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Actes des journées scientifiques de la Faculté des Lettres,
des Langues et des Sciences du Langage (FLSL)

tenues les 13 et 14 janvier 2026 sise à Kabala



Thème : Langues africaines et mutations sociales :

Dynamique de résilience, d'innovation et de justice sociale



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*Sur le thème : LANGUES
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Argumentaire de l'appel à communication des journées scientifiques de la FLSL

Dans un contexte africain en constante mutation – marqué par des transitions politiques, des crises sécuritaires, des mobilités internes croissantes, ainsi que des revendications identitaires et sociales – les langues africaines s'imposent comme des vecteurs centraux de médiation, d'innovation et d'adaptation. Elles ne sont pas seulement des instruments de communication, mais des marqueurs identitaires (Bamgbose, 1991; Touré, 2023), des outils de résistance, de développement (Touré et al., 2022), et des leviers de transformation sociale. Face à la pluralité des usages et des situations de communication, il devient impératif de repenser le rôle des langues dans les dynamiques sociales en Afrique, en particulier dans l'espace sahélien et dans l'espace AES (Alliance des États du Sahel). Les Journées scientifiques de la FLSL entendent interroger les multiples fonctions des langues africaines à l'aune des défis contemporains, dans une perspective à la fois critique et prospective.

Comment les langues africaines, dans toute leur diversité et leur historicité, participent-elles à la recomposition des sociétés africaines en proie à des transformations majeures ? Dans quelle mesure ces langues deviennent-elles des ressources de résilience face aux crises (Ballo, 2024; Minkailou et al., 2023), de revendication face aux marginalisations, et d'innovation dans les champs de la médiation, de la gouvernance, de l'éducation (Nounta, 2015; Nouta et Touré, 2024;) ou encore du genre ? À travers quelles politiques linguistiques, quelles pratiques sociales, et quelles représentations culturelles se redéfinit leur place dans les processus de construction sociale ? Autant de questions qui invitent à une analyse pluridisciplinaire, ancrée dans les réalités sociolinguistiques africaines.

Le cadre théorique de ces journées scientifiques s'inscrit dans une approche pluridisciplinaire, à la croisée de la sociolinguistique critique (Calvet, 1999), de la linguistique anthropologique (Gumperz, 1982), de la sociologie du langage (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000), de l'enrichissement terminologique des langues africaines (Diki-Kidiri, 2008 ; Ligan 2022) des études postcoloniales et des théories du développement linguistique (Kirmayer, 2009). Il s'agit de considérer les langues africaines non pas comme de simples instruments de communication, mais comme des systèmes socio-symboliques imbriqués dans des logiques de pouvoir, (Lakoff, 1975 ; Cameron, 1992), de résistance, de négociation identitaire et d'innovation sociale (Blommaert, 2010).

Ces perspectives permettent d'interroger les langues non seulement comme outils de communication, mais comme ressources sociales façonnées par le pouvoir, les idéologies et les dynamiques identitaires (Agouzoum, 2025).

Ces Journées scientifiques visent à ouvrir un espace de réflexion interdisciplinaire sur les fonctions sociales et politiques des langues africaines face aux mutations contemporaines. Elles ambitionnent de contribuer à une revalorisation des langues africaines, non seulement comme patrimoine culturel, mais comme leviers d'innovation sociale, d'équité et de résilience communautaire (Lezou Koffi, 2024). À travers les contributions attendues, il s'agit également de formuler des recommandations concrètes en matière d'aménagement linguistique, de politiques publiques, et de recherche-action.

Axes de communication

AXE 1 : Politiques linguistiques et migrations internes au Mali et dans l'espace AES

Les mobilités internes au Mali – qu'elles soient volontaires (urbanisation, emploi, scolarisation) ou contraintes (déplacement forcé, insécurité) – recomposent les cartographies linguistiques locales. Dans un tel contexte, les langues majoritaires comme le bamanankan ou le songhay se

redéploient dans de nouveaux espaces, tandis que d'autres langues jouent un rôle de relais ou de médiation.

Cet axe interroge :

- Les langues de la mobilité : quelles langues sont utilisées dans les processus de migration intra- ou interrégionale ?
- Les dispositifs ou absences d'aménagement linguistique interrégional dans l'espace AES : peut-on envisager une politique linguistique concertée entre pays membres ?
- Le statut des langues dans les lieux d'accueil (écoles, services publics, espaces marchands) : entre intégration et invisibilisation des langues des déplacés.

AXE 2 : Langues minoritaires et résilience culturelle en contexte de crise

En période de conflit ou d'instabilité, les langues minoritaires jouent souvent un rôle central dans le maintien de la cohésion communautaire, la transmission des savoirs endogènes, et la reconstruction identitaire. La résilience passe ici par des formes de créativité discursive, de ritualisation linguistique ou de réinvestissement symbolique.

Cet axe propose de questionner :

- Les usages communautaires des langues minoritaires dans les zones de crise : contes, proverbes, chants, etc.
- Les pratiques de transmission des valeurs et des mémoires collectives en situation de rupture sociale.
- Les stratégies linguistiques d'adaptation et de préservation : traduction orale, codes partagés, lexiques de résistance.
- La dimension politique de la résilience linguistique : une affirmation identitaire face aux logiques d'homogénéisation culturelle.

