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DECOLONIZING THE POSTCOLONIAL AFRICAN EDUCATION SYSTEMS AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP BASED ON THE KURUKAN FUGA CHARTER'S ARTICLES

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Résumé

Cet article fait un diagnostic de l'Afrique subsaharienne prise au piège dans les crochets de la culture occidentale. Pourtant les rois du Manden avaient une culture authentique propre à leur environnement qui provenait de la charte de *Kurukan Fuga*. Ceci pose un problème qu'aucun pays ne peut réaliser son développement économique et culturel sans s'appuyer sur sa culture. Pour examiner ce problème courant, une méthode qualitative est adoptée. En ce qui concerne la méthode susmentionnée, les données de cette étude sont collectées, analysées et interprétées dans le contexte de la théorie postcoloniale. Ainsi, l'étude révèle que les preneurs de décisions en Afrique devraient créer des écoles ou centres Africains basés sur des valeurs africaines et les appelées « centres traditionnels » tels que les écoles coraniques. En somme, c'est recommandé que les dirigeants Africains associent leurs instructions à leurs cultures pour alléger la peine de la population basée sur les valeurs des aînés.

Mot clés : Afrique subsaharienne, centres traditionnels, colonisation, culture, dirigeants.

Abstract

This paper makes a diagnosis of Sub-Saharan Africa entrapped in the hooks of Western culture. Yet, the kings of Manden had an authentic culture proper to their environment that derived from the Kurukan Fuga charter. This poses a problem that no country can achieve its economic and cultural development without relying on its culture. To investigate the foregoing problem, the qualitative method is adopted. In regard to the aforementioned method, the study's data are collected, analyzed and interpreted in the context of postcolonial theory. Thus, the study reveals that African decision-makers should create African learning centers or schools based on African values called « traditional centers » such as koranic schools. In sum, it recommends that these days' African leaders should associate their educations to their cultures to relieve the sorrow of the population based on the values of the elders.

Keywords: colonization, culture, leaders, Sub-Saharan Africa, traditional centers.

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Introduction

We have chosen to talk about the reeducation and regeneration of contemporary Africa in consistence with the Kurukan Fuga Charter's content and some other Africans' ancient values because, before the arrival of the colonizer, pre-colonial West African societies had their proper ways to educate people. That was a reality in the different African mediaeval Empires of Ghana, Mali and Songhay known today thanks to scientific excavations and texts as the *Tarik-es-Sudan*. The latter taught us that Kaya-Maghan Cissé-Tounkara or Maghan of Kaimou was one of the first black princes in the first State set in the Haut-Sénégal Niger around the fourth century¹, particularly in the Ghana Empire. We also learned that it is with Sundjata, that the Empire of Mali was created in 1235, who introduced the Kurukan Fuga Charter. This charter permitted to regulate the life of the empire and defined how to socialize and educate people. In other words, the Empire of Mali had a well-structured society and it had less

to envy to Europe concerning children education owing to the Kurukan Fuga Charter. For instance, in the precolonial West Africa of medieval Empires such as Ghana, Mali and Songhay, children's upbringing was based on the values of the area. Children and communities were educated through the strategies developed by the elders and authorities. As a consequence, honesty, the sense of integrity and dignity prevailed everywhere. In addition, corruption and individualism rarely existed because people were educated to follow values like *Dànbe*², *Hórɔnya*³, *Mɔɔɔya*⁴, *Jatigiya*⁵, *Senankuya*⁶, etc.

However, the problem is that many Europeans, through the horrendous practices of slavery and colonialism, have developed strategies to entice Africans to leave their culture for theirs by depriving Africans' ways of education and socialization of their substance (African values, sciences, manners and history). For instance, the elimination of African culture in the African education systems was deeply planned by

¹ <http://cojumali.over-blog.com> 29/10/2021 at 7 :58 a.m.

²*Dànbe* which means honor, dignity, reputation

³*Hórɔnya* stands for to free,

⁴*Mɔɔɔya* is the valuing of humanity and humanistic manners and values, savoir-vivre, helpfulness

⁵*Jatigiya* or *diatiguiya* is explained as hospitality, charity.

