5	270	-4.1	7	3
Nigeria	Hausa	21%	21% Yoruba	105	300	-0.1	114	11
Rwanda	Hutu	90%	9% Tutsi	7.55	210	-1.2	287	2
São Tomé				0.1	330	-1.2	122	3
Senegal	Wolof	44%	18% Serer	7.9	750	0	40	0
Seychelles	Creole	89%		0.1	6,280	3.4	159	5
Sierra Leone	Mende	36%	31.7% Temne	4.5	150	-1.5	62	3
Somalia	Somali	95%		8.9	120	-2.3	14	2
South Africa	Zulu	24%	18% European	39.7	2,980	-0.2	32.5	
Sudan	Arab	40%	10% Nubian	26.6	400	-0.2	11	14
Swaziland	Swazi	97%		0.9	1,080	3.0	51	1
Tanzania	Sukuma	13%	4% Makonde	28	90	0.1	30	0
Togo	Ewe	46%		3.9	340	-2.1	68	5
Uganda	Ganda	28%	12% Karam.	18.0	180	1.9	75	8
Zaire/Congo	Luba	18%	16% Congo	41.1	210	-0.8	18	1
Zimbabwe	Shona	77%	17% Ndebele	10.7	520	-0.3	27.5	0
<b>East/Southeast Asia</b>								
Cambodia	Khmer	92%	5% Vietnamese	9.7	200	1.5	53.5	3
China	Han Chin.	92%	3% Sino-Thai	1,178	490	8.2	123	0
Indonesia	Javanese	45%	14% Sundan.	187.2	740	4.2	98	2
Japan	Japanese	99%	0.6% other	124.5	31,490	3.4	330	0

Laos	Lao Loum	55%	27% Lao T.	4.6	280	2.1	19	2
Malaysia	Malay	62%	30% Chinese	19.1	3,140	3.5	58	1
Myanmar	Burman	67%	6.3% Kayin	44.6	250	0.8	66	5
North Korea	Korean	100%		23	900	-5.7	191	0
Philippines	Filipino	40%	30% Indones.	64.8	850	-0.6	216	5
Singapore	Chinese	76%	15% Malay	2.8	19,850	6.1	4,353	0
South Korea	Korean	100%	20,000 Chinese	44.1	7,660	8.2	444	1
Taiwan	Taiwanese	84%	14% M. C.	20.9	10,550	7.6	579	0
Thailand	Thai	80%	12% Chinese	58.1	2,110	6.4	113	5
Vietnam	Vietnamese	87%	3% Chinese	71.3	170	4.8	216	3

Source: Fischer Weltatmanach 1996, pp. 31-5; Coups = Coups and attempted coups; data taken from Pfetsch 1994.

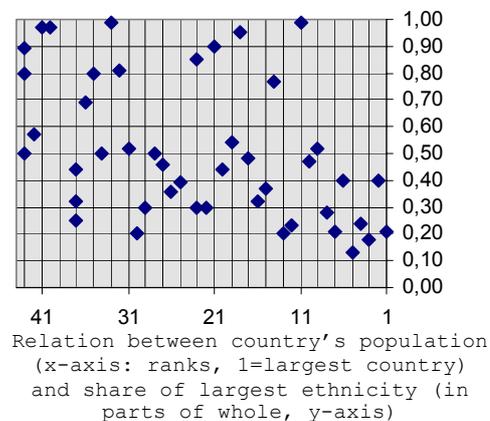
### Statistical correlations of demographic, economic and political indicators (based on the data quoted in the Annex)

	Population/ dominance	Dominance / GDP	Dominance / increase	Dominance / density	Dominance/ coups	Size of popul. / GDP	Population / GDP increase
Africa	-0.49	0.28	0.02	0.15	0.09	-0.53	-0.31
Asia	0.12	0.12	0.26	0.37	-0.40	0.12	0.26

	Population / density	Population / coups	GDP / density	GDP / coups	Increase / density	Increase / coups	Density / coups
Africa	-0.02	0.06	-0.05	-0.21	0.11	-0.04	0.13
Asia	0.37	-0.40	0.44	-0.61	0.43	-0.31	-0.26