AXE 3 : Langues africaines et justice sociale (accès aux services publics)

L'accès aux services publics demeure fortement conditionné par la langue utilisée. Dans des contextes multilingues, le recours exclusif aux langues officielles, souvent exogènes, crée des inégalités linguistiques majeures, notamment dans les domaines de la santé, de la justice, et de l'éducation.

Les communications attendues dans cet axe pourront traiter :

- Des obstacles linguistiques à l'accès équitable aux services de base.
- Des expériences d'interprétariat communautaire, de traduction institutionnelle, ou de matérialisation des langues nationales dans les services publics.
- Des enjeux de littératie plurilingue dans la prise de parole citoyenne.
- Des propositions d'ingénierie linguistique sociale : chartes linguistiques, labellisations inclusives, etc.

AXE 4 : Plurilinguisme, conflictualité et médiation

Le plurilinguisme, loin d'être une simple donnée descriptive, peut générer des tensions linguistiques, mais aussi des opportunités de médiation. Dans les espaces de négociation (famille, chefferies, instances coutumières, commissions de paix), les langues africaines sont utilisées comme outils d'apaisement ou d'assertion.

Les contributions de cet axe pourront explorer :

- Les rôles des langues locales dans les processus traditionnels de gestion des conflits.
- Les pratiques plurilingues dans les forums sociaux, les dialogues intercommunautaires ou interreligieux.
- Les enjeux liés à la neutralité linguistique dans les médiations : quelle langue pour quelle légitimité ?
- Les médiateurs linguistiques : griots, sages, traducteurs coutumiers, etc.

AXE 5 : Langues, genre et représentations sociales

Les langues participent à la (re)production des rapports sociaux de sexe à travers des pratiques discursives qui peuvent être discriminantes, stigmatisantes ou libératrices. Cet axe se propose d'aborder les interactions entre langage, genre et pouvoir.

Il s'agit d'interroger :

- Les formes de sexisme linguistique : stéréotypes dans les proverbes, insultes genrées, invisibilisation grammaticale.
- Les rapports d'autorité et de silence dans les interactions sociales et politiques.
- Les transformations linguistiques dans les mouvements féministes africains (néologismes, requalifications, contre-discours).
- Les enjeux du langage inclusif en langues africaines : entre tradition et modernité.

AXE 6 : Langues africaines et littérature

La littérature en langues africaines participe aux dynamiques de résilience, d'innovation et de justice sociale dans les sociétés africaines contemporaines en mutation. Cet axe explore en quoi l'écriture littéraire en langues africaines contribue à la sauvegarde et à la revitalisation du patrimoine linguistique et culturel africain. Il interroge :

- Comment les écrivains utilisent-ils les langues africaines pour résister à l'homogénéisation culturelle et linguistique mondiale ?
- Quelles formes nouvelles de création littéraire (orature numérique, poésie urbaine, slam, etc.) émergent à partir des langues africaines ?
- Comment les écrivains négocient-ils entre l'héritage oral et les exigences de l'écriture moderne pour inventer de nouvelles esthétiques littéraires ?
- Comment les choix linguistiques dans les œuvres littéraires traduisent-ils des positionnements politiques ou éthiques face aux inégalités sociales et aux questions de justice ?

AXE 7 : Langues africaines à l'ère de l'IA

L'intelligence artificielle (IA) ouvre des perspectives inédites pour la valorisation, la documentation et la diffusion des langues africaines. Toutefois, ces technologies restent largement dominées par les langues hégémoniques, reproduisant des inégalités linguistiques dans l'espace numérique. Ce sixième axe propose d'interroger :

- Les enjeux de l'inclusion linguistique africaine dans les systèmes d'IA, qu'il s'agisse de reconnaissance vocale, de traduction automatique, d'archivage sonore ou de modélisation sémantique.
- Les initiatives locales et panafricaines visant à entraîner des corpus en langues africaines, à intégrer ces langues dans les assistants virtuels, ou à concevoir des bases de données linguistiques ouvertes.

- La gouvernance linguistique des technologies de l'IA, les risques de standardisation ou de folklorisation numérique, et les stratégies d'appropriation communautaire des outils d'IA dans une perspective de souveraineté technolinguistique.

AXE 8 : Axe libre

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African Resistance to the Transatlantic Slave Trade: Recovering Overlooked Agency

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Abstract

This study explores the resistance of Africans to transatlantic slave trade. As the problematics of the study, we have noticed that scholarly narratives of abolition have frequently foregrounded European and North American actors while marginalizing African agency. Preliminary review indicates that Africans engaged in diverse, sustained forms of resistance—military, social, and spatial—that have not been systematically documented or analyzed in relation to the transatlantic slave trade. This gap obscures a fuller understanding of how the trade operated and how African societies contested it. The objective of the study is to document and analyze the forms, motivations, and impacts of African resistance to the transatlantic slave trade. Methodologically, the qualitative research based on close reading of primary and secondary textual sources, and archival materials is used to collect the data. Theoretically, Afrocentricity guides the analysis and interpretation of the collected data, centering African perspectives, values, and agency in explaining resistance strategies and meanings. As results, the study reframed abolition histories by restoring African actors to the center of analysis, offered new case studies for comparative Atlantic history, and informed debates on the social and political legacies of the slave trade.