⁶*Senankuya* or *Sinankunya* means joking relationship

the French colonizer and authorities on the territory covered by the former Empire of Mali. They noticed that the descendants of Sundjata had followed the path of their elders(ancestors), that is why they chose to rule directly and with iron hands in colonial Mali, Guinea and Senegal etc. They did so to destroy the native populations' connection with their customs, values and past.

In the same frame of mind, we have realized that several Western nations have strived to distort African realities and history through the Europeanization of African schools' curricula. This was actually a subtle efficient manner to engrave their culture and history in the minds of the African child instead of setting up schools based on the wisdoms and values used and promoted by the Mandingo former leaders during the Kurukan Fuga Conference in 1236. The consequences of all these have been felt on the postcolonial African and his education system.

The objective of this study is therefore to explicate how to integrate into the current African education systems, especially in Mali, the ancient Mandingo values of education and socialization embedded in the Kurukan Fuga Charter and other African ancestral values. To be able to attain the aforementioned objective, the research's data are collected, analyzed and interpreted within the theoretical context of

postcolonialism and the Consciencism of Kwame Nkrumah rooted in the decolonization ideology.

Methodologically, the study is implemented in the context of qualitative method and it is organized into three major parts: the first part talks about education in precolonial Africa in relation to the Kurukan Fuga Charter. The second one demonstrates how the adaptation of Sundjata's wisdom could awaken the territory of Ancient Mali and the last part deals with the social influence of youth in the reeducation and regeneration of the postcolonial African youth.

1. Education in Pre-colonial Africa

In precolonial Africa, education could be referred to as the initiation into Ancient Africa which is a long process of knowledge acquisition that could be reshaped and given the name of traditional centers. This acquisition goes through different stages in the life of the African:

The tradition considers that the life of the normal man is made up two important phases, an ascendant one up to sixty-three years old and a descendant up to hundred and twenty-six years old. Each of these phases has three big sections of twenty-one years,

consist of three periods of seven years each (Bâ, 1972, p.12).⁷

In pre-colonial Africa education was made up of well-defined steps. Each of the three steps of twenty-one corresponded to an initiation and special period of human life. The first big phase was dedicated to marriage, the second one at forty-two was the beginning of maturity and the last one was strengthening one's achievement by being an example. One learned special experience at each phase.

In addition, girls and boys followed different ways of education. In the Manden society for instance, education was the action of the adult on younger generation and the young on his peer in order to help him to be initiated. It was based on the social tissue. Girls' education and socialization was ensured by their mothers, aunts and grand-mothers whereas boys education was assured by their fathers, uncles, grandfathers. The great values of the society were taught by the masters of initiation represented by aforementioned people. The main function of the rituals initiated through

initiations was to make the person ready to integrate the adult life (article 4)⁸. Not only, they must be known by the initiates but also they should be prepared to face them bravely. As a result of the initiation, they would be strong and made to preserve the community interest based citizens meaning that they are ready to protect the interest of the community before their own one (article 9)⁹. The children show obedience to their parents and all people who can have the same age as their parents or commonly just an older person. That is why the Senegalese ethnologist stated:

The most important, for the people, is to find the main theme that connects them to their ancient past, as far back as possible. In front of the cultural aggressions of all kinds; in the face of all disintegrated of the outside world; the most effective cultural weapon that a people can have is this sense of continuity (C. A. Diop, 1981, p. 272).¹⁰.

In the above excerpt, Cheikh Anta Diop thus raises the way we should grasp the past and allows us to have new thought. This

⁷ The original version is as follows : La tradition considère que la vie d'un homme normal comporte deux grandes phases : l'une ascendante, jusqu'à soixante-trois ans, l'autre descendante, jusqu'à cent vingt-trois ans. Chacune de ces phases comporte trois grandes sections de vingt et un ans, composée de trois périodes de sept ans (Bâ, 1972, p. 12).

