

Research Article

The Cognitive Slumber of Ivorian Cultural Policy

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Abstract

Slavery and colonisation have left lasting scars on Africa. Yet, in total denial, Trump and Sarkozy, two Western presidents, have made derogatory remarks about the continent. What can be said about the rapid economic growth of the United States and Europe, the cultural heritage of the African continent scattered throughout the world, and anti-black racism in Arabic-speaking countries? However, playing the victim is not constructive, because since independence, Africa, particularly Côte d'Ivoire, has remained in a deep “cognitive slumber” when it comes to public cultural policies. Beyond superficial activity, these policies, built on disjointed logic, have continued to be mobilised without really being thought of as a lever for social, economic and political development. They reflect a cultural governance that is more reactive than structuring and forward-looking, incapable of anchoring culture in a sustainable vision of the state. It is therefore logical to look to history for the causes of this inertia, while also examining the heritage-related behaviour of those in power, coupled with the wait-and-see attitude of the population. To understand this relaxation, which is not inevitable, in order to move away from a policy of urgency, this text takes a multidisciplinary approach combining cultural history, sociology of public policy, and analysis of institutional narratives. This approach avoids a strictly national impasse by placing the Ivorian case within a broader dynamic reflecting a sub-regional trend.

Keywords

Cultural Policy, Sub-Regional Integration, Elitist Heritage, Education, Black African Culture, Alienation

1. General Introduction

During a meeting with parliamentarians at the White House on 11 January 2018, Trump described Haiti and several African countries that are sources of immigrants as “*shithole countries*”¹. For his part, on 26 July 2007 in the Senegalese capital, Sarkozy stated with conviction that: “*The tragedy of Africa is that the African man has not sufficiently entered history*.”² The tendentious remarks of these two Western

presidents are not new. Moreover, they clearly reveal the view that the vast majority of Western leaders have of Africa.

This smear campaign has been successful because Africa's desire for emancipation, which requires “*restoring African culture to its central place in the rebuilding of national identities*” [1]³, has remained an empty promise [2]⁴ to this day. Since the

¹ États-Unis. Propos injurieux du président Donald Trump à l'égard d'Haïti et d'États africains. 11 janvier 2018 - Événement - Encyclopédie Universalis. Accessed on 15/04/2025 at 3 p.m.

² L'intégralité du discours de Dakar prononcé par Nicolas Sarkozy. Accessed on 15/04/2025 at 5 p.m. Vidéos Bing. Viewed on 15/04/2025 at 5 p.m.

³ Union africaine, Charte pour la Renaissance Culturelle Africaine, adopté le 24 janvier 2006 à Khartoum (Soudan), lors de la 6e session ordinaire de la Conférence de l'Union africaine. Articles 5 et 7. Accessed on 02/02/2025 at 12 p.m.

⁴ Le Mémorial ACTe, Archives du Mémorial ACTe, est inauguré officiellement le 10 mai 2015 à Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe, en présence du président François Hollande. Ce centre caribéen d'expressions et de mémoire de la traite et de

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Pan-African Cultural Manifesto of 1969⁵, Africa has continually proclaimed culture as the pillar of its unity and post-colonial development through numerous meetings⁶. However, these commitments, expressed through symbolic texts, contrast with “political fragmentation” and “inertia in cultural policies”. It is this dichotomy that partly encourages these “shocking and shameful remarks with racist overtones (...)”⁷.

Since 1960, Côte d'Ivoire in particular has presented a cultural paradox: the apparent vitality of its cultural policies (dynamic and abundant festivals, heritage restoration, etc.) conceals a profound strategic inertia, despite an ambitious regulatory framework and a clear awareness at the continental level.

This state of affairs paradigmatically illustrates the “cognitive slumber of cultural policies”. The concept refers to a state of institutional dissonance in which Ivorian political actors unconsciously reproduce colonial patterns while proclaiming pan-African ambitions.

This article posits that the factors behind this are the “systemic denial” of historical traumas (slavery, colonisation), “administrative inertia” and the “deliberate political strategy” of the postcolonial elite to maintain culture as an “identity spectacle” in order to mask the absence of a transformative vision. This triple dynamic, fuelled by the “collective cognitive dissonance” between emancipatory discourse and neo-colonial practices, explains the inability to translate cultural charters into operational policies, despite the development of subtle forms of identity preservation and circumvention of colonial cultural imposition by the population [3].

How do cultural imperialism and historical traumas shape cultural representations and policies in West Africa?

How is the pan-African project paralysed by the paternalism of local elites and the alienation of civil societies, despite sub-regional integration?

What institutional mechanisms could anchor Black African culture in a logic of sustainable development and active citizenship?

l'esclavage est organisé sous l'égide du Conseil régional de la Guadeloupe. Accessed on 02/02/2025 at 8 p.m.

⁵ Microsoft Word - Manifeste culturel panafricain.doc.

⁶ - FESPACO Resolutions (1969). Pan-African Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou. Resolutions and recommendations from the first African Film Days. Ouagadougou: FESPACO General Secretariat.

- “La Charte Culturelle de l'Afrique-Port-Louis (1976)”, In UNESCO. (1978). Culture et développement en Afrique: conférence intergouvernementale sur les politiques culturelles en Afrique (Accra, Ghana, 27 octobre - 6 novembre 1975). Paris: UNESCO. 495 p.

- Le Plan d'action de Lagos (1980), Organisation de l'Unité Africaine. (1980). Rapport sur la culture et le développement. Addis-Abeba: OUA, Département de l'Éducation, de la Culture et des Affaires Sociales. 132 p.

- The Harare Manifesto (1990). Mbembe Achille, Critique de la raison nègre. Paris, La Découverte, 2013, 288 p.

- “Les Assises africaines de Lomé (2013)”, In Actes des Assises africaines de la culture: “La culture, fondement du développement de l'Afrique”, Lomé, Togo, 1^{er}-3 août 2013, Lomé Ministère de la Culture du Togo / Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF)

- La Charte pour la Renaissance Culturelle Africaine (2006 mise à jour et entrée en vigueur en 2021). (DOC) Charte de la renaissance culturelle africaine. Accessed on 15/04/2025 at 10 a.m.

⁷ Déclaration de Rupert Colville, porte-parole du Haut-Commissariat des Nations Unies aux droits de l'homme (OHCHR), Genève. 2018. Le Haut-Commissariat aux droits de l'homme dénonce des propos “choquants” prêtés au Président américain | ONU Info. Accessed on 15/04/2025 at 3 p.m.

zenship?

To overcome the “culture of urgency”, the analysis draws on a multidisciplinary approach combining cultural history, sociology of public policy, and analysis of institutional narratives. *The origins of the “cognitive slumber” of Ivorian cultural policies: the “siren song” of Western theories* (1) explores the dependencies inherited from the slave trade and colonisation, as well as their perpetuation exacerbated by neocolonialism. *Subliminal paradigm shifts by the West* (2) warns of the insidious nature of Western theories that insinuate themselves into African cultural systems, corrupting them from within and “formatting” them. *Internal hypnotic mechanisms* (3) examines the levers of internal blockages to the implementation of cultural policies in Africa, before proposing “the jellyfish of post-Pan-Africanism” as a mast to resist the “siren song” while initiating a gradual and salvific awakening.

2. The Origins of the “Cognitive Slumber” of Ivorian Cultural Policies: The “Siren Song” of Western Theories

The expression “siren song” has become a literary and philosophical metaphor used to describe seductive but deceptive discourse. Mbembe uses it here to criticise universalism as a process that perpetuates mimetic dependence, which consists in the reproduction of unsuitable administrative models [48].