Key words: Africa, black, captive, revolt, slavery, white

Résumé

Cette étude explore la résistance des Africains à la traite transatlantique des esclaves. En ce qui concerne les problématiques de l'étude, nous avons constaté que les récits académiques de l'abolition mettent fréquemment en avant les acteurs Européens et Nord-Américains tout en marginalisant l'agence Africaine. Un examen préliminaire indique que les Africains ont participé à des formes diverses et soutenues de résistance — militaires, sociales et spatiales — qui n'ont pas été systématiquement documentées ou analysées en lien avec la traite transatlantique des esclaves. Cette lacune empêche une compréhension plus complète du fonctionnement de la traite et de la manière dont les sociétés Africaines y ont constaté. L'objectif de l'étude est de documenter et d'analyser les formes, les motivations et les impacts de la résistance Africaine à la traite transatlantique des esclaves. Sur le plan méthodologique, la recherche qualitative reposant sur la lecture attentive de sources textuelles primaires et secondaires et de documents d'archives est utilisée pour collecter les données. Sur le plan théorique, l'afrocentricité guide l'analyse et l'interprétation des données collectées, en centrant les perspectives, les valeurs et l'autonomie Africaines pour expliquer les stratégies et les significations de la résistance. En termes de résultats, l'étude a reconfiguré les histoires de l'abolition en rétablissant les acteurs Africains au centre de l'analyse, proposé de nouvelles études de cas pour l'histoire atlantique comparative, et alimenté les débats sur les héritages sociaux et politiques de la traite des esclaves.

Mots clé : Afrique, blanc, captif, esclavage, noir, révolte,

Introduction:

Transatlantic slave trade commonly known as triangular trade refers to the human trade between three continents, namely Europe, Africa and America. This trade started when Europeans were eager to make their countries economically more powerful. They tried to develop the space trade so as to go to Asia and buy goods and bring them to their countries. In 1492, an Italian seaman named Christopher Columbus sponsored by the king and queen of Spain undertook a voyage to Asia, but missed his way to Asia and found out a new location which was later named New World by Europeans because it was uninhabited. Christopher came back to Spain with much gold, silver and some slaves. This urged many European explorers to go to the New World for the search of gold, but the expectation of many of them did not occur because they did not find there as much gold as they thought.

However, they should find another way to make fortune. Most of them turned to agriculture because the land was abundant, free and fertile. They engaged in the cultivation of sugar cane, tobacco, cotton and rice. They used to hire Indians to do their plantation work but Indians seemed to be too weak to handle plantation work. The failure of Indians to deal with plantation work pushed some Europeans to look elsewhere. They decided to come to Africa and take Africans. In the words of James A Rawley and Behrendt "The harshness of this toil killed Indians so mercilessly that King Ferdinand of Spain in 1510 ordered the Casa de Contratación to send out 250 enslaved Africans. The event is taken as the beginning of the slave trade between the Old and New Worlds." (2005, p9).

The main actors of the transatlantic slave trade were Portugal, Spain, Holland, Britain and France. Later on, Britain and France became the European countries which dominated it the most. When they first came to Africa, they did not directly start with slave trade. They came first with religion and then business and after that slave trade. At the beginning they treated Africans as their equal. Africans also considered them as one of them and kindly received them because they did not know their true intention. They had weapons before the arrival of Whites, but they never tried to do harm to them. According to Major A. Leonard, a British military officer,

Although the people [Ngwa] who enroute turned out in thousands to look at us appeared to be very friendly and peacefully disposed, not a man apparently moved a step without carrying a naked sword in one hand and a rifle at full lock in the other. Even the boys, some of them not higher than an ordinary man's knee . . . walked out armed with bows and pointed arrows (Diouf, 2003, P129.)

Africans never willingly accepted their enslavement. When they knew the true intention of Europeans, they undertook many struggles so as to stop it. They undertook many forms of resistance. Some were violent and others were non-violent. Some African leaders tried to have a deal with them so as to avoid the enslavement of their people. Others fought them face to face. The captives always planned to do something so as to prevent their deportation. They either took their lives or took the lives of their captors or masters. Whites always knew that Blacks would resist. They believed that slaves only sought the right moments to escape or revolt. Therefore, they warned their captains to be watchful because slaves could escape or undertake revolts at any moment.

The problem this study addresses is the overlook of the contribution of Africans to the fight against the transatlantic slave trade, the stereotypes of Africans' participation in Transatlantic slave trade and the Eurocentrists' misinterpretation of the true reason of the transatlantic slave trade. Many scholars showed that Europeans consciously saw that slavery was a crime against humanity and stood up so as to fight against it. They knew that slavery was a bad thing, but it was good for their economy. Therefore, they kept on doing it in spite of its prohibition by their constitutions. By the way of

illustration, James A Rawley and Behrendt said this, "South Carolina and Georgia thought a further continuance of such importations useful to them and they would not agree to the Constitution until they were satisfied"(2005, P352). It was Africans' constant resistance which stopped it.