⁸ www.unesco.org 25 /08/2014 at 2:30 p.m. The charter of *Kurukan Fuga* by Siriman Kouyate. Article 4: The society is divided into age groups. Belong to the same age-group the people (men or women) who are born during a period three years in secession. The members of the intermediary class

between young and old people should be invited to take part in taking important concerning the society.

⁹ Article 9: The children's education behoves the entire society. The paternal authority in consequence falls to everyone.

¹⁰ The original version is as follows : [l'] essentiel, pour le peuple, est de retrouver le fil conducteur qui le relie à son passé ancestral le plus lointain possible. Devant les agressions culturelles de toutes sortes, devant tous les facteurs désagrégeants du monde extérieur, l'arme culturelle la plus efficace dont puisse se doter un peuple est ce sentiment de continuité historique. (Diop, 1981, p. 272).

new thought should derive from the harmonious connections that Africans would find with their glorious past. In other words, good models or values of the past can help contemporary Africans to transcend alienation that is why in Frantz Fanon's: « Against the colonialism, how to cure the colonized from his alienation? »¹¹ it is explicated that to cure Africans from the mental domination of Europeans, one should get inspired by the values of the elders. It is only at this price that we can contribute to the emergence of civilization. Once more, we may utter that the educational system set for by our elders for our offspring used to determine their progress in real life due to the conditions and the places where they were educated:

The initiation of boys happens in full bush far from the ordinary familial frame. In a secret and virgin forest from any human action place as said by Camara Laye « we left the town behind and entered the bush by a path which leads to a sacred place where each year the initiation takes place » (C. Laye, 1981, p. 82).

The excerpt reveals that the candidates to the initiation rituals are as in a different world. This part of the forest was virgin and that

contributed to enhance the environment. The foregoing way of educating fits the article 38 of the Kurukan Fuga charter which says: “*Before setting fire to the bush, do not look at the ground, rise your head in the direction of the top of the trees to see if they do not bear fruits or flowers.*” During the initiation, children were taught and shown the importance of protecting the ecosystem along with the wild life as embedded the aforementioned article.

Beside to the endogenous ways of educating African children and people, precolonial Africa had also known the advent of Koranic schools. For instance, Abdullah Ibn Yasin¹² is generally believed to have established: « after about 1050 a centre of religious teaching, called a hermitage. He and those who followed him became known as the people of the hermitage, Al-Murabethin, or Almoravids » (B. Davidson, 1977, p. 42). This creation of this kind of schools started when the Berbers began to look for a new means of livelihood. Thus, little by little Ibn Yasin spread the Berber communities of the far western lands under his controlled through conquests and education. Through this type of education embedded in Koranic knowledge, many

¹¹ Justine Canonne, « Frantz Fanon : contre le colonialisme », mensuel n°233-janvier 2012 in [www. Scienceshumaines.com](http://www.Scienceshumaines.com), et si on repensait tout. 08/10/2021 at 3 :04 p.m.

The original version is as follows : contre le colonialisme, comment guérir le colonisé de son aliénation (Laye, 1981, p. 82).

¹² Abdullah ibn Yasin is a theologian of XI century to the Sanhaja Berbers of the western Sahara. He was a Berber. He was living in the town of Nafis in the Moroccan High Atlas when he was invited by two Sanhaja leaders to instruct the Berber tribesmen of the Sahara in the true principles of Islam. Also he was the founder of Almoravid movement.

endogenous ancestral values were taught and transmitted from generations to generations until the arrival of the colonizer. In addition, the emissaries of Abdullah Ibn Yasin started converting the lesser rulers of the states in the far western area like in Takrur (or Futa Toro). West Africa seems to lose its cultural benchmarks in aid of occidental ones. The valuation of old systems could allow Africans to get back to their lost benchmarks.

Also, others can see things differently and say that the emphasis on the aforementioned family values suggests parental childrearing attitudes that are more authoritarian than progressive. Authoritarian attitudes emphasize parental authority and child obedience and conformity; in contrast, progressive attitudes involve beliefs that children are agentic and self-directing and should be able to express and assert themselves (Schaefer & Edgerton, 1985).