2.1. The “Siren Song” of Universalism: A Powerful Sleeping Pill Against Cultural Policies in Côte d'Ivoire

It is now well established that the “mess” of underdevelopment in African countries was created from scratch by the various slave trades and colonisation. The Arab-Berber slave trade led to the current anti-black racism in Arabic-speaking countries⁸. The Western slave trade is directly linked to the rapid economic growth of the United States and Europe. Colonisation is responsible for the dispersion of the African continent's cultural heritage throughout the world. Orchestrated and maintained by neo-colonialism, the “nauseating” stench of the putrefaction of this “shit” (underdevelopment, impoverishment, alienation, infant mortality, fratricidal wars, coups d'état, etc.) is amplified by the vicious circle of double debt and the effect of the “opiates” that are revealed religions and sports betting. Even in this century, the West continues to deliberately drain Africa through “selective immigration”, while the Mediterranean “swallows” its lifeblood.

The appeal of universal human rights is the real Trojan

⁸ Souleymane Bachir Diagne et Malek Chebel, Podcast: La traite arabo-musulmane, une histoire méconnue | France Culture, 54 min. Published on Wednesday, 19 September 2007 at 6:20 p.m. Accessed on 15/04/2025 at 8 p.m.

horse of neo-colonialism. Mutua criticises this “project” as an imposed Western model, appealing in its universal moral language but serving only geopolitical interests, with military interventions in the name of human rights at its epicenter [6]. Universalism oscillates between a shared norm and a shamelessly exploited lever of influence.

Furthermore, the “siren song” of neoliberal economic universalism chanted by the “Washington Consensus” in the 1990s and rigidly applied has royally ignored local contexts, exacerbating inequalities. This neoliberal ideology, which is the source of the dead ends of globalisation imposed “from above”, has often led to the opposite of development, sowing impoverishment, instability and social crises [7].

French secularism, republican universalism and religious universalism also spread their charming message far and wide across Africa. The first, under the seductive guise of the ideal of equality, often masks forms of cultural racism and exclusion of specific cultural expressions while perpetuating forced assimilation [8]. The second, which claims that the law applies uniformly to all individuals, regardless of their particular affiliations, is undermined by the structural racism that has long plagued Western societies. Finally, the universalism of Christianity or Islam inevitably plunges Africa into proselytism and cultural intolerance.

In the name of the “opiate” that is revealed religion, on 13 March 2016, heavily armed assailants attacked hotels in the seaside resort of Grand-Bassam in Côte d'Ivoire, killing 18 people. The attack was claimed by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). This religious terrorism highlights regional security issues. Indeed, the whole of West Africa, without exception, finds itself unwillingly engaged in a struggle against the rise of Muslim fundamentalism. Furthermore, even if Côte d'Ivoire manages to maintain a unique stability and coexistence in the face of ethnic and religious struggles, the spectre of these conflicts continues to haunt election periods. On the other hand, the phenomenon of sports betting, a second “opiate”, is rapidly spreading with serious social consequences for the continent's youth⁹.

Western cultural universalism has a seductive effect, promising international recognition. One of the major drivers fuelling the “siren song” of African cultural policies is the mechanism whereby African states, often seeking symbolic legitimacy on the world stage, engage in heritage preservation or cultural initiatives motivated primarily by the gaze of the West or international institutions, rather than by endogenous dynamics. One of the most striking examples is the rush for international recognition labels such as UNESCO World Heritage status. Many preservation or promotion projects are not primarily oriented towards local cultural needs, but rather towards obtaining this “holy grail” that confers prestige, international visibility, and often access to funding. However,

these approaches are sometimes disconnected from local populations, who are not closely involved in the process, and ultimately promote a “showcase heritage” at the expense of real community roots. The global spread of the European educational or artistic model plays a large part in this [9].

A prime example of “showcase heritage” in Côte d'Ivoire is the Basilica of Our Lady of Peace in Yamoussoukro. Monumental and ostentatious, it has little cultural relevance locally. As spectacular as it is, it is not really part of the religious and cultural practices of the majority of Ivorians (Muslims, animists, evangelicals)¹⁰. Furthermore, it has not generated any large-scale sustainable economic or cultural momentum for the local population. This type of building is characteristic of *façade* or showcase heritage because it is more about prestige and state or international representation.

The same is true of the Museum of Civilisations of Côte d'Ivoire in Abidjan and the historic town of Grand-Bassam, which was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2012. Restored after the socio-political crisis and reopened with great fanfare in 2017 after years of decline, the museum is not very well integrated into national educational circuits, and access to it remains limited to an elite few. The museum embodies a desire to showcase Ivorian cultural modernity, particularly internationally. The historic city of Grand-Bassam serves the same purpose. Promoted as an international showcase, it is partially disconnected from local memory and living customs [10].

An example of intangible “showcase heritage” in Côte d'Ivoire is the Zaouli dance of the Gouro people, which was added to UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage in 2017. Always performed at official events or for cultural diplomacy, its visibility is mainly international and its use more event-based. Outside its original ritual context, it is used in shows and festivals, particularly in Abidjan and abroad. The spiritual and initiatory dimension of the mask is rarely highlighted and reduced to a simple aesthetic performance. Unfortunately, the communities of origin benefit little from the economic or symbolic spin-offs, which fuels a dissociation between external valorisation and internal transmission. The Zaouli mask, which has become an exported cultural emblem, illustrates the tension between heritage visibility and community vitality.

Funding from major cultural or cooperation agencies (Agence Française de Développement (AFD), European Union (EU), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), etc.) imposes normative frameworks and intervention formats that are sometimes incompatible with local socio-cultural realities. In seeking to “appeal” to these partners, states adapt their policies to exogenous criteria, which compromise cultural sovereignty and local relevance. This dialectic explains the inertia of cultural policies in West Africa, particularly in Côte d'Ivoire.

⁹ Marie de Vergès et Marine Jeannin (Abidjan, correspondance), *L'Afrique gagnée par la fièvre des paris sportifs. L'Afrique gagnée par la fièvre des paris sportifs*. Published on 28 December 2023 at 3:00 a.m., modified on 5 January 2024 at 11:19 a.m. Accessed on 17 April 2025 at 8:00 p.m.

¹⁰ Jimmy Moran, *Croyances Religieuses en Côte D'Ivoire*. <https://fr.ripleybelieves.com/religious-beliefs-in-ivory-coast-3357>. Accessed on 22/04/2025 at 8 p.m.

Enchanted by the “siren song” of universalism, *“Africa is being urged to develop within the conceptual frameworks of those who have underdeveloped it”* [5]. Universalism proclaims that certain values or models should apply to everyone. However, history shows that the once triumphant idea of universality served as a mask for colonialism and ethnocentrism to oppress peoples “on the margins of progress” in the name of “civilisation” [6]¹¹. Under the guise of civilisational neutrality, contemporary universalism continues in Africa to insidiously inoculate its “venom” coated with seduction, epistemic violence and mimetic dependence, further weighing down the “cognitive slumber” of cultural policies and systematically invalidating endogenous knowledge [11].

In response to the “siren song” of universalism, Africa may be tempted to oppose it with particularism, relativism, or even the theory of hybridity. In reality, all these theories, which were born and developed in the West, regardless of their proponents, remain a remixed version of the same “siren song”.



Figure 1. Zaouli dance performance at Fâx Houphouët Boigny Stadium in Abidjan. Anonymous credit.

2.2. The “Siren Song” of Particularism: A Suicidal Melody for Côte d'Ivoire

Particularism refers to the desire or tendency of an individual or group to preserve, assert or reactivate distinctive cultural, linguistic, social, institutional, ethnic or professional characteristics. It can be expressed in the artistic, political,

linguistic, regional, religious or even administrative spheres. By extension, at the global or continental level, particularism is the desire and pride of a people to assert their national character¹². Unlike universalism, which is homogenising and domineering, particularism emphasises the uniqueness and irreducibility of identities. It is rooted in history, memory and symbolism.

Experiments in village democracy in Ghana [13] and solidarity-based economic models based on tontines in Central Africa [14] illustrate this cultural and institutional pluralism. In Côte d'Ivoire, traditional chiefdoms act as local social regulatory structures, combining ancestral legitimacy and political arbitration in areas where the state has little presence, [15], while cooperatives based on local solidarity (ethnic, family, village) play a major economic role in the cocoa-coffee sector, bypassing traditional neoliberal models [16]. These systems, which are independent of Western norms, function effectively in their sociocultural environment.