A lot of European slave traders lost their lives because of the resistance of Africans to the system. In a given moment, Europeans were afraid to come to Africa. Being a European, to come to Africa and return safely was a miracle. For instance, it is described in *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad how Whites died in Africa during the transatlantic slave trade. All the story began with the appointment of Charlie Marlow by a company to replace one of its captains who was killed by the natives. When he went to the headquarter of the company to sign the contract, the doctor consulted him. He measured his head which surprised Marlow. Marlow asked him if he would also measure the heads of their employees when they returned from Africa. The doctor told him this, "Oh, I never see them," (Conrad, 1995, p13). This passage means that they never returned from Africa.

Scholars also used to mention that African leaders contributed too much to the enslavement of their people, but they did not say how or why. Although some Africans conspired with some Whites for the slave trade, they did not capture Blacks as people used to say. They only sold their prisoners of war because they saw them as their enemies and they should live far away from them. Others engaged in slave trade so as to have guns which could permit them to protect their people from enslavement. Many European justified African enslavements as a mission of civilization. John Atkins, a British slaving ship's surgeon said that many people overlooked their mission of civilization and talked about the horrible things of slavery. In his own words, "Nobody talked as yet of any 'civilizing mission'. (Davidson, 1980, p74.) That was what they said if not there was a hidden reason behind that. African enslavement had no other reason than economic one.

The objective of this study is to highlight the tremendous struggle undertaken by Africans so as to stop the transatlantic slave trade. It shows people that Europeans did not willingly want to stop slave trade, but they did not have any choice because Africans showed that Whites did not have any right to enslave them and they would prefer death to enslavement. Many Europeans lost their lives because of African resistance. Specifically, the study seeks to show the different forms of resistance that Africans undertook during the transatlantic slave trade. They undertook many forms of resistance to stop slave trade. Some were violent and others were non-violent. These objectives permit us to formulate the following research questions. What were the contributions of Africans to the fight against the transatlantic slave trade? What forms of resistance did Africans take to stop the transatlantic slave trade?

The theory used to analyze and interpret the data is Afrocentricity. It is a theory which puts the interests of Africans at the center of everything. It permits us to interpret and understand things from African perspectives. This theory permits us to know the hidden reason of African enslavement and the different forms of resistance they undertook to stop it. The method we used to collect the data was qualitative approach. We found the qualitative approach very suitable for this study because we got the data from books, articles and through close reading. As far data analysis is concerned, we conducted the data analysis of the study by using content analysis.

Structurally, the study is divided into two main parts. The first part deals with the Passive resistance of free and enslaved Africans to the transatlantic slave trade. This first part includes non-violent strategies undertaken by African communities to avoid African enslavement and the escape and suicide of the captives. In the second part, we develop the active resistance of free and enslaved Africans to the transatlantic slave trade. This part is made up of the armed rebellions of some African kings against the transatlantic slave trade and the bloody revolts of the captives against the transatlantic slave trade.

1. Passive resistance of free and enslaved Africans to transatlantic slave trade

1.1. The non-violent strategies undertaken by African communities to avoid African enslavement

As we have mentioned above, Europeans did not directly start with the slave trade when they first came to Africa. Their missionaries first came to Christianize Africans. They opened churches and schools wherever they could. During their evangelization they tried to colonize the minds of Africans in teaching them that slavery was a divine fact and slaves must obey their masters. Meanwhile, they turned their religious teaching into business which consisted of the exploitation of the raw materials of Africa and slave trade.

African leaders did not appreciate their slave trade. Therefore, they told them that they did not do this kind of partnership. They wanted them to teach them things that could permit them to develop their communities like Europe. Affonso, the king of Congo, sent a letter to the king of Portugal and claimed that he wanted White teachers, priests and specialists in different domains and not businessmen like slave traders, ivory traders. In 1526, King Nzinga Mbemba of Bakongo also sent a letter to the king of Portugal in which he told him to send teachers, priests, doctors to his community instead of sending slave traders.

Some African leaders went so far and sent their people to Europe for studies. For instance, in 1742, King André of Saint Pau gave his 17-year-old son to the captain of the slave ship of L'Intrépide so that he could go to France with him and teach him French language and French civilization. Unfortunately, he died on the way to France. In the same year, King Pite of Mesurade gave his grandchild to Hiacinthe Normand, the captain of Le Télémaque so that he could take to France with him and teach him French language and after that to bring him back.

These facts did not change anything about their involvement in the slave trade. African leaders were obliged to find another strategy so as to avoid the enslavement of their people. They saw migration as another way to escape from enslavement. In the words of Sylviane A Diouf, "When facing an outbreak of violence, abandoning the land and resettling somewhere else was often the only weapon. " (2003, p53.) They went to places such as lakes, caves and mountains. They believed that it was very hard to capture anyone of them in those places. In those places they could see slave traders in distance and take some precautions. Those who settled on lake were very good at swimming. Whenever they captured them and tried to transport them to the coast, they either jumped over the canoes or overturned them. The enslavers could not capture them in water. Many of them escaped from enslavement thanks to their competence in swimming.