### Discussion of correlations

- Population (size) / dominance of a group of population: Growing loss of homogeneity in Africa with increase in population (see diagram, due to lack of long-term hegemonies), and the opposite in Asia;
- Dominance/GDP: The more homogeneous a population, the higher its GDP (smaller correlations);
- Dominance/increase: The more homogeneous a population, the higher the growth rates in Asia (barely applicable to Africa);
- Dominance/density: The more densely a country is populated, the more homogeneous its population (stronger correlation in the Far East due to longer-term processes of amalgamation and hegemonic experiences);
- Dominance/coups: A clear connection between ethnic homogeneity and stability in Asia; somewhat the opposite in Africa, perhaps due to the lack of inner-ethnic unity;
- Population (size) / GDP: The larger an African country, the lower its GDP (perhaps due to less ethnic homogeneity and/or lower density); slightly the opposite in Asia;
- Population (size) / increase of GDP: The larger a country's population in Asia, the more rapid the increase in its GDP; slightly the opposite in Africa (the same applies as with population/GDP);
- Population/density: The larger the population in an Asian country, the more densely inhabited it is (advantageous for home markets and setting up infrastructures); no connection in Africa;
- Population / (attempted) coups: Large stability in Asia with increasing population; no connection in Africa (disturbing factors: inhomogeneity, lower density);
- GDP/coups: The higher GDP is, the lower the danger of coups; connection much clearer in Asia than in Africa (perhaps due to the smaller size of countries);
- Increase of GDP / density: The larger density in Asia, the faster the countries' GDP grows; much less significant connection in Africa (disturbing factors: less population with increasing density = smaller home markets);
- Increase of GDP / coups: The faster the economy develops, the less likely are coups (less connection in Africa, perhaps due to more crucial power struggles caused by less homogeneity);
- Density/coups: The higher population density in Asia, the less likely are coups; somewhat the opposite in Africa (perhaps because more densely populated African countries are also smaller, and therefore more prone to coups, and/or homogeneity does not increase in density as much as in Asia).



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> PPP allows to measure the real purchasing power of per-capita income. Based on a market basket, the exchange rate of currencies is calculated in order to correspond to the rate of individual domestic purchasing power. PPP is given in "international dollars" (see Stiftung Entwicklung und Frieden 1998).

<sup>2</sup> However, Joanna Moss and John Ravenhill have shown (1989) that African countries are slowly - yet increasingly - becoming able to reduce their dependency on certain raw materials and commercial partners and to diversify their exports.

<sup>3</sup> Hot money in the Far East has frequently been landing in the banks of neighboring countries, to the benefit of the entire region. In 1980, Indonesian flight capital was estimated at \$20 billion, thus exceeding the national debt total. Most of the money landed in bank accounts in Singapore and Hong Kong (Helmut Lukas, Vienna University, personal communication).

<sup>4</sup> Figure taken from the *Rapport annuel de la Société financière mondiale*, quoted in *Jeune Afrique* 1813, p. 54 (October 5th, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> The share of foreign investments in Africa dropped from 16% in 1970 to 3.4% in 1995 (see *Rapport annuel de la Société financière mondiale*, Note 4).

<sup>6</sup> Change was accelerated by the growing budget deficits in the traditional donor countries that sought comfortable excuses to cut on "aid" after the end of the East-West conflict. Democratization and multiparty politics, as conceived along the lines of western styles, were frequently brought in as preconditions for such "assistance", thus contributing to a "race for democracy".

<sup>7</sup> See Rainer Tetzlaff's article on politicized ethnicity (1991).

<sup>8</sup> See Roman Lohmeier's essay on the politicization of religion in northern Nigeria (1992).

<sup>9</sup> In a very comprehensive survey, Nohlen and Nuscheler (1993a, pp. 34ff) have identified the following internal and external reasons for the crisis in African development:

- Burdens inherited from colonialism: barely any nation-states due to borders that had been drawn up arbitrarily; low-level productive forces; monocultural specialization of colonial economies; serious differences in development levels between capital cities and hinterlands; the Balkanization of Africa left numerous small states and very low-level education and health sectors; colonial rule implied superiority and subjugation in all forms of administration.

- Problems of agriculture: poverty and uncertain rainfalls in many soil regions; preference given to cash crop production on the part of the colonial powers and their successors alike; priority given to capital-intensive, large-scale agricultural projects instead of small farmers; marketing and distribution concentrated on marketing boards; insignificant share of funds spent to support agriculture; abuse of farmers as objects for experiments; import of cheap foodstuff ousting local farmers from the market; food shortages intensified by wars.

- The ecological crisis: destruction of the tropical rain forest; terrain degradation and desertification; water shortages; problems of waste management and conflicts over water; Africa as Europe's garbage dump; environmental damages due to mining.

<sup>10</sup> One interesting survey of this issue can be found in Robert Carneiro (1973, pp. 152-175). So-called voluntaristic theories, which investigate the development of larger systems on the basis of voluntariness, stand in opposition to "theories of constraint". The latter assume that autonomous political units do not give up their sovereignty without radical external constraints in order to facilitate larger structures.

<sup>11</sup> The empire of Great Zimbabwe, on the other hand, was based on livestock breeding, thus somewhat qualifying this perspective.

<sup>12</sup> Tetzlaff's is certainly a reflection of Africa's dominating image, but he has neglected other larger precolonial structures showing considerable complexity, like Benin.