For Africa, therefore, the solution of particularism seems attractive, since it is a tool for reclaiming identity in the face of imposed models (Francophonie, universal rights, etc.). In postcolonial contexts, particularism can indeed be interpreted as an act of cultural resistance.

However, particularism that is poorly managed and conceived by an unintelligent central power, obsessed with ‘the politics of the belly’ [17]¹³ and in the midst of a “cognitive slumber” in terms of cultural policies, can become a factor of fragmentation, a tool of manipulation to legitimise or exclude certain groups. [19]. At the national level, regional or ethnic demands can hinder political cohesion or the construction of a shared memory. Post-independence Africa offers several examples of this, particularly through conflicts related to identity.

In an Africa plagued by renewed coups d'état, untimely constitutional revisions and endless presidential terms, social fragmentation and a decline in the public interest are inevitable. Too many competing particularisms, exploited by political elites, destabilise national unity and weaken the state, fragmenting public debate and calling common laws into question¹⁴ [20].

The anarchic practice of indefinitely renewable presidential terms must be stopped. One example that could be the beginning of a solution to this Gordian knot comes from the management of power in Akan countries. In their tradition, the village is made up of several tribes, at most four or five. Initially, brothers accompanied by their sisters and blood cousins supported by their sisters settle together on the same land. They agree to share the same water source. The founders

¹² particularisme | Dictionnaire de l'Académie française | 9e édition

¹³ Jean-François Bayart, *L'État en Afrique: la politique du ventre*, Paris, Fayard, 1989, 453 p. The expression ‘politics of the belly’ is introduced in the introduction and developed in more detail in Chapter 2, pages 107 to 133.

¹⁴ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Race et Histoire*, Paris, UNESCO, 1952, 92 pages. From pages 46 to 55, the ethnologist discusses the danger of fetishising cultural differences to the point where they become an obstacle to cohesion and universal dialogue.

¹¹ L'idée d'universalité | BnF Essentiels. Accessed on 17-16-2025 at 9 p.m.

of the village do not marry among themselves but instead form alliances with other villages through marriage. The descendants of these founders, each in their respective lineages and families, form the tribes. The village throne is held for life and passes smoothly from tribe to tribe indefinitely, guarded by the sisters (Queen Mother), each assisting her own child in the exercise of power.

In comparison, after more than 65 years of power in Eburie, four major tribes stand out in the political landscape due to their longevity or popularity¹⁵. The “true Queen Mother”, symbolised by the people, will formalise the order of governance of each tribe by referendum and then elect the President from among the candidates proposed by the tribe. The term of office will be seven years. Experience shows that a five-year term is too short and a ten-year term is a sure path to abuse. Political parties or individuals, even without an elected mandate, once integrated into a tribe, are prohibited from transhumance. This measure will be guaranteed by a Commission responsible for monitoring political transhumance and elections, composed solely of women (Queen Mothers), handpicked for their proven integrity, patriotism and total independence. The members of this commission, numbering seven, are elected for life by the people during the referendum organising the order of accession to the throne, without the possibility of claiming the presidential office.

During the management of power, the other tribes become a force of proposition and regulation by sitting in a council (parliament), in equitable representation, without possible access to the government. Their presence there disrupts the full enjoyment of power by the tribe on the throne, which in turn cannot sit in parliament. Only the people, convened by the “Queen Mothers”, can dismiss or replace the President by electing another from the same tribe to complete the current term. Municipalities and other elective offices subject to the verdict of the “true Queen Mother” are held by members of the ruling tribe. All members of this system are systematically and compulsorily renewed every seven years, with the exception of the “Queen Mothers”.

Another peculiar practice is the existence of “joking alliances” throughout Africa, particularly in West Africa¹⁶. They play several crucial roles¹⁷, and updating them is essential to

the harmonious management of the city. In Côte d'Ivoire, only the Bété people have no allies, although history shows that they could have some.

As we know, universality is an ideological construct at the service of certain dominant particularisms, with the aim of suffocating other particularisms under a discourse of theoretical equality [12]. Moreover, it is becoming increasingly clear that the ultimate unavowed agenda of the universalist project is the complete and methodical dissolution of African identities into an abstract norm in an irreversible manner.

Given the tenacity of neocolonialism and its abysmal depths, this project is in its forced, frenetic and oppressive march. François Mitterrand's famous phrase, pronounced in Strasbourg on January 17, 1995 “*nationalism is war*” is further proof of this. Under its humanist guise, this speech to the European Parliament in Strasbourg is an indirect, unambiguous message, also addressed to Africa. Macron also repeated it on Tuesday, April 12, 2022 in Strasbourg¹⁸.

The echoes of this speech, which sounds like a warning to African sovereigntists, can be felt in the Alliance des pays du Sahel (AES). “*If African countries realize their ambition to drive neo-colonialism from their shores by nationalizing Western interests, whatever they may be, the scourge of war will fall upon them, worse than a plague of locusts. African Presidents will therefore be wise not to allow our imperialist impulses to revive*”. To object to the criticism of over-interpretation, we must remember that Africa's fate has too often been played out in this kind of European deliberative forum. In any case, can Europe deal with the thorny issue of nationalism without including Africa in its reflections?

The acuteness of this threat is not to be underestimated, given that François Mitterrand, although a Socialist president (1981-1995), largely perpetuated the logic of “*Françafrique*”, an informal system of opaque politico-economic relations between France and its former African colonies. In his speeches, Mitterrand called for democracy¹⁹, making democratization a condition of French aid. But in practice, France continued to support autocratic regimes militarily, financially and diplomatically, with the sole aim of preserving, consolidating and expanding its interests [21]²⁰.

The “siren song of particularism” warns of the seductive but dangerous risk of identitarian or regionalist withdrawal. The bewitching melody of this project is an irresistible, even ideal, temptation for certain reactionary Africans who want to break away here and now from the “evil” yoke of all forms of imperialism. However, without adequate prior ramparts, this

¹⁵ The first is the Parti démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire-Rassemblement démocratique africain (PDCI-RDA), founded in 1946. The second is the Parti des peuples africains-Côte d'Ivoire (PPA-CI) founded in 2021, abandoning the Front populaire ivoirien (FPI) created in 1982. The third is the Rassemblement des houphouïstes pour la démocratie et la paix (RHDP) founded in 2005, which became a political party in 2018, absorbing the Rassemblement des républicains (RDR) founded in 1994 and the Union pour la démocratie et pour la paix en Côte d'Ivoire (UDPCI) founded in 2001. The fourth and final tribe is civil society, made up of independent players and political parties that have never pledged allegiance or alliance to any of the tribes.

¹⁶ Zaoro Hyacinthe Loua, “Les alliances interethniques en Afrique de l'Ouest: Nouvelles stratégies de réconciliation”, In *Théologiques*, Volume 23, numéro 2, 2015, p. 185-201. <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1042749ar>. Digital release: December 22, 2017. Accessed on 24/11/2023 at 12 noon

¹⁷ Joking alliances represent a codified social relationship between two individuals, families, clans or ethnic groups, based on the ritual right to mock each other without serious consequence, with the aim of strengthening social cohesion. It is based on implicit rules that authorize mockery, jokes, provocation and sometimes

even symbolic theft, while prohibiting open conflict. It plays a role in peace, mediation and fraternization in many African societies.

¹⁸ La rédaction de l'INA, François Mitterrand en 1995: “Le nationalisme, c'est la guerre !”. <https://www.ina.fr/ina-eclair-actu/francois-mitterrand-en-1995-le-nationalisme-c-est-la-guerre>. Published on 13.04.2022. Accessed on 24/02/2023 at 18h45.

¹⁹ Speech by François Mitterrand at La Baule, during the 16th Conference of Heads of State of Africa and France, La Baule, June 20, 1990. French diplomatic documents 1990.