The discovery of the Kurukan Fuga charter is without any doubt the major cultural and social event at the end of the twentieth century in Black African history, namely West Africa. The aforementioned African made charter has become part of the Universal Patrimony today thanks to his highly historical and cultural significance. This historical treasure from the past may serve contemporary postcolonial African nations, especially the former states that

formed the Mali Empire. One may understand through the foregoing thought that, if Africa wants to be developed, it has to go from what it was to reach what it wants to be by its own effort and devotion. Time is up for postcolonial Africa to fly with its own wings by relying on its past and cultural heritage like the Kurukan Fuga Charter and ancestral values in the reeducation and regeneration of the postcolonial African. The article 7 based on Sanankunya or the joking relationship should be taught from kindergarten up to the university through tales, seminars, and lectures. For the fulfillment of this project, schools authorities, political authorities, teachers, researchers and writers have a key role to play.

What I imply in the above paragraph is that we can adapt the present-day situation to the past context. In the past people lived in villages which were inhabited by members of a few extended families. Therefore, the elders of the families provided leadership in the village and the elder of the oldest family served as the head of court and of village. Though, it is easy to imagine a village as inhabited by people who are members of an immediate family and who are more or less related to everyone else. Our « traditional centers » may be on the image of these villages because life is an agreement. Among the cores of these traditional centers we would have the

teaching and the promotion of ancestral values such as brotherhood, honesty, faithfulness and some updated articles of the Kurukan Fuga Charter as key majors. Everybody may join it and it could be as PRODEC (Decennial Program of Development and Education based on the referential line- one village, one school and /or one CED¹³ Education Centre for Development similar to TC meaning traditional centers.

2. Endogenous Way to Decolonize Postcolonial African Education and Leadership

Historically in 1076, some Almoravid Berbers defeated the Empire of Ghana. Then after in the early 1200s, Sumanguru ruled the fragmented Empire of Ghana and attacked Ka-ba (Kangaba) but Sundjata's life had been spared. Moreover, in 1235, happened the battle of Krina as a struggle between two powerful magicians, Sumanguru and Sundjata. Hence following the victory over Sumanguru in Krina, Sundjata concentrated on consolidating the Empire. After the end of the war, all the chiefs gathered after the rainy season at Ka-ba (Kangaba) and swore fealty to Sundjata as their sovereign. Each chief then accepted one's own chieftom from Sundjata and the

agreement set there is called the Kurukan Fuga Charter.

Nowadays, one can notice in West Africa that the traditional scholars' ways to solve conflicts as Sundjata had done so with the Kurukan Fuga Charter can be inspiring and useful for postcolonial Mali and West Africa as a whole. This can actually be taken a past reference to solve problems of the present. After having got the first lesson about unity education in 1236, West African leaders could think about other ways of development different from disunity. In fact, there are a very few number of Africans even intellectuals who could explain to someone about only three articles of the Kurukan Fuga Charter. Development of technology and the constant rise of modernity without updated Africans' traditions have among other consequences the loss of many traditional and cultural links and values. This situation can explain the current social deviances of many African children and leaders.

As Tierno Bokar said in *Aspects de la civilisation africaine* by Amadou Hampaté Bâ: « Writing is one thing, and knowledge is another one. Writing is the Xerox of knowledge, but it is not knowledge itself. True knowledge is a light which is in the man. It is the heritage of all that our

¹³ CED stands for Educational Center for Development started from 2001 up to 2010 for

the universal schooling of children from age 7 up to 13.

ancestors have known and have transmitted in germ, as the baobab tree is contained in strength in its seed » (Bâ, 1972, p. 22).¹⁴ Knowledge was transmitted through word-of-mouth and it was not given to anyone but those who made effort to get it. For instance, the elder of the family observed his children and decided to whom I should give what type of knowledge to each of them due to their temperament.

