

# DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA: A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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## INTRODUCTION: CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT REVISITED

The debate about the role of culture in development, especially in Africa and in Third and Fourth World countries, had become so sterile that no new insights appeared possible.<sup>1</sup> Now, a number of factors have stimulated a renewed interest in the role of culture in the development process. Chief among these factors is the emergence of Japan as a global giant whose success is said to be due not only to its cultural characteristics, but retrogressively, to the "racial homogeneity" of its population.<sup>2</sup> Second, the publication of Paul Kennedy's book, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers* has raised the Spenglerian conundrum: the possibility that the core state in the West (US) is in danger of losing its *élan vital* and, like Ninevah and Tyre, doomed to disappear. The issues here are not only didactic, but social, cultural, and philosophical.<sup>3</sup> It is probably only a matter of time before it is suggested that Gorbachev's call for *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the Soviet Union, in conjunction with the growing economic anxiety in the United States, might not only end the Cold War, but free the Third and Fourth Worlds to develop, independent from today's outworn economic and especially cultural-philosophical dogmas.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Many African scholars and policymakers blame the persisting effects of cultural, economic, and other features of colonial domination for their plight, and insist that these factors, now linked to neo-colonialism, are still affecting their independent countries. In contrast, many Western European and American scholars and publicists assert that colonialism has been over for at least two generations, and that neo-colonialism is a poor excuse for the lack of African development. Moreover, they are often loathe to entertain the notion that culture has anything to do with development. See Elliot P. Skinner, "The Global Economic Order and the Poor Villages: The Issue of Mediating Structures," Proceedings of the Seventh ICF (New York: International Cultural Foundation, 1979), 343-360; Sami Amin, *Imperialism and Unequal Development* (London: Monthly Review Press, 1977); Ali Mazrui, *Cultural Engineering and Nation-Building in East Africa* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1972); Ali Mazrui, *A World Federation of Cultures: An African Perspective* (New York: Free Press, 1976); Irving Louis Horowitz, *Three Worlds of Development*, 2nd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 449; Paul Shepard, *The Modernization: The Humanist Response to Its Promise and Problems* (Washington, D.C.: Paragon Press, 1982), 29-39; Peter Worsely, *The Third World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 1-49; Marvin Harris, *American Now: The Anthropology of Changing Culture* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), 1-38.
2. Frank Gibney, *Japan: The Fragile Superpower* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1979), 119 and passim.
3. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Vantage Books, 1979); Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1939).
4. Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987).

The notion that culture is important to development, as well as to all aspects of human life, has been long recognized by social scientists. Culture is important for human beings because it provides the necessary designs or models for living, indicating what is considered proper, or moral, or even sane. It provides a body of knowledge and tools by which people adapt to their environments, rules by which they relate to each other, and a veritable storehouse of knowledge, beliefs, and formulae through which humans attempt to understand the universe and their place within it.<sup>5</sup>

Through the use of shared cognitive symbols, culture provides the distinctive way in which each societal system orders the world. It tells people what to expect from others in their society and why, thereby furnishing them with a degree of mastery and confidence in most social situations. The cognitive claim as to what is "fact" or "data" or "reality" is not always readily explainable and while these processes are ultimately judged against experience, people have difficulty sharing experiences with persons of other cultural traditions.<sup>6</sup> Those societies which are the result of largely endogenous processes and forces and have cultural characteristics unique to themselves and their people often find it hard to share their experiences with others. Nevertheless, all human societies are capable of borrowing cultural traits from each other even though, given the opportunity, they modify them to suit their own traditions and circumstances.<sup>7</sup>

#### IMPERIAL IMPACT ON AFRICAN CULTURE

The present concern about the "inability" of African countries to develop as rapidly as other countries is as much due to cultural perception as it is a concern with the actual rate of cultural change there. Non-African as well as Western-educated Africans complain about the slow rate of change, whereas many rural Africans believe that they are living in a "runaway world." It is a

5. Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture; Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Languages, Art and Custom* 1 (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 53; Margaret Mead, *New Lives for Old: Cultural Transformation-Manus* (New York: Morrow, 1956).