²⁰ See also, Jean-François Bayart, Béatrice Hibou, Stephen Ellis, *La criminalisation de l'État en Afrique*, Paris, Éditions Complexe, 1997.

venture will plunge the West African sub-region further into the abyss.

Partial conclusion

One-way universalism and the injunction of strict inapplicability of particularism are proof that the West is relentlessly pursuing its pernicious and subliminal enterprise of putting Africa to sleep. However, we must not “throw the baby out with the bathwater”. These two notions have an intelligibility that must be applied with lucidity in a courageous, concerted and consensual sub-regional political agenda²¹. “To conquer without peril is to triumph without glory”.

Western propaganda about Africa is multiple and multiform. It varies its lexical field in order to give the illusion of a paradigm shift, while retaining the same implacable objective of keeping Africa under its yoke at all costs.

3. Subliminal Paradigm Changes by the West

Relativism and hybridity also broadcast their intoxicating and highly toxic refrains over Africa.

3.1. “The Siren Song” of Cultural Relativism: An Invocation of the Instrumentalization of Identities and the Crystallization of Archaisms

In its epistemological, moral and cultural dimensions, in the human and social sciences, relativism is a philosophical and scientific position that asserts that truth, knowledge, moral values or cultural norms are not absolute or universal, but depend on specific contexts such as: the cultural framework (cultural relativism), the conceptual/language system (linguistic or conceptual relativism), the historical or social context and practices of a community (epistemological). Relativism is opposed to absolutism, universalism and strong objectivism²² [18].

For Cultural Relativism (Anthropology), a culture's beliefs, values and practices can only be judged by its own standards, not those of another culture. There is no superior universal criterion for evaluating cultures. Franz Boas (1858-1942), the Father of American Anthropology, insists on studying cultures in their specific context, and rejects evolutionary racial/cultural hierarchies²³ [22].

But how can we criticize practices such as genocide if all values are culturally relative? If “*all truth is relative, is this statement itself absolute or relative?*” Based on Plato's classic

argument against Protagoras²⁴ [24], “the siren song of relativism” becomes very audible. It can undermine the common sense of an entire country. Why develop weapons technologies to ensure our own defense, if we can entrust it to a third country? (Defense agreements between Côte d'Ivoire and France²⁵) Why have our own currency, if France assures us the parity of the CFA Franc with the Euro?²⁶

The excesses of cultural relativism in Africa, and particularly in Côte d'Ivoire, reveal critical issues of social cohesion, political instrumentalization and intellectual stagnation. The political instrumentalization of identity in Côte d'Ivoire with the “Ivoirité” crisis (1995-2011) is a case in point. This concept, initially cultural²⁷, launched by Bédié was radicalized into a criterion of political exclusion (natives versus foreigners) [23]. As a result: “The uncritical sacralization of ethno-regional identities has legitimized violent discrimination” [25].

Under the banner of “it's our culture”, a principle of passive moral relativism, female genital mutilation and forced marriages still persist in West Africa, in the absence of proactive cultural policies to combat them in the name of universal values²⁸. A passive celebration of “all traditions” without critical discernment, the absence of a framework to articulate cultural diversity and shared values, the failure to take into account contemporary cultural dynamics (urbanization, youth, globalization), an “unregulated” cultural relativism becomes a breeding ground for identity manipulation.

Relativism goes awry when it becomes dogmatic and absolute. Cultural relativism in Africa is not an evil in itself. It is necessary to respect diversity. But its misuse by inert cultural policies in the grip of “cognitive sleep” leads to the instrumentalization of identities, the crystallization of archaisms and the delegitimization of the humanist universal. Yet its antidote lies neither in absolutism nor in the theory of hybridity, all of which are equally dangerous.

3.2. The Market in Identities: Hybridity as a Pretext for Surface Multiculturalism

The term itself comes from the Latin “hibrida” or “hybrida” and originally referred to crossbreeding between domestic and

²¹ Read the subtitle: 3.2 The “jellyfish” of Pan-Africanism as a mast against the hypnotic arsenals of the West and Africa

²² Benjamin Matalon, “Deux attitudes politico-philosophiques: universalisme et relativisme”, In Cahiers de Psychologie Politique, NO 29 / La technique Juillet 2016. Deux attitudes politico-philosophiques: universalisme et relativisme - Benjamin Matalon - Cahiers de Psychologie Politique. Accessed on 02/24/2023 at 7:55 PM

²³ Boas, Franz. The Mind of Primitive Man, New York, édition Dover, 2007, 336 p et du même auteur, Race, Language and Culture, New York, Free Press, 1966, 634 p.

²⁴ Platon, Théétète, trad. Luc Brisson, Paris, GF Flammarion, 1993, passages 170a–172b, p. 143-151. Socrates shows the paradox: if every opinion is true, then the opinion of someone who thinks that all opinions are not true must also be true, which is self-contradictory. Hence the logical question: “If all truth is relative, is this statement itself absolute or relative?”

²⁵ loidici.com. Accord de défense entre la République de Côte d'Ivoire et la République de France. <https://loidici.biz/2018/12/31/accord-de-defense-entre-la-republique-de-cote-divoire-et-la-republique-de-france/cotedivoire/5516/naty/>. Accessed on 06/24/2023 at 6pm

²⁶ France Diplomatie, La coopération monétaire entre l'Afrique et la France: le franc CFA. La coopération monétaire entre l'Afrique et la France: le franc CFA - Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères. Updated: December 2021. Accessed on 14/02/2023 at 02h

²⁷ Thiémélé Ramsès Boa, “Ivoirité, Identité culturelle et intégration africaine: logique de dédramatisation d'un concept”, In Synergies Afrique Centrale et de l'Ouest, no 3, 2009, pp. 75-83.

²⁸ cote_divoire_short_report_v1_(march_2020)_french.pdf

wild animals, such as the domestic pig and the wild boar [26]. In the colonial context, hybridity is applied to human beings and refers to “métissage”, which is the crossing of populations considered to be of different “races”, notably European colonists and colonized populations. In fact, French colonial circulars from 1930 aimed to control miscegenation in order to preserve the colonial racial order [27]. The Carde Report of 1928 in AOF (Afrique Occidentale Française) was already advocating the removal of mixed-race children from native maternal influence, and limiting the number of mixed-race children likely to claim rights (citizenship, inheritance) [28]. The Mandel Decree (1939)²⁹ extended these measures to the entire French Empire, formalizing the logic of racial segregation.

In its evolution, the concept has become profoundly positivized and extended far beyond the strict colonial context. Hybridity has given rise to concepts such as acculturation and syncretism. It remains crucial for thinking about the complexity, fluidity and constant negotiation of identities and cultures in the contemporary world. The individual from two cultures or “races”, the “marginal man” himself, lives on the margins of both groups and is in the grip of an identity crisis [29, 30].

However, hybridity is sometimes too vague or abstract a notion, masking persistent power relations and material inequalities. There is indeed an inflationary and sometimes idealized use of this notion, especially when we know that its celebration is a privilege of the cosmopolitan intellectual elite, which does not always reflect the experience of marginalized populations [31]. In the end: “hybridity has become the new opium of intellectuals, a multiculturalism that evacuates relations of domination” [49].

Although liberating in postcolonial theories (Bhabha³⁰, Glissant³¹, Hall³²), hybridity does indeed entail conceptual and political pitfalls. Unfortunately, hybridity has become a new, rigid category, replacing the old “pure” identities with an equally normative model. If, in the words of Aimé Césaire: “There is no innocent encounter between Europe and other continents”³³ [4], then hybridity can only be a “syndrome of alienation” [32]. Paradoxically, the more we celebrate hybridity, the greater the material inequalities.