<sup>13</sup> In many Asian countries, on the other hand, precolonial hegemonies supported a common identity and substantially facilitated postcolonial state formation. Already in 300 BC, for example, the Yamato State spread its hegemony over the islands of Japan. From the 7th to the 13th century, Sumatra, Borneo and Malacca experienced the Srivijaya Empire which was superseded by the Majapahit Empire.

<sup>14</sup> Anthony O'Connor (1983, p. 41): "In the mid-nineteenth century large towns were almost entirely confined to south-western Nigeria, but a series of medium-sized towns extended across the savanna zone of West Africa, and many small settlements were strung along the coasts from Saint-Louis to Lobito and from Mogadisho to Maputo".

<sup>15</sup> Nuscheler and Ziemer (1980, pp. 89ff) have identified the following starting problems for African countries:

- Identity: Nations were still patterns of an artificial or alien format in the eyes of most citizens;

- Legitimacy: The order of rule and politics was only seldom supported by consent;
- Participation: The masses of the population hardly had a share in political decision-making;
- Penetration: Administration failed to penetrate the hinterlands completely;
- Distribution: The distribution of goods and services between regions and social groups remained highly unbalanced;
- Integration: The young countries virtually lacked the foundations of nation-states (except Somalia, Lesotho and Swaziland).

<sup>16</sup> In his autobiography, the renowned historian Joseph Ki-Zerbo's father, a Samo, reported that he had been taken as a slave as late as the end of the 19th century.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Labahn has dealt with the Somalis' origins: "Their ethnocultural homogeneity was only disclosed in cases of external threat. From within, they never constituted a solid political unit but were rather fragmented into numerous clans, subclans and family communities" (quoted in Nohlen and Nuscheler 1993b, p. 135).

<sup>18</sup> Only in the 19th century did various peoples find a common identity in the Swazi Empire.

<sup>19</sup> Kenneth Good (1994, pp. 509-515), for example, has vividly outlined how top politicians drove the National Development Bank in Botswana to the verge of bankruptcy by granting unjustified credits that were neither demanded nor paid back.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in *Jeune Afrique* 1831 (1996).

<sup>21</sup> Only few countries have shown such committed educational practices, up to the highest levels, as Guinea under Sekou Touré, where a total of eight different local tongues were used in schools. This practice was considerably restrained after the statesman's death, since teaching in so many languages was not only expensive, but Guinean graduates also had increasing difficulties to communicate with their peers from neighboring countries whose (European) national languages they could hardly command.

<sup>22</sup> Maurice Delafosse (1929, p. 19) estimated the number of Mandekan-speakers of his time to be approx. 4.8 million, while today's speakers amount to at least 30 million, i.e. the number of speakers has grown twice as fast as the population.

<sup>23</sup> Interethnic spouses, however, are still exceptional in Africa. O'Connor (1983, p. 120) has referred to various studies carried out in West and East African cities. In 1973, only 8% of the marriages concluded in Kampala involved members of different ethnic groups. Schildkrout (1978) has indicated that in Kumasi, 20% of the migrant workers from northern Ghana were married to partners from other ethnicities - yet 40% of their urban-born children, indicating how urbanization contributes to the disintegration of ethnic boundaries.

<sup>24</sup> Tetzlaff (1991, p. 12) has identified "enforced ethnicity" as one of the typical consequences of colonialism. "'Closed ethnicities" were invented by colonial masters for reasons of opportuneness. For example, the British colonial administration in Nigeria, Rhodesia and Uganda declared "lineages", clans and village units as "tribes" with accountable chiefs, in order to appoint these latter as responsible for socage and tax-collecting and make them answerable".

<sup>25</sup> See Ebermann (1989). Since deeper knowledge is transferred individually rather than in groups, individuals must endeavor to win their seniors' favor, e.g. by giving them small presents (such as cola nuts), by paying them respect and by attempting to spend as much time with them as possible. In such meetings, individuals wait patiently until the old begin their accounts as they themselves think fit. The young have little influence on the topics of discussion and refrain from asking too many or direct questions, since this is regarded as a sign of disrespect. Such behavior is diametrically opposed to that of social revolutionaries, so that those who adapt are the only ones to be initiated to deeper spheres of knowledge. This phenomenon has a stabilizing influence on the system.

<sup>26</sup> It is striking to notice that syncretistic religions in Asia are mostly identified as special forms of Hinduism or Islam in Asia - or special forms of Christianity or Islam in Africa - but not as autochthonous forms once influenced by religions of external origin. According to my experience, only a small proportion of educated Africans is ready to profess African traditional religions.

<sup>27</sup> According to Dieter Senghaas (1986, p. 85), "'Cultural revivalism' (of the kind of re-Islamization) is mainly to be expected in critical regions, in terms of development policies, where social mobilization is highly developed, the fissuredness of society deepening, and - in some cultures - where a recollection of one's past advanced culture is under way".