Some people surrounded their communities with heavy walls and chose some people to protect the main gates. They built houses with many doors so that a person could escape in case of an attempt of capture. In places where kidnapping was numerous, when everyone wanted to go out and left children at home, they hid them before leaving. Some used their children as spies. They told them to climb the trees and inspect the areas. Once they suspected someone, they could make them sign. This was common in Igbo communities. For instance, When Equiano was a child, he used to climb trees so as to watch his neighbourhood. One day, he saw a slave raider and he made a sign so as to let people know that there was a slave raider in their village. Meanwhile, the youth of the village came to surround him so that he could not escape and the old came to catch him (Equiano, 1793, p17).

During slave trade African communities tried to unify so as to make themselves centralized powerful communities. The communities which felt weak joined the powerful communities for their protection against slavery. For instance, in the 17th century, Asante put almost all the states of Gold Coast in control and became a very powerful state. There had also been a unification of communities in the Northern Iboland. For instance, Ihite, Ogwugwu, and Okpu-naAchala joined each other to form Umuchu. Because of slavery, most Africans stopped walking alone in the bush or travelling alone. They did everything in group.

Ransom was developed in many communities. Whenever their people were captured, they came to liberate them in exchange with slaves, money or something valuable. They sought every mean to liberate those who were expensive to them. For instance, in 1731, Ayuba Suleyman had been captured and sold as slave. There was an acquaintance between him and the captain to whom he was sold because he used to sell him slaves. The relationship between them permitted him to send a letter to his father so as to explain the situation to him. His father sent the captain many slaves for his liberation. Unfortunately, the ship embarked before they arrived. The Ransom seemed to arrange enslavers more than buying slaves because each captive was released for at least two slaves. Some could give four or five slaves for the liberation of just one person. Some could even give more than five slaves. It depended on how important the person was to his relatives.

Some people preferred to buy their relatives from European slave traders instead of giving their slaves for the liberation of their relatives. Some ethnic groups never engaged in slave trade. Their economy was not based on it and when their people were captured, they bought them with cash money or things that might interest Europeans. For example, the economy of the Baga was based on salt mining and agriculture. They got everything through agriculture and salt mining. When one of their people was captured, they purchased him by real money instead of giving some slaves for his liberty. Zachary Macaulay, the governor of Sierra Leone testified their non-involvement in the slave trade in this way,

It is worth noting that the Bagos who inhabit the country along the Sea Coast between the Rio Pongas and Rio Nunez, do not sell slaves. They employ themselves in making salt with wh.[ich] they buy Ivory from the Foulahs and goods from the traders in the Rio Nunez. Whenever one of their number is sold they take the utmost pains to recover him, but with their salt or produce, not with slaves. This aversion from the slave trade exists however only among the Bagos who inhabit the above district. (McGowan, 1990, pp7-8).

Some African leaders accepted to collaborate with the slave traders. Their collaboration did not mean that they wanted slave trade, but they did it so as to avoid the enslavement of their people. They saw this as another form of resistance. They noticed that if they did not practice it, it would be practised on them. In the words of Diouf, "For some then, the best way to resist enslavement was to become slavers" (2003, p154).

The rulers who welcomed slave traders always had a deal with them. They should capture no one of their people and if some people caught anyone of them and sold him to them, they could go and recuperate him. Those who did not respect this deal were not allowed to stay in their communities and would be challenged whenever they tried to enter their communities. For instance, in 1805, a Portuguese captain kidnapped the son and two slaves of the king of Gula. His son came back because of his pressure on Portuguese slave traders. He prohibited them to do slave trade in his community and he seized any slave ships which belonged to Portugal.

Some interacted with European slave traders so as to have weapons. Once they managed to have enough, they would get rid of them and prepare their communities against their attacks. As illustration, Almami Sadu, the ruler of Futa Jallon, did not hide his unhappiness about slave trade although he collaborated with them. In 1794, he directly told some British men that he traded slaves with them because he did not have another way to acquire things they brought to Africa. Otherwise, if he had the possibility to gain those things without them, he would chase all of them. Winston McGowan describes his words in this way, "If he could get guns and powder, and everything else he wanted for Ivory, rice and cattle, he would soon drive all the slave dealers out of the Country." (1990, p6.)

African kings tried to give European slave traders people who were less important in their communities. Among them were prisoners of war, traditional rule breakers and women. Agaja, a king of Dahomey tried to sell only women to European slave traders. He believed that women had less role to play in the community. He never accepted the sale of men. The sale of men for slavery was also prohibited in Benin in the 1520s. African leaders only sold people who were burden in the society. In the words of Basil Davidson: "In this respect the powerful men of West Africa behaved no differently from those of Europe: they transported their 'malcontents' and 'trouble-makers' to lands that were safely beyond the sea" (1980, P281).

European slave traders did not like African kings who opposed their trade. Their lives were in danger. They tried to do everything so as to capture them and send them far away from Africa. For instance, in the 1690s, André Brûe, the director-general of the Compagnie du Sénégal, was committed to enslave Lat Sukaabe Faal, the king of Kayor and Baol because he prevented them from buying slaves in his community.