Identity-based folklore, through the museification of local cultures, reduces sub-Saharan traditions to exotic fragments in a “hybrid” mosaic, emptied of their political and spiritual meaning. FESTIMA (Festival International des Masques et des Arts) becomes a tourist spectacle where the sacred dances of Burkina Faso are detached from their social function (conflict resolution, initiatory transmission). The 16^e edition

was held from April 18 to 25, 2024 in Dédougou, in the “land of upright men”, under the theme “Masks, culture and resilience”. Harris Memel-Fotê denounces this folklorization supported by the Ministries of Tourism and Culture [33]. All too often, decision-makers forget that culture is a living system, not a resource to be extracted.

In the name of hybridity as a standard of excellence, creative independence is annihilated. By way of example, there is a real tension in the contemporary Ivorian cinematographic and audiovisual landscape. A production like Mamane's *Bienvenue au Gondwana*³⁴ (2016) (Welcome to Gondwana) illustrates an orientation towards international co-productions that target a wider audience and are part of a dynamic of distribution on Western markets. What can we say about local reality shows and talkshows that mirror those of the West? Artists and institutions are encouraged to produce “hybrid” works to gain access to international funding (European foundations, biennials). Cultural policies internalize that artistic value is measured by its capacity to be “digested” by the West. Under the hypnosis of alienation, African creators produce for external validation rather than for their communities [34].

Partial conclusion

Hybridity and relativism are the most powerful sleeping pills distilled directly at the heart of African thought. Unlike universalism, which can be imposed with international sanctions, and particularism, which can be repressed with thinly veiled threats of open war, these two notions operate with the strategy of “Overton's window”. This analysis shows how relativism and hybridity, once marginalized and inapplicable to African realities, have become tools of institutional discourse. Initially perceived as imported concepts in the name of cultural authenticity or radical universalism, their gradual imposition took place via a dialectical process in which local actors (academics, civil society organizations, artists) deconstructed this binary opposition. Finally, even if their integration remains ambivalent, their legitimacy derives from their empirical operability.

In addition to the tools that prolong and maintain the “cognitive sleep of cultural policies”, mental chains are in charge of deepening this phenomenon.

4. Internal Hypnotic Mechanisms

Lulled by the melody of Western ideological theories, Africa's leaders and populations are “zombified”, moving forward in chains towards their downfall. Fortunately, in its paradoxical sleep³⁵ phase, Africa continues to confront “Pan-Africanism” with socio-political realities, in order to fine-tune its conceptualization and application, with the aim of gradually breaking the spell and ensuring “the saving awakening”.

²⁹ Journal Officiel de la République française, décret no 1522 du 14 mai 1939.

³⁰ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London / New York, Routledge, 1994, 345 p.

³¹ Édouard Glissant, *Poétique de la Relation*, Paris, Gallimard, 1990, 215 p.

³² Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, In *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (dir. Jonathan Rutherford), London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1990, pp. 222-237.

³³ Le Discours sur le colonialisme suivi de Discours sur la Négritude, Op. Cit

³⁴ Mamane Oumarou, *Bienvenue au Gondwana*, Niger/ France, Les Films du Continent, 2016, 80 min.

³⁵ REM sleep is a period during which our brain is active, while we are asleep.

4.1. Paternalistic Leaders and a “Wait-and-See” Attitude on the Part of the Population

For Gerald Dworkin, paternalism is a system of domination in which an authority (individual, state or institution) imposes decisions on individuals or groups, justifying this constraint by the claim to protect their interests or avoid harm, to the detriment of their autonomy and consent [35].

It's not so much the imposition of decisions that poses a problem. This is done all over the world under the guise of democracy. Moreover, it's almost impossible to take into account all the often contradictory aspirations of a people. In Africa alone, cultural policies that are tentative and unsuccessful raise questions.

In Côte d'Ivoire in particular, the history of cultural policies is striking for the prevarications and erring ways of the so-called “paters” from 1960 onwards. Indeed, it's difficult to read the linear evolution of cultural policy and its real impact on society. Even if it's undeniable that from time to time there are outbursts³⁶.

Despite the balkanization of Africa, with countries of relatively small surface area (322,463 km² for Côte d'Ivoire), cultural achievements remain insufficient in number. What's more, most cultural buildings and activities are located in the two political and economic capitals, leaving the interior of the country to fend for itself. Cinema (cinemas and films), which was very dynamic before the 1990s, declined sharply and then stagnated drastically³⁷ [40]. The lack of professional protection for artists and technicians, backed up by legislation and coercive control, is partly responsible for the tragic loss of icons in music and the arts in general. There is still no national ticketing system, no film exhibition visas, no legal assistance for artists and technicians in dedicated institutions.

The Institut national supérieur des arts et de l'action culturelle (INSAAC) still has no equivalent in the inland towns, like the universities, police academies, military garrisons or medical science schools. Leaders can always object that everything in the country is urgent and that the socio-political crisis of 1999-2011 has a lot to do with the slowdown in cultural activities across the country. However, the criticism relates to 65 years of independence.

The country's official independence was proclaimed on 07 August 1960, and on 02 November 1959, France provided the country with a School of Dramatic Art run by a Board of

Directors³⁸. This was the first administrative structure to manage the theatre and music sectors. The creation of this administration a year before independence by the coloniser is symptomatic of his paternalistic attitude. From the outset, the former colonial power laid the foundations for its interference in the cultural policies of the Ivorian nation. The French Ministry of Culture was created in 1959, so there is every reason to believe that this school was under its aegis. Georges Abid (French), founder of the school, was its central figure until 1967. In addition to Germain Coffi Gadeau (a native and major figure in Ivorian theatre), Jean Guichard for dance and Pierre Guédénian for theatrical technique, all French aid workers, were recruited for the first few years³⁹.

Under the obedience of their “masters in thought”, the “Ivorian paters” refrained from creating a Ministry of Culture in the image of the “mother country” from the very first hours of independence. It was not until 04 April 1976 that the Ministry of Cultural Affairs was finally created, and 16 February 1978 that a decree established and organised it (18 years later). Before this date, the public authorities were engulfed in trial and error when it came to naming and structuring the body that was to take charge of cultural policy in Côte d'Ivoire⁴⁰.

The most common name for this body is “Ministère de la Culture et de la Francophonie” (33 years old), but over the years it has changed considerably⁴¹. The “Ivorian father” applies domination by substitution of judgement. Knowing what is good for his “children”, he has decided to make the name of a Ministry the barometer of diplomatic relations with the former colonial power⁴² [42]. Denying the ability of the “sons of the soil” to think independently about their own cultural policy, he ties it to that of France by making La Francophonie, which could have been a department within the Ministry, the equivalent of the culture of an entire country. In this sense, paternalism is a gentle violence that substitutes authority for consent, in the name of a supposed good.

Even if the administration is a continuity, the all too frequent changes at the head of this body (17 in all over 65

³⁶ Construction of the Institut National Supérieur des Arts et de l'Action Culturelle (INSAAC) in Abidjan (October 09, 1991), construction of the Fondation Félix Houphouët Boigny pour la Recherche de la Paix in Yamoussoukro (1985-1989), construction of the Fondation de Paix Félix Houphouët Boigny in Yamoussoukro (1977-1987), construction of the Palais de la Culture in Abidjan (December 20, 2000), editions of the Marchés Arts du Spectacle d'Abidjan (MASA) in Abidjan, the annual WOZO vacances program for the very young, the construction of the Abidjan Exhibition Centre (July 17, 2023), the revitalization of the audiovisual sector, UNESCO recognition of Côte d'Ivoire's rich tangible and intangible cultural heritage, the annual organization of the Salon International du Contenu Audiovisuel (SICA) in Abidjan, etc.