6. The very discourse used by Westerners to "manage" and even to "produce" the non-West, culturally, politically, ideologically, and imaginatively, has been the subject of criticism by Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 3; Michel Foucault, *Power-Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980); Clifford Geertz, "Ritual and Social Change: A Javanese Example," *American Anthropologist* 59 (1957): 32-54; and Stephen A. Tyler, *Cognitive Anthropology* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969).

7. It is a truism that under ordinary circumstances there has always been an interrelationship between the natural environment, the biota, and the cultural or sociocultural system. Independent or autonomous societies normally have little difficulty adapting or adjusting to changes or perturbations within their component parts of subsystems. For example, if there are changes in a society's environment due to natural causes such as floods, droughts, and climatic shifts, the biota may change, and the human populations involved may migrate to new regions, or develop new techno-economic institutions, social structures, and ideologies to preserve and to explain the new character of their social system. Similarly, a society may change if virulent diseases break out among either its non-human or human biota necessitating migration or other forms of economic, social, and cultural adaptations. Lastly, the invention or discoveries of new economic, social, and cultural elements may have an impact on the environment or the biota thus bringing about systemic changes. Such changes may be slow or quite rapid. See Julian H. Steward, "Ecological Aspects of Southwestern Society," *Anthropos* 32 (1937): 87-104; Harold Brookfield, "Epistemological Perspective," in *Man in Ecosystems*, *International Social Science Journal* 93, UNESCO, xxxiv, no. 3, (1982): 375-94.

fact that Africa has never been immune to fundamental change.<sup>8</sup> The continent is a veritable museum of past and present cultures in all stages of complexity and development, and Africa's role in the development of humanity and culture now is recognized fully. That this was not recognized earlier is due as much to racism as to the state of paleontology and archaeology.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, in pre-historic as well as historical times, Africa gave, as well as received, cultural traits from the Fertile Crescent, the Mediterranean, Southeast Asia, and even the New World. In fact, many parts of Africa at times had been integrated into the political, economic, and cultural systems of the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and Asia. Nevertheless, some parts of the continent retained a basic African cultural system, modified to suit regional ecological realities, while other parts exhibited multiple cultural heritages when Islam arrived in the seventh century, and Western Christendom in the fifteenth century.<sup>10</sup>

Africa shared the fate of most of the world in being conquered and colonized by Western Europeans from the fifteenth century until recently.<sup>11</sup> Again, as for many societies, the European impact was so shattering that it will take generations of people to cope with its effects. Arnold Toynbee once wrote that future historians reviewing the emergence of the modern world would note "the terrific impact of the Western civilization upon all other living societies of the world of that day. They will say of this impact that it was so powerful and so pervasive that it turned the lives of all its victims upside down and inside out — affecting the behavior, outlook, feelings, and beliefs of individual men, women, and children in an intimate way, touching chords in human souls that are not touched by mere external material forces — however ponderous and terrifying."<sup>12</sup> Later on, Sekou Touré of Guinea was to remark that it was easy to build railroads, ports, and towns; what was more difficult to change were the minds of the colonized persons.<sup>13</sup>

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8. For example, it is clear that in earlier periods, the climate and vegetation in the Sahel region, frequently changed from lush tropical forests to sterile deserts during the Pluvial and Arid periods. This was accompanied by corresponding changes in the animal and plant populations. The last major change in this area took place while human beings (then hunters, fishers, and collectors) inhabited the region. The lithic and bone kits along the now sandy and bone-dry wadis attest to the presence of now vanished societies. More contemporary African populations such as the San (Bushman) and Batwa (Pygmies), which traditionally depended upon the periodic gathering of wild foods and animals, apparently were able to retain their pristine technology and culture over millennia provided that they could move about. Rapid change did not come to these populations until more powerful peoples, possessing domestic animals and agriculture and using iron tools, arrived on the scene and either absorbed them, or drove them into unwanted and economically marginal areas. Today's African hunter and gathering populations are being rapidly absorbed as even their marginal areas become important to the new independent states of that continent. Philip Curtin, Steven Feierman, Leonard Thompson, eds., *African History* (New York: Longman, 1978), 290 and passim.