African religion also played a tremendous role in the resistance to the transatlantic slave trade. Africans were true believers before the arrival of Islam and Christianity in Africa. During the transatlantic slave trade, most of them prayed their gods so that they could prevent them from enslavement. They believed that their gods could send European slave traders far away from them. For instance, Conneau explained the mystical things that the natives tried to do to him. In his own words, "I am certain the poor part of the population looked on me as their Satan. Once or twice I detected women pick up a handful of earth and throw it towards me, exclaiming a short sentence. This was done to drive the evil spirit from them" (McGowan, 1990, P17).

1.2. The escape and suicide of the captives

European slave traders used to park their ships at the coast and went to buy slaves inside. After buying slaves they brought them to the coast where they parked their ships. On their way to the coast, they shackled them and made them walk for days or weeks. Some refused to walk and they beat them severely, but that did not change anything. They beat some till they died. Some tried to remove their chains and run away. They put some on canoes so as to transport them to the coast. Many of them jumped overboard.

When they arrived at the coast, they kept them in the barracoons, the buildings in which they kept slaves before their embarkation. Even there some sought some means to escape. Some slaves willingly died of hunger. They believed that that was also another way to protest enslavement. The crew members worried about the slaves' refusal to eat. When a slave died, it was their money which went away. Therefore, they did everything so as to make them eat something.

Many strategies were taken by crew members so as to make slaves eat food. They opened the mouths of slaves by force and put food inside. They burned the lips of some so that they could open their mouths. In the words of Dr. Alexander Falconbridge, a doctor on the ship of Tartar: "I have seen coals of fire, glowing hot, put on a shovel and placed so near their lips as to scorch and burn them. And this has been accompanied with threats to eat. This generally has the required effect." (Bly, 1998, p181.) They beat some slaves because of their refusal to eat. For instance, when they were on the ship, they brought food to Olaudah Equiano to eat, but he refused to eat it. They tied his feet and beat him very well so that he could eat it.

Many slaves also jumped overboard. Enslavers took many precautions so as to prevent slaves from jumping overboard. They watched all their movements. they erected nets, but those things did not prevent them from jumping overboard. Many slaves believed in life after death. Therefore, they did not see their deaths as a sad thing. They believed that it was a means to come back home. Before they jumped, they said good bye to their mates. They never regretted their jumping overboard and they never accepted that the enslavers saved them. Whenever a slave jumped overboard, they tried to save

him. But many slaves did not let them be saved. When they knew that they wanted to save them, they drowned themselves. For instance, three slaves of the ship on which Equiano was jumped overboard and the crew members immediately tried to save them. They managed to save only one. The two others drowned themselves. According to Equiano,

We believed that, once drowned, a man would return to his village and family. . . . Two men from my country were on deck one day when the nets, usually bunched tight against the side of the ship, were left hanging loose. . . . The men saw the ocean sparkle in through the gap between the ship and blown-out net, and they jumped into it. . . . A group of sailors lowered a small boat down to the water and began to row fast towards the two heads that were still bobbing above the green. But before they reached them the men waved their arms like happy madmen, and went under" (Bly, 1998, p181).

Africans always thought the dead were not dead. They were among them. That is why they always poured some food on soil before eating. A large number of them committed suicide in thinking that they would come back to their homelands. Some hanged themselves. The ship captains knew that slaves committed suicide in thinking that they would come back to their homes. The captains discouraged them in mutilating the dead slaves and told them that they would never come back in life or even if they came back, they would be handicapped because some of their parts had missed. They could cut the person's feet and throw them on one side of the sea and cut his arms and throw them on the other side of the sea.

Many European slave traders refused to come in Benin because of the Benin people's commitment to die instead of accepting enslavement. Those who traded in Benin had more losses than those who traded elsewhere in Africa. For instance, in 1716, Joubert Desmarais, the captain of the slave ship L'Aurore traded 463 slaves in Benin, but 341 passed away during the middle passage. Benin people's refusal to enslavement had been explained in this way,

On a toujours remarqué que les Nègres de Bénin ne réussissent pas comme les Aradas, les Mines et les Sénégalais ; ils se laissent mourir en route par orgueil ou désespoir et ceux qui restent ne sont pas d'un grand service sur les habitations. Cependant quelques capitaines séduits par le bon marché, qui les ruine ensuite, vont à cette côte, qui est d'ailleurs la plus malsaine de l'Afrique ; ils y perdent la moitié et quelquefois les deux tiers de leurs équipages comme a fait ledit capitaine Joubert. M. de Bonivet, qui y a fait aussi sa traite, a eu le même sort" (Daget, 1978, p48).¹

2. Active resistance of free and enslaved Africans to the transatlantic slave trade

2.1. The armed rebellions of African kings against transatlantic slave trade

Some African rulers did not only refuse to take part in the slave trade, but they did everything so as to prevent Europeans from having slaves. They fought African communities which traded slaves with Europeans. They took away their prisoners who were supposed to be sold to European slave

¹ We have always noticed that the Negroes of Benin do not succeed like the Aradas, the Mines and the Senegalese; they let themselves die on the way out of the pride or despair, and those who remain are of little service to the dwellings. However, some captains, seduced by the cheapness, which then ruins them, go to this coast, which is moreover the unhealthiest in Africa; they lose half and sometimes two-thirds of their crew, as the said Captain Joubert did. M. de Bonivet, who also traded there, met the same fate (Our own translation.)

traders. They prevented whatever could facilitate the transportation of slaves to the coast and to America. For instance, the king of Futa Toro forbade slave traders to cross his community with slaves. He told them to find another way to join the coast and stop crossing his community. He also forbade his people to come close to slave traders.