³⁷ Assi é Jean-Baptiste Boni, *Cinéma et audiovisuel en Côte d'Ivoire* (2002-2018): Une aventure ambiguë Afrique contemporaine, 2017/3, no 263-264, pp. 385 à 403. *Cinéma et audiovisuel en Côte d'Ivoire* (2002-2018) | Cairn.info

³⁸ On 6 October 1961, the country set up a Fine Arts and Research Department (headed by the same French development worker) attached to the Ministry of National Education. Subsequently, in 1969, the Department of Fine Arts and Research became the Department of Cultural Affairs (DAC) by decree no. 69-04 of 04 January 1969. The real interest shown in culture by the public authorities only really took off in 1971 with the creation of the Secretariat of State for Cultural Affairs (SEAC), still under the supervision of the Ministry of National Education. <https://culture.gouv.ci/historique/> published on Friday 16 May 2025. Accessed on 22/05/2025 at 3pm. On this subject, we regret that the National Archives of Côte d'Ivoire, which may hold administrative documents detailing the composition of the boards of directors of public establishments from this period, are not accessible, either physically or online.

³⁹ <https://culture.gouv.ci/historique/>. Op. Cit.

⁴⁰ Idem

⁴¹ Ministère de la Culture et de l'Industrie des Arts et du Spectacle (09 April 2021-25 April 2022; April 2006 -11 March 2010), Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication (June 2000-October 2000), Ministère de la Culture (1993-1999; 1988-1989), Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Culture (1989-1990), Ministry of Information, Culture, Youth and Sport (1987-1988) and finally, Ministry of Cultural Affairs (1975-1987).

⁴² From 2006 to 2010, under the populist administration of Gbagbo Laurent, in perpetual contradiction with the Elysée administration, the term Francophonie was withdrawn.

years)⁴³ are indicative of a patrimonialist approach on the part of those in power at the centre. The management of culture has become an extension of the personal wealth of the director [36]. Some may therefore advance hollow and peremptory statements such as: “By 2040, Côte d'Ivoire aims to become an industrial nation, united in its cultural diversity, democratic and open to the world”⁴⁴. In response, Sophia Sherine Hutt said: “No one is beautiful, radiant or joyful because of ambition. A life full of trials, pitfalls, shadows and light generally pushes us to bring out the best in ourselves”. (La musique du Ciel en héritage, p 17 Chapitre 5, “L'Éveil”) [37]

The various officials in charge of culture have settled comfortably into neo-patrimonialism, which refers to the persistence of heritage practices in states that claim to be modern [38]. How else can we understand the fact that Côte d'Ivoire is an official delegate at the Cannes Film Festival every year, even when the country has no film in the list of winners. In fact, in 2025, young filmmakers took to social networks to publicly mock and protest against a delegation of TV series producers and directors sent to Cannes, a film festival, with taxpayers' money⁴⁵.

On the question of copyright management, the then minister maintained that the Ivorian Copyright Office (BURIDA) had distributed more than 5 billion CFA francs to cultural players since 2012. This is thanks to major reforms that have made the structure more efficient⁴⁶. Yet unfortunately, under its very modern and transparent guise, with no official call for projects, BURIDA's “creative support fund” is spent every year while artists and audiences clamour for the works it supports.

In Côte d'Ivoire, 27 Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) channels are available to viewers. However, not everyone has access to them, mainly for reasons of effective coverage of the

whole country. This means that people have to pay for a subscription to the private “Canal+” package in order to watch the national public channels. This is despite the compulsory payment of the RTI⁴⁷ licence fee. In the absence of operational and free DTT, no negotiations have been entered into with the managers of this French structure operating in the country, so that they allow free access to households for the programmes of the national public channels. Meanwhile, children and teenagers in the sub-region continue to gorge themselves on films and mangas from elsewhere, taking them further and further away from their black African roots.

What's more, social networks such as Tik Tok, Youtube etc., which are very popular with African populations, are still not monetisable in the sub-region. Why don't the “neo-patrimonial African patrons”, who have no desire to support sub-regional social networks, oblige these foreign structures to comply with the laws of the countries where they operate? Such action would also substantially increase the income of creators and public funds via taxes.

African states are often dominated by neo-patrimonial logics, in which formal institutions are emptied of their substance in favour of informal, clientelist networks. What's more, hybrid governance is also used to describe systems that combine neopatrimonialism, privatisation of the state and neoliberal influences⁴⁸ [39].

On the basis of the African proverb that affirms “you don't make a sacrifice with half a cola”, we must also question the attitude of the populations concerned. Are they amorphous or do they adopt a behavioural strategy characterised by the deliberate postponement of action or the taking of a position in a context of uncertainty, conflict or risk, in the expectation that the situation will evolve favourably or that other players will take the initiative? [41]

Under colonisation, these same populations rebelled⁴⁹. Today, they complain of a lack of access to institutions and develop a feeling of cultural illegitimacy marked by the marginalisation of local languages. The people of Côte d'Ivoire are also expressing a historic distrust of the State, particularly because of the socio-political crisis.

All things considered, how can you oppose a highly ideological system that insinuates itself into the deepest recesses of your subconscious when you are a population with an illiteracy rate of 47%, 2/3 of whom are women, bearing in mind that this disparity is even greater in rural areas?⁵⁰ In

⁴³ The average time at the head of this ministry is 3 years. The longest tenure is held by Maurice Bandaman (1 June 2011-20 March 2020, i.e. 9 years). The shortest tenure is that of Mel-Eg Théodore (December 2005-April 2006, i.e. less than 6 months). The number of terms less than or equal to 12 months is 07.

⁴⁴ Promotion de la culture ivoirienne: acquis, défis et perspectives. https://afriquedusud.diplomatie.gouv.ci/details_gdossier.php?lang=&num=212. Accessed on 12/12/2024.

⁴⁵ Lettre ouverte à Madame la Ministre Ministère de la Culture et de la Francophonie. Missa Ndry - Lettre ouverte à Madame la Ministre Ministère... | Facebook.

Publication de Kouamé Mathurin Samuel Codjovi. <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16aX28DbY5/?>

Publication de Missa Ndry. Missa Ndry - Droit de réponse à M. Jean Noël Bah Jétiens... | Facebook.

Publication de Missa Ndry. Missa Ndry - Il est temps de dire les choses clairement... | Facebook.

Publication de Jamel-prod Basiru. https://web.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=9689040737839657&id=100002014800793&mibextid=wwXlfr&rdid=vQPSYdFAswbkZhlS#.

Publication de Jean-marie Guéssé é C'EST UN CONSTAT Cher cinéophile... - Jean-marie Guéssé é | Facebook.

Serge Arnaud Armah. Facebook.

Publication de Onac-ci Officel. https://web.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=703005049045260&id=100080073143422&mibextid=wwXlfr&rdid=i7QEVrBJPvR2npq#. Accessed on 01/07/2025 at 02:00.

⁴⁶ Promotion de la culture ivoirienne: acquis, défis et perspectives. https://afriquedusud.diplomatie.gouv.ci/details_gdossier.php?lang=&num=212.

Op. Cit.

⁴⁷ Since 1 April 1994, article 38 of law no. 201 of 8 April 1994 has introduced a licence fee for Radiodiffusion Télévision Ivoirienne (RTI) to support the mixed company, at a rate of approximately 2,000 CFA francs per two-month period.

⁴⁸ Shelley L. Hurt et Ronnie D. Lipschutz, Hybrid Rule and State Formation: Public-Private Power in the 21st Century, Londres, Routledge, 2020, 258 p. Chapters 1 to 4 analyse the hybrid origins of the state and neoliberal bureaucracy as an expression of hybrid power.

Les chapitres 1 à 4 analysent les origines hybrides de l'État et la bureaucratie néolibérale comme expression du pouvoir hybride.

⁴⁹ Laurent Gbagbo, Côte d'Ivoire: Pour une alternative démocratique, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1983, 220 p.

⁵⁰ Alphabétisation: La Côte d'Ivoire multiplie les initiatives pour réduire le taux d'analphabétisme.

<https://news.abidjan.net/articles/723761/alphabetsation-la-cote-divoire-multiplie->

2021, the monetary poverty rate in Côte d'Ivoire will be 37.5%⁵¹. This is despite the substantial increase in the budgets of the cross-cutting ministries responsible for culture. In fact, the plethora of these ministries (08 in all) have more cultural scope than the dedicated ministry⁵².