9. Cheikh Anta Diop, *African Origins of Civilization: Myth or Reality*, Mercer Cook, ed., (New York: Lawrence Hill, 1974).

10. Many scholars insist that Africa really has three heritages: the traditional, the Islamic, and that of Western Christendom. See Ali Mazrui and Toby Levine, eds., *The Africans: A Course Reader* (New York: Praeger, 1986).

11. Philip Curtin et al, eds., *African History* (New York: Longman, 1978), chapters 15-17.

12. E. Franklin Frazier, *Race and Culture Contact in the Modern World* (New York: Alfred Knopf), 3.

13. Sekou Toure, *Guinean Revolution and Social Progress* (Conakry: Government of Republic of Guinea, 1963),

Many European colonizers recognized that they had to change the culture of their victims if colonialism would succeed. Colonel Trentinian, the governor of French Sudan in 1897, sent this circular to his subordinates: "Here in the Sudan, we confront a population which has been defeated militarily, it must now be conquered intellectually and morally. We must therefore draw the people to us, work with them constantly so that we can curb their spirit, impose our ideas upon them, and brand them with our particular stamp."<sup>14</sup>

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This cultural "policy of assimilation" was spelled out in the first lesson the African pupils learned in school: "My new country from today is France. I am French. And when I grow up, every Sunday, I shall place the Tricolor on the top of my house and say to my subjects, 'There is a beautiful flag.'"<sup>15</sup> These African youngsters were also taught that their ancestors were Gauls with blond hair and blue eyes!

By the 1920s and 1930s, a small but later influential group of Africans had acquired aspects of Metropolitan cultures and considered themselves to be "British," "French," and "Portuguese." These were the products of an effort "to literally make of the native an object in the hands of the occupying nation."<sup>16</sup> They not only considered Europe as "home" but adopted European names, clothing, speech, and mannerisms (some went as far as to practice throwing back their heads when speaking so as to prevent their actually short hair from tumbling down before their eyes, in imitation of their European teachers). The colonial African elite "judged, condemned, abandoned his

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6, 240. While in many parts of Africa, as elsewhere, indigenous peoples did not initially take the incoming Europeans seriously, convinced that their societies were, if not the best that human beings were capable of developing, then quite adequate for their needs; European power and ideas shattered those notions. Various African populations resisted the Europeans militarily, and when defeated they turned to messianic and millenarian movements to create what has been termed new "mazeways" in the attempt to restructure their lives. These "primitive rebels" did not believe it was possible to exchange "old lives for new" simply by adopting technology, or by articulating "rationally" with the European imperial systems. The cultural and economic impact was often too devastating for that. See Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1948); Peter Worsley, *The Trumpets Shall Sound: A Study of 'Cargo' Cults in Melanesia* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1957).

14. Denise Bouche, "Les Ecoles françaises au Soudan à l'époque de la conquête, 1884-1900, in *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* (1966) VI, no. 22, 246.

15. *Ibid.*

16. Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 260; Franz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution* (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

cultural forms, his language, his food habits, his sexual behaviour, his ways of sitting down, of resting, of laughing, of enjoying himself."<sup>17</sup>

### THE AFRICAN RESPONSE

The ultimate reaction of many Africans to the colonial situation involved both anger at their psycho-social and cultural dependency, as well as a determination to end it. They often attempted to "return to the source," and embrace their original culture with what Fanon called "the desperation of a drowning man." He observed:

This culture, abandoned, sloughed off, rejected, despised, becomes for the inferiorized an object of passionate attachment . . . . The customs, traditions, beliefs, formerly denied and passed over in silence are violently valorized and affirmed . . . Tradition is no longer scoffed at by the group. The group no longer runs away from itself. The sense of the past is rediscovered, the worship of ancestors resumed . . . . The past, becoming henceforth a constellation of values, becomes identified with the Truth.<sup>18</sup>

To counter this cultural dissonance, many African leaders developed such cultural slogans as "negritude" and the "African personality" to liberate themselves psychically as their countries moved toward independence in the 1960s.