In African traditional society, all males were initiated in war. When a male child was born, they took him to the god of war so that it could protect him from the injury of all kinds of iron. Many African kings also trained their young men to defend their communities when they were attacked. Most of them received military training for the defence of the community. Those who could not defend themselves were not allowed to take a long road alone. They were always accompanied by people who received military train and knew how to manipulate arms. In the words of Sylviane A Diouf, “....., women carried out economic activities like farming in groups (Oru Ogbo), and those who attended distant markets were accompanied by their husbands or armed male escorts” (2023, p128).

Africans used to attack slave ships before their embarkations so as to liberate their relatives. In 1740 Africans attacked Jolly Bachelor, a slave ship which was on the Sierra Leone River. They took control of the ship by killing the captain and some other crew members. Another attack of Africans took place in 1764; some Africans attacked a slave ship led by captain Joseph Miller. They killed all the crew members. They liberated the slaves and took all necessary things they wanted.

Dahomey army always went to attack their neighbouring communities which engaged in slave trade. They destroyed the stores of slave traders and took all their goods. For instance, in 1727, they attacked Juda, the area where more slaves were treated. They destroyed the stores of the crew members of Le More and took all the goods and seized some as prisoners. In 1728, they also attacked Juda and took all the goods of the crew members of the slave ship Charlemagne.

Blacks also caught Whites and sold them between themselves. For instance, in 1753, four members of crew of the slave ship La Tendre Famille went fishing and the natives captured three of them. The fourth one drowned himself. They sold them to other Africans who sold them to a Portuguese captain. On January 30th 1720, the natives also captured 6 crew members of the slave ship La Marie Angélique when they went to trade in Sestre (Daget, 1978, p75).

2.2 The bloody revolts of the captives against the transatlantic slave trade

The resistance of slaves reached its climax when they were joining the ships for embarkation. Most of them saw that as their last chance to remain in Africa. They challenged a lot slave traders. They refused to enter the slave ships. Once the ships embarked, they did not care about their lives because they already thought that they would be killed in America. Therefore, it was better that they died in their homelands instead of dying in foreign lands. They understood every strategy so as to destroy the ships. In the words of Ottobah Cugoano, a captive from Gold Coast, "And when we found ourselves at last taken away, death was more preferable than life, and a plan was concerted amongst us that we might burn and blow up the ship and to perish altogether in the flames; but we were betrayed by one of our countrymen" (McGowan, 1990, P18).

Slaves organized revolts on the ships every time. They tried to seek the right moments for their revolts. Sometime, they planned to do their revolts during meal times. During the meal times they deferred them and brought them on deck so that they could eat. They found that moment the best one to struggle. They could also undertake their revolts when they knew that the crew members were not huge. Another ideal moment for them was when the crew members suffered from a sickness which weakened them. They might also carry out their revolts when they knew that the crew members were not watchful. They might be busy distracting themselves or doing something else.

Since Slaves' revolts were common during the transatlantic slave trade, European slave traders always thought that slaves were planning something against them. They believed that their lives were

in danger whenever they were close to slaves. Therefore, they did not play with their arms when slaves were about to get on the ship for embarkation. They got ready with their arms. They were ready to shoot whenever they suspected any revolt.

The captains of the slave ships were always warned to take precautions because they knew Blacks would always rebel. They did not know the exact moments of their revolts, but they knew that they would never accept their transportations peacefully. In the words of David Richardson: "Although predicting insurrections was difficult, owners of slave ships were well aware of the possibility of revolts and instructed commanders of slave ships to take appropriate measures to prevent them" (2001, p72).

White slave traders undertook many means to prevent slave revolts. They increased the number of their crew members and acquired sophisticated weapons. They believed that slaves would not undertake any revolt when they saw many crew members with deadly weapons. The captains also started to treat slaves badly. They tied them with chains to the point that they could barely move. They severely beat the leaders of the revolts. They hungered some, they even shot others. They thought that it was slaves' punishment that could stop or decrease their revolts, but it has been the opposite. The worse they treated slaves, the more they revolted. The enslavers' holding weapons did not prevent slaves from rebelling. They knew that revolts would mean their deaths, but they did not care.

Slaves watched all the movements of the enslavers. When they noticed that there was a possibility to revolt, they would not hesitate to do it. For instance, there had been a situation in which the ship was disturbed by the storm. the wind was blowing everywhere. Two slaves tried to plan a revolt when the crew members were busy with preventing the ship from shipwreck. The two slaves who were organizing the revolt were called Dkemba and Matamba. Matamba told Dkemba to inform the others that they should get ready and after the storm they would revolt. Dkemba told him that the right moment was to fight when they were busy. They exchanged in this manner, Matamba said: "It is time! Tell the others to prepare . . . We will strike when the waters of the great river grow calm." And Dkemba said: ""Should we not attack now while they are preoccupied with the storm?" (Bly, 1998, p179).