<sup>28</sup> I wonder whether the revaluation of whites in some parts of Africa - against better judgment or for lack of alternatives - could also be interpreted as fundamentalistic. The failures of many local elites in those areas have resulted in a glorification of the whites, a kind of nostalgia for Europe, which in no way can be explained by the experiences of colonialism. In the course of a study conducted in a Bambara village in Mali in 1991, three out of 64 interviewees claimed that the government was eager to help them out of need, yet all 64 individuals

thought the same of the whites. For sure, this can only be accounted for by wide-spread disappointment with the ruling elites (Traoré at the time). Reinterpretations of tradition could reasonably be conceived in the same way: In the Bélé Dougou region, for instance, followers of Komo, a Bambara secret society, consider Mecca to be the origin of their institution (see Ebermann 1989).

<sup>29</sup> As to self-esteem, there also seem to be differences within oral cultures, where peoples react differently according to whether they are accustomed to ruling or subordination. The Bambara, the dominating ethnicity in Mali (coming from the ancient Kingdom of Mali), show higher self-satisfaction and less fatalism than, say, the Bozo people. The Kikuyus in Kenya - whose existence in the fertile highlands surrounding Nairobi always was endangered by white settlers - and who were thus forced to make daily compromises, seem to show much less pride in themselves than the Maasai cattle breeders living in arid and unattractive regions. At the same time, extremely vivid griot traditions among the Bambara and Malinke peoples in West Africa have been able to maintain self-esteem and thus perfectly correspond to written literature.

<sup>30</sup> According to Helmut Lukas from the Vienna Institute of Ethnology, a baby milk campaign once launched by Nestlé was all but successful in Indonesia in terms of publicity, yet very much so in the Philippines. The analyses described above could also serve to explain this difference. Urbanization has been considerably less important in the history of the Philippines than in Indonesian history.

<sup>31</sup> One exception to this rule was Portuguese trade relations with the Gold Coast - from the 16th to the 17th centuries - where their goods were considered so low in quality that the Europeans had to purchase goods in the Benin Empire in order to sell them at a profit on the Gold Coast.

<sup>32</sup> An early impact of the law of supply and demand is indicated in the story of the Malian ruler Kankan Musa who, on his journey to Mecca, spent and gave away so much gold that the local gold rate in Egypt experienced a 12-year drop (see Tall 1977, p. 153).

<sup>33</sup> Elands are considered to be wild cattle and are therefore hunted.

<sup>34</sup> Personal experience in a Maasai village in Kenya, July-September 1978.

<sup>35</sup> In the village of Sonongo, 2,000 km to the north of Koulikoro.

<sup>36</sup> Timberlake (1988, p. 132) has referred to some exceptions: The Chagga and other peoples in Tanzania have developed a complex system of forestry. Again, it is striking that that writer should predominantly relate to densely populated areas.

<sup>37</sup> Beach (1980, p. 51) has suggested that the Kingdom of Zimbabwe, an urban culture, lost its basis of livelihood - and finally declined in the 16th century - on account of large-scale environmental destruction.

<sup>38</sup> Jean Boulet, *Magoumaz, pays mafa*, (ORSTOM monograph), quoted in Giri 1986, p. 188.

<sup>39</sup> Giri (1986, p. 188): "... no active farmer cultivates more than half a hectare, yet there is hardly any fallow. The fields have been cleared of stones and terraced in order to improve the infiltration of rainwater and prevent soil erosion. Barriers, so-called dzalas, have been installed, made of grass cut and laid on the ground. These barriers brake the down-flow and eventually turn into soil which can be used as dung. Every farmer owns a cow and usually one sheep, three goats and a dozen chicken. They make complete use of the animal dung produced by their modest herds. Only useful trees have been preserved and they are utilized to the same extent as the fields. These soils are thus able to feed the people and additionally produce some peanuts and tobacco. And all this is done with the means available, without buying expensive mineral fertilizers ...".

<sup>40</sup> When Sankara did without an airplane of his own in 1985, parts of the public opinion in Burkina Faso interpreted this gesture as an admission of poverty.

<sup>41</sup> In 1985, 767 Taiwanese out of 100,000 studied mechanical engineering, but the available statistics for 13 African countries revealed an average of merely 9/100,000 (Zymelman 1990, p. 27).

<sup>42</sup> Deborah Bräutigam 1994, p. 126.

<sup>43</sup> Nohlen and Nuscheler 1993b, p. 548.

<sup>44</sup> All correlations listed here represent rank correlations on the basis of extreme values.

<sup>45</sup> According to my own research in the Malian village of Nkorongoji, 50km to the north of Bamako, in 1991.

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