To acquire knowledge, African elders chose words-of-mouth technique for their offspring's upbringing and socialization, but this legacy is almost left behind today in favor of other ways of transmitting knowledge such as writing. In fact, this ancient way of transmitting knowledge is unfortunately left in the garbage can in favor of writing which is believed to be the key to knowledge. But as explained through the character of 'Thierno bocar' in Amadou Hampathé Ba's text, writing and knowledge are two fundamentally different things. He went further in stating that knowledge is not in the writing rather in the human being. It appears then that the way of transmission, be it

through writing or word-of-mouth is not the true issue but what really matters here is the quality of the man. For instance, the great Emperor of Manden, Sundjata, has given to the world an incredible constitution without knowing how to jot down a single word.

At the very peak of the former Mali Empire with Kankou-Moussa or Gongo Moussa (1307-1332): « The civil servants of the Emperor gave proof of discipline and probity...The Sudanese Empires in general and in particular the Manding one seems to have been homes of moral and legal norms which guaranteed the cohesion of populations in the social and political communities » (D. Cissé, 1970, p. 21).¹⁵ We can thus deduce that the foregoing quote is the actual result of the implementation of the Kurukan Fuga Charter. But today this ancestral way of educating children and people as advocated in the aforementioned charter seems to vanish at an alarming pace. The truth is that many African countries such as west African ones have adopted non-African models of education and this has led to the metamorphosis of the African Man.

¹⁴ The original version is as follows : L'écriture est une chose et le savoir en est une autre. L'écriture est la photographie du savoir, mais elle n'est pas le savoir lui-même. Le savoir est une lumière qui est en l'homme. Il est l'héritage de tout ce que les ancêtres ont pu connaître et qu'ils nous ont transmis en germe, tout comme le baobab est contenu en puissance dans sa graine (Bâ, 1972, p. 22).

¹⁵The original version is as follows : Les fonctionnaires de l'Empereur faisaient preuve de discipline et de probité...Les Empires Soudanais dans l'ensemble et en particulier le Manding semblent avoir été des foyers de normes morales et légales garantissant la cohésion des populations dans des communautés politiques et sociales. (Cissé, 1970, p. 21).

If only Africa in general or West Africa in particular wishes to compete with other nations in Europe, America and Asia, Africans have to start to remodel their education systems on the basis of their ancestral models. In so doing, they may also borrow from other non-African nations to ensure their survival and technological development.

Undeniably, parents guide the first step of the kid according to his sex. Son is shaped by dad and daughter by mum in pre-colonial West Africa. Marie Cécile and Edmond Ortigues report that in Senegalese society for example: « the kid may not question, may not give points of view, does not judge but to obey and may not stare at the person that he respects » (Cécile, 1966, p. 53). In fact, aunts, siblings, neighbors can also influence the child since his young age.

As the child will integrate step by step the society each step will be a test. Outside the family the first influence on the young is the age group. It develops the sense of individual responsibility and the community life. The rituals are progressive and each prepares at a new stage of the life.

According to Louis-Vincent Thomas: « This age group sets up technological, social and religious training schools with an indisputable efficiency » (Thomas, 1974, p. 414). Its purpose is both fun (struggle, dance...) and practice (labor, hunt...). These groups are submitted to

initiation being in charge of battle-hardened traditional masters.

Léopold Sédar Senghor says about these real schools: « one enters novice, one starts to submit to initiation ceremony, with their subjective symbolism have for goal to make the ignorant, a man who knows, the infantile anarchy, a well-organized liberty » (Senghor, 1964, p. 272).

Humility and modesty are main qualities taught by the masters. Initiation is a real educational system directed by enlightened masters. This teaching could take several years. All which is possible and desirable is taught such as mythology, magic, tale, legend, politeness, habits and customs, morality and so on and so forth. The body and the willpower are imposed tough and rough test to teach courage and solid clear-sightedness.