Attempting to resist the invasion of the French-speaking world, “nouchi” street slang has been created by Ivorians. Two of these words, “s'enjailler” and “boucantier”, feature in *Le Petit Larousse illustré 2020*. But as Thiong'o notes, “The hegemony of English, French and other colonial languages in the audiovisual and digital media is accelerating the decline of African languages, irreplaceable vehicles of endogenous knowledge and specific world views. A concern amplified by the digital age” [43]

Deconstructing the wait-and-see attitude of the Ivorian population in the face of the inertia of public cultural policies requires a multidimensional strategy, combining citizen empowerment, creative denunciation and institutional reconstruction, all of which are advocated by post-Panafricanism.

4.2. The Jellyfish of Post-Panafricanism as a Mast Against the Hypnotic Arsenals of the West and Africa

Born in the 19th century in the Caribbean, against the backdrop of the process of abolishing slavery, marked by the Haitian revolution between 1791 and 1804, this ideological movement advocates the unity of African countries and had a strong resonance during the anti-colonialist struggles. The aim of this political movement was to protect Africa's interests by making it speak with a single voice. Little by little, the doctrine of solidarity between African peoples became entwined with the anti-colonialist struggles that spread across the African continent⁵³. A link was created between the diasporas who fought for civil rights in the United States and the Africans who fought against colonisation in the 20th century⁵⁴.

Against the backdrop of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, the idea of forming a united bloc with greater influence on the international stage made sense. In 1963, together with his peers, Nkrumah founded the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the predecessor of the African Union (AU). “Pan-Africanism is the idea of solidarity between African peoples” [44].

Nkrumah's speech at the signing of the OAU treaty enthralled the participants, but put off the conservative camp, led by L'opold Sédar Senghor, President of Senegal (1960-1980) and Félix Houphouët-Boigny, leader of Côte d'Ivoire for 33 years (1960-1993). “Most of the leaders of the time had a very nationalistic vision of Africa. They wanted to build nation states” [44].

The internal rebellion against the pan-Africanist was led by the fierce secular arms of France-Africa, coupled with “inactive” theorists [45]. L'opold Sédar Senghor was one of the founding fathers of Négritude, a movement advocating a return to one's roots, which could have been more effective if it had joined forces with pan-Africanism to lead the fight by covering the cultural “front” creatively rather than reactively. On the subject of Négritude, Wole Soyinka said: “A tiger does not proclaim its tigritude. It pounces on its prey” [45]. In this essay, Soyinka criticises the essentialism of Négritude, arguing that insistence on an essentialized black identity is pointless. The metaphor of the tiger illustrates his idea of action and creation taking precedence over declarations of identity.

On the other hand, the opposition of the “Sage of Yamoussoukro”, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, must be heard. Fearing the ex-colonial power of nuisance, a turbulent Pan-Africanism gesticulating in all directions in frontal opposition to the West in the early days of independence was not ideal. For him, the devastation of Guinea Conakry, which said “No” to the referendum on union in 1958⁵⁵, and that of the father of Ghanaian independence, Kwame Nkrumah, overthrown on 24 February 1966 by the US State Department⁵⁶,

les-initiatives-pour-reduire-le-taux-danalphabetisme. Publié le lundi 4 septembre 2023 | CIGC-Côte d'Ivoire. Accessed on 22/03/2025 at 2:11 am

⁵¹ Agence Nationale de statistique (anstat.ci). Chiffres_Cles_CIV_2025.pdf

⁵² The Ministry of National Education and Literacy, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the Ministry of Technical Education, Vocational Training and Apprenticeship, the Ministry of Communication, the Ministry of Culture and Francophonie, the Ministry of Tourism and Crafts, the Ministry of National Cohesion, Solidarity and the Fight against Poverty, the Ministry of Women, the Family and Children.

⁵³ Vidéo GEO - HISTOIRE: Comment est née l'Union africaine ? Par Audrey Parmentier. Published on 15 October 2022 at 7.30pm. Updated on 8 March 2023 at 3.35pm. <https://www.geo.fr/geopolitique/quest-ce-que-le-panafricanisme-212091>. Accessed on 13/09/2024 at 04H15.

⁵⁴ The main founding fathers are:

-Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912), Liberian, precursor, he pleaded for a black conscience and the African renaissance.

- Henry Sylvester Williams (1869-1911), Trinidadian, founder of the 1st Pan-African Congress in London in 1900.

- William Edward Burghard Du Bois (1868-1963), Afro-American, intellectual and activist, central figure of the Pan-African Congresses (1919-1945). In 1961, he moved to Ghana at the invitation of Kwame Nkrumah, where he worked on an African encyclopaedia.

- Marcus Garvey (1887-1940), Jamaican, founder of UNIA (Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League) in 1914. This or-

ganisation aimed to: promote black pride and the unity of people of African descent; encourage the economic, cultural and political development of black people; and defend the idea of returning to Africa to create an independent black nation. It was one of the largest mass pan-African movements in history. With the UNIA, it advocated a return to Africa and worldwide black unity.

- George Padmore (1903-1959), Trinidadian, Marxist, mentor of African leaders, coordinator of the Manchester Congress (1945).

- Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972), Ghanaian, 1st President of independent Ghana, fervent campaigner for African unity.

- Haile Selassie I (1892-1975), Emperor of Ethiopia, host of the founding summit of the OAU (Organisation of African Unity) in 1963 in Addis Ababa.

⁵⁵ This referendum was about whether or not to accept the new French Community. Guinea was the only territory in French-speaking Africa to refuse, gaining immediate independence on 2 October 1958. In reaction to this brutal break with the French system, the mother country urgently withdrew its civil servants, cut off financial aid and dismantled infrastructure, cables, archives and so on. In short, a policy of radical retaliation similar to the military strategy of “scorched earth” (Tabula rasa) to punish Guinea and dissuade other colonies from following the same path. The “No” became a powerful symbol of African sovereignty and dignity, reinforcing the pan-Africanist and anti-colonial discourse in Africa.

⁵⁶ Tirthankar Chanda, Grandeur et déclin de Kwame Nkrumah, père du panafricanisme.

<https://www.rfi.fr/fr/connaissances/20220427-grandeur-et-d%C3%A9clin-de-kwame-nkrumah-p%C3%A8re-du-panafricanisme>. Published on 27/04/2022 at 09:05 and Modified on 27/04/2022 at 09:20. Accessed on 02/03/2024 at 05h

should serve as a lesson. In the same vein, the charismatic president of Burkina Faso, Captain Thomas Isidore Noël Sankara, a fervent pan-Africanist who came to power on 4 August 1983 in a coup d'état, was also assassinated in another coup d'état on 15 October 1987. History will record that it was his former comrade in arms, Blaise Compaoré who instigated the coup.

As recently as 2025, Kéni Sôba⁵⁷ and Nathalie Yamb⁵⁸, among others, fierce opponents of France's neo-colonial economic, military and cultural "vampirisation" of Africa and proponents of pan-Africanism, were subject to expulsion orders, residence bans or restrictions in several French-speaking African countries, often under diplomatic pressure. Their blacklisting, although effective, is not officially recognised by public documents. Nathalie Yamb, for example, was expelled from Côte d'Ivoire on 2 December 2019⁵⁹. These two activists, irreverently and regularly treated as "Panafricons", even by some Africans, on social networks without making any substantial contribution to the debate, are subject to censorship or reduced visibility in the traditional media. They are subject to surveillance or restricted access to major international institutions.

In Europe too, these free thinkers are monitored or marginalised. Kéni Sôba, who has lived in France for a long time, is classified as a radical activist, particularly since his early days in movements described as anti-Western⁶⁰. He is banned from entering certain European countries at certain times. Nathalie Yamb is banned from entering the Schengen area at France's request⁶¹. Their discourse, perceived as subversive, receives little coverage in the mainstream European media. These committed pan-Africanists regularly denounce a form of indirect censorship, particularly on platforms or in international institutions. However, they remain very active on social networks, where they gather a large audience critical of neo-colonialism. This climate reflects the persistent tensions surrounding issues of sovereignty, neo-colonialism and freedom of expression in French-speaking Africa.