Matamba did not agree with him. For him, the best moment to stand up was when they were too tired. Therefore, they should let them wear out their energies with solving the storm problem. When the storm calmed down, he told the others that they could start their revolt because that moment might find that the crew members were too tired and asleep. They never believed that their revolts would fail. They believed that they would succeed in one way or another. They believed that if they won, they would come back to their homelands and if they failed, it meant their deaths and they would join their ancestors. They saw both of them as their victories. All of them were motivated and determined. All of them said this together, "Victory will be ours," (Bly, 1998, p179.)

Revolts were more likely to happen in larger ships than small ones because most of the time their crew members were too small to manage the slaves they had. A larger ship could take 500 slaves while its crew members did not exceed 40 or 60 people. Slaves could directly see that they could not stop them. Dr. John Bell, the doctor of the slave ship *Thamis*, sent a letter to John Fletcher on December 15, 1776, in which he explained to him how slaves took advantage of the low number of the crew members and revolted when they were deferred so as to have bath. They were 160 and the crew members were only 6 at that moment. They believed that such small number could not stop them. They had killed many and some threw overboard. They lost more than 30 slaves in that revolt.

Although many revolts of slaves failed, it is also necessary to mention that some had been very successful. For instance, slaves took control of the slave ship *Little George* during a revolt which took place in 1730. They killed some crew members and seized the rest. Those who were seized frightened slaves in saying that they would sink the ship or blow it up. But that did not make slaves relinquish

their struggle. They threatened slaves a lot, but they did not give up. They finally made a deal with them. They accepted to make slaves free and bring them back to Sierra Leone and slaves also accepted not to hurt anyone of them. They came ashore and left successfully in spite of the crew members' attempt to recapture them.

Another successful revolt occurred on June 30th, 1839 on a slave ship named *Amistad*. That revolt was led by slave Joseph Cinque. They killed two crew members, namely the captain and the cook and told the remaining crew members to sail them back to Africa. They accepted it, but they tried to deceive them. They took the direction of Africa during the day and at night they changed the direction and tried to go to America. Despite this, the slaves came out victorious in that revolt because transatlantic slave trade was prohibited in The United States of America in 1820. Therefore, its supreme court would never accept the importation of any slaves on American territory. When they came to the USA, the US Supreme Court conducted an investigation about their backgrounds and it found out they were exported from Africa. It freed them and sent them back to Africa.

Women also played a tremendous role in many revolts taken place on ships during the transatlantic slave trade. Male slaves used them as their informants. They had more freedom than male slaves. Most of the time, the crew members did not shackle them. There was no place on the ships that they did not know because the crew members took them to their private places and used them. Some female slaves were even more informed than some crew members. They knew almost all the movements of the crew members and they also knew where they put their arms. They did not only bring information to male slaves; they also brought them arms so that they could carry out their revolts. For instance, in 1721, a revolt was taken place by Tomba, the chief of Baga on an English slave ship. He managed to have arms and the situation of the crew members because of the intervention of a woman. She brought him many arms and told him the exact number of crew members who were on the deck.

Conclusion

On the whole, the transatlantic slave trade had been challenged by both free and enslaved Africans. They undertook different forms of resistance to it. Some were non-violent and others were violent. African people left from place to place so as to avoid enslavement. They went to places where they could hardly be captured. They tried to unify each other so as to form strong communities. The captives often committed suicide. Some hanged themselves. Some refused to eat and drink till they died, others jumped overboard. Most of them believed in life after death. They strongly believed that they would come back to their homelands after their deaths.

Many Africans also undertook violent actions. Some African leaders went and burnt the stores and houses of enslavers. They attacked slave ships so as to liberate slave and take all the goods within. They attacked African communities which accepted to collaborate with European slave traders. Slaves also undertook many revolts on slave ships. They always looked for the rights moments to revolt. It could happen during the meal times, when the crew members were small, when an illness caught the crew members or when they were busy doing something. Sometime they failed; sometime they succeeded. They could take control of a whole ship. They seized its crew members and sailed wherever they wanted to.

We recommend Africans to keep on fighting because slavery is not over yet. Although African people are physically free, they are still mentally enslaved. Europeans made us believe that we did not have civilization, culture and history before our contact with them. We were savages and cannibals. As illustration, Tom Watson said this to Booker T. Washington, an African American leader, "During the millennium when Europeans were building a civilization, your people were running about in the woods, naked, eating raw meat . . . steeped in ignorance, vice and superstition, with an occasional lapse into human sacrifice and cannibalism" Norrell, 2009, p324).

Europeans never feel sorry for African enslavement. They rather saw it as a mission of civilization. What is so sad is that we all believe in these kinds of things. We believe that whatever is from Europe is good and whatever is from Africa is bad. There are some African scholars who do not believe in any piece of news if they do not hear it on RFI, France 24, BBC etc. Some Blacks are ashamed of their blackness. They use cosmetics products so as to bleach their skin. All these things are the legacy of slavery. Time has come for we Africans to remind where we came from. That is the sole way to know where we are going and prepare for that.

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