Pierre ERNY says: « during these intensive courses older exerts pressure on the younger called vertical type of education and in the horizontal one the Youngers exert pressure on each other's. In the kind of final synthesis before one reaches the status that consecrates him as a person of full exercise » (Ndaw, 1997, p. 160).

According to the Bambara conception, the life of a normal man is consisted of two phases « the first ascendant up to 63 and the second descendent up to 126 years old. Each one has 3 phases of 21 years old break down in 7 years old »

(Ndaw, 1997, p. 154) says by Amadou Hampaté Bâ. The education of the young girl does not happen with the same severity. In *Caught in the Storm* by Seydou Badian Kouyaté, there was a conflict between two generations due to the fact that Kany went to school and refused to be married to old Benfa who was old but rich. He depicted a paternalistic society. "The old men have been to be disappointed but at the end of the story, peace is restored and African values have prevailed" (Kouyaté, 1998, p. Xi).

Once African countries had won their independence in the 1960s, the challenge taken up by a group of intellectual from Africa, or African descendent was to rid people's minds of prejudice by remedying a widespread ignorance of African heritage. Trade and colonization have perpetuated a belief that Africa is a continent without history or civilization. An example of the persistence of this belief can be seen in a statement, made as late as 1963, by Hugh Trevor-Roper, an eminent professor of modern history at Oxford University wrote "«students want us to teach them about the history of black Africa. Perhaps in the future there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none, or very little: there is only the history of Europe in Africa. The rest is largely darkness and darkness is not the subject of history »."¹⁶ Moreover, one can see that time is not any more to argue about the veracity of Kurukan fuga Charter which has

elements that the entire humanity needed to be proud such as unity.

The best way to do this was to give Africans the opportunity to rewrite their own history, with the necessary scientific support and the way they wanted. A scientific committee was set up. Within the framework of this project, Cheik Anta Diop (Senegal), Hampaté Ba (Mali), Joseph Ki-Zerbo (Burkina Faso), Ali Mazrui (Kenya) and Théophile Obenga (Republic of Congo), to cite just this era's more illustrious members, held seminal discussions with their peers from other regions of the world, which were to transform ideas about Africa and black people. CELTHO is also helping African to save their history.

Though, just after the independences in West Africa certain leaders tried to revival attempts of values on which great Empires had lived and flourished in the countries like Guinea Conakry, Mali, happened thanks to music, dance, and activities calling to magnify Africanism. But very quickly, these actions to come back to the sources failed because these actions have been diverted from their initial goals which were to educate the African youth to glorify themselves for their ancestors by integrating their ways and customs in their everyday life in the benefit of the propaganda actions in favor to the dictatorial powers. The youth education on the African positive values has

¹⁶ www. Jstor.org 29/09/2021 at 12 : 35 p.m.

stopped to be the lever for the culture in benefit to the support of the system whence the fail of the first policies of coming back to the source advocated just after independences.

In the light of what precedes, nothing is totally destroyed but what remains is the will for future changes. Africans will be independent the day the large majority bears in mind that «Wherever the tradition is respected, individual does not count before the collectivity » (Bâ, 1972, p. 136).

Conclusion

In a nutshell, the constitution set up by Sundjata contains some carefully- wrought articles which are mostly still updated and some needed to be reshuffled according to the present day realities. Moreover, going from the ancestral heritage such as adapting West African education to the Kurukan Fuga charter values is tough and rough but necessary. The

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future of West Africa can be played now and one would need to convince the masses to take into account their traditional values because that is the only sure way to compete with others as Chinese's did. As a piece of advice given to Peter in his novel: « It's like a lion barring your road .You either turn back because you can cope with it, or you kill it, and go on » (Abraham, 1981, p. 157). For sure, “where there is a will there is a way” and West African can valorize the ideology of Kurukan Fuga and get leaders who would only live for the interest of their countries.

The coming of the new president Emmanuel Macron in Gao (Mali) is a striking example of patriotism toward his country and a lesson for Africans. He showed to Malians that he was interested in the Barkhane operation but not the suffering of Malians. That is why he landed in Gao where he has got French soldiers instead of Bamako.

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