⁵⁷ Kéni Sôba, whose real name is Stellio Gilles Robert Capo Chichi, was born on 9 December 1981 in Strasbourg, France, and is a black supremacist and pan-Africanist activist from Benin. Born in France, he was stripped of his French nationality in 2024.

⁵⁸ Nathalie Yamb, who goes by the pseudonym "La Dame de Sochi", was born on 22 July 1969 in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland. She is a Swiss-Cameroonian pan-African political activist, influencer and web video artist.

⁵⁹ Marturin Atcha, Nathalie Yamb: le message de l'activiste pour les 4 ans de son expulsion de Côte d'Ivoire. <https://www.afrique-sur7.fr/nathalie-yamb-le-message-de-lactiviste-pour-les-4-ans-de-son-expulsion-de-cote-divoire>. Published on 2 December 2023 at 17:23. Accessed on 02/03/2024 at 01h

⁶⁰ C. Du, Anti-Occident, "révolutionnaire africain" Qui est Kémi Séba, l'activiste menacé de déchéance de nationalité française. Anti-Occident, "révolutionnaire africain" Qui est Kémi Séba, l'activiste menacé de déchéance de nationalité française - Le Parisien. Published on 6 March 2024 at 13:08. Accessed on 16/09/2024 at 03h

⁶¹ Le Monde avec AFP, L'UE sanctionne l'influenceuse Nathalie Yamb pour ses positions prorusses: L'activiste helvético-cameroonaise, connue pour ses activités prorusse, est interdite d'entrée dans l'Union européenne. L'UE sanctionne l'influenceuse Nathalie Yamb pour ses positions prorusses. Published on 27 June 2025 at 09:30, modified on 27 June 2025 at 11:10. Accessed on 30/06/2025 at 24:00.

As we can see, both reactionary pan-Africanism and Negritude are confined to a negation of Europe. Yet even if Félix Houphouët-Boigny's attitude can be described as "cowardly", it echoes the following statement by Soyinka: "The tree must have deep roots in the soil of its ancestors, but it must also extend its branches into all the heavens" [46]. Here, Soyinka criticises Negritude, particularly Senghor's (and this can be extended to pan-Africanism), for defining itself in opposition to Europe, thus limiting African culture to a reaction against colonialism rather than an autonomous creation.

If the pan-Africanist is to be a "jellyfish" to be wielded against all those and all theories that deprive Africa of its interests, he or she must pacify his or her discourse and be more methodical. As we all know, true sovereignty requires a thorough overhaul of our education/training and information systems. Designing and rigorously applying a policy of education/training excellence in all fields, without complexes or complacency, coupled with an intelligent and imaginative information policy, in order to distil a positive narrative about Africa, must be the royal road to post-Panafricanism.

It's no longer a question of shouting to anyone who will listen that Africa, as the cradle of humanity, invented everything, only to have everything stolen from it. The point is to prove it through this gentle, silent revolution, with culture as the driving force. As Wole Soyinka puts it: "*The concepts of Negritude (and Pan-Africanism) have fulfilled a historical function, but they must give way to a phase of "post-Negritude" (of "post-Pan-Africanism") where the African is no longer defined by race, but by creativity (and action)*" [47].

Partial conclusion

Even if the West is not innocent, it is not the only culprit in the "cognitive sleep of public cultural policies in Africa". Unfortunately, the African elite, despite the strength of its Western knowledge and its roots in the land, far from stimulating an awakening, amplifies the sleep out of sheer navel-gazing. For their part, the people, inventive but heavily handicapped by illiteracy and poverty, are content to get by. Only a responsible and respectful post-Panafricanist, stripped of his reactionary and provocative discourse in order to methodically infuse information, education and training policies of excellence with the compass of negro-African culture, will be able to shake the continent out of its torpor.

5. General Conclusion⁶²

This article is not the umpteenth manifesto on the transatlantic and Arab-Berber slave trades, with their morbid overtones for Africa, in order to claim some sort of compensation.

⁶² I would have liked to write this analysis in my mother tongue, but how could I reach the global scientific community? I also wanted to quote Black African mythology in place of Greek mythology, but that would require me to take overly complex explanatory detours. So I've resigned myself to using the strength of "the other", which is now mine, in the expectation that one day I'll add my own strength to it. We are inspired by Massa Makan Diabaté's linguistic dilemma Massa Makan Diabaté Le lieutenant de Kouta, Paris, Hatier, 1993, p 5. This novel is the first in the Kouta trilogy.

Nor is it a naïve plea against colonisation and its trail of calamities for the people of Africa, with the aim of seeking financial compensation. Eminent specialists and opinion leaders from Africa and elsewhere have done so and are continuing this relentless struggle.

Rather, this text demonstrates that without a political agenda to prepare for its “survival” in an increasingly violent world, outrageously geared towards preserving the interests and way of life of the West, Africa is voluntarily handing itself over as a “holocaust” to the economic and military powers that be. Torn apart by futile sub-regional dissension, it is struggling by consensus to embark resolutely on forward-looking, structural and courageous policies of self-sufficiency in food, education, health, industry, the economy and the military, in order to prepare itself to face the aftermath of shortages of all kinds that will sound the death knell of a new oppression. Africa seems happy to live. Yet there is an Akan proverb that says: “*When you are shown the moon, don't look at the finger*”.

In the hope that they will finally abandon their egocentric posture of “neo-patrimonial paters”, African elites will be able to show the way to self-determination to a population force-fed by the narrative of social networks and the Western media. The former flatters their pride by repeating over and over again the myth of their ancestors' glorious past, trapping them in a posture of victimhood. The second, trying to convince them of their miserabilism through clever indoctrination, presents the “old continent” as their one and only lifeline. As a result, Africa, addicted to two powerful opiates (revealed religions and sports betting) is squandering its dignity and turning its back on all the values that proudly underpinned its identity.

The analysis clearly sets out the reconquest of Africa's cultural sovereignty as a sine qua non for any other quest for sovereignty, be it political, economic, food, energy or even military. Having long since realised that the West is not an enemy but a powerful adversary and often a partner who unfortunately prioritises its own interests, reactionary pan-Africanists must stop berating and scolding it. Especially as Africa itself, after more than 65 years of independence, can in no way internally ensure its own survival in the event of an external attack or major catastrophe.

Since “caution is not synonymous with fear”, the continent would do well to avoid antagonising the West and to restructure its education/training system valiantly and without complacency, from top to bottom, without forgetting to establish its own narrative through information and communication channels. The intelligent and pragmatic reactivation of its culture must be at the heart of this crucial action. By embracing UNESCO's maxim that: “*it is in the minds of men that wars begin and it is therefore in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed*”⁶³, the “cradle of humanity” will have to stop whining and scrupulously and patiently inculcate in the minds of its children the strategies for its cognitive awakening.

⁶³ Acte constitutif de l'UNESCO, adopté à Londres le 16 novembre 1945.

Abbreviations

AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
AFD	French Development Agency
PDCI-RDA	Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire-African Democratic Rally
PPA-CI	African People's Party - Côte d'Ivoire
FPI	Ivorian Popular Front
RHDP	Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace
RDR	Rally of Republicans
UDPCI	Union for Democracy and Peace in Côte d'Ivoire
AES	Alliance of Sahel States
CFA	African Financial Community franc
AOF	French West Africa
FESTIMA	International Festival of Masks and Arts
INSAAC	National Higher Institute of Arts and Cultural Action
SICA)	International Audiovisual Content Exhibition
MASA	Abidjan Performing Arts Market
DTT	Digital Terrestrial Television
RTI	for Ivorian Radio and Television
OAU	Organization of African Unity
AU	African Union
BURIDA	Ivorian Copyright Office

Author Contributions

Boni Assié is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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