Because of their cultural ambivalence *vis-à-vis* the West, most African leaders had no clear view of the programs to be used to develop their countries. It was not so much the sting of economic exploitation as it was the yearning for human dignity that loomed very large in their thinking. Marxist-derived "socialism" was attractive not only because it postulated a relationship between the twin evils of capitalism and colonialism, but also because it predicted a socialist millennium without those scourges. As important, however, was that Marxism was linked to the Soviet Union, a nation-state system which was distrusted and feared by the West. By adopting the rhetoric of Marxist communism, Africans were able to plug into a symbolic system which alarmed

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17. Ibid. Although many of them tried, the colonized never became the alter ego of the colonizers because they were treated as objects to satisfy the needs of colonizers. They wished to emulate the colonizers because their masters suffered none of the deficiencies of the colonized. The colonizers had all the rights; enjoyed important possession; benefited from high prestige; and possessed that power which maintained the colonized in servitude. Moreover, the colonizer often rejected these imitative efforts with disdain, not only because they believed that this was incompatible, with the cognitive abilities, and racial characteristics of the colonized, but actually subversive of the colonial situation itself. This categorical rejection became increasingly hurtful to Africans who often found an acceptance of sorts outside of their homelands.

18. Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, 40; Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 212. He was quite perceptive but scathing when he suggested that these elites were really not free and that they had only substituted an "unconditional affirmation of African culture" for the previous "unconditioned affirmation of European culture." He felt that the exponents of "negritude" oppose the idea of an old Europe to a young Africa, tiresome reasoning to lyricism, oppressive logic to high-stepping nature, and on one side stiffness, ceremony, etiquette, and skepticism, while on the other frankness, liveliness, liberty, and — why not? — luxuriance: but also irresponsibility."

the people who had only scorn for their indigenous movements and ideas.<sup>19</sup> "African Socialism" became for them the economic analogue of such cultural terms as "negritude" and the "African personality."

Fanon was troubled by the cognitive dissonance between the needs of independent states for the appropriate technical, economic and highly differentiated modes of thinking, and the emotional fervor of some African nationalists. He believed that what he considered to be the archaic cult of "negritude" had no relationship to technical development. Moreover, he felt that the institutions which the Africans were attempting to valorize no longer corresponded to the elaborate methods or actions that were needed.<sup>20</sup> Instead of

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"mystification," Fanon wanted a thorough understanding of the relationship among technologies, social structures, and culture. But neither "negritude" nor the "African personality" consciously affected African economic behavior. Paradoxically, the few attempts made by African leaders to utilize traditional institutions as guides with which to develop their societies received no intellectual or public support.<sup>21</sup>

Central to the development problems of African states has been the fact that their economies remain under the control of their erstwhile colonizers. Amazingly, given the harsh rhetoric of many African nationalists, very few took steps to sever their feeble economies from Metropolitan control. It also was partly because of these ties that African leaders were unable to agree on the possibility of political federation in 1963. The result is that an area representing only about 12 percent of the world's surface and less than 9

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19. Waldemar A. Nielsen, *The Great Powers and Africa* (New York: published for the Council on Foreign Relations by Praeger, 1969) 17.

20. Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, 84.

21. The events surrounding the publication of Amos Tutuola's *Palm Wine Drinkard* is a case in point. This semi-literate Yoruba functionary told a tale about a palm wine enthusiast who, lamenting the death of his favorite tapster, decided to follow the deceased to "Ghost Town." Tutuola's work was a cognitive *tour de force* in which he used pidgin English to describe Yoruba mythological categories, and attempted to reach an international audience. His "novel" was hailed by Westerners as truly innovative, and a veritable Rosetta Stone to the Yoruba's mind. But the reaction of the Nigerian literati was immediate and severe. Africans who were attempting to use Joycean and Greenian models with differential success accused Western scholars of paternalism and worse. See Amos Tutuola, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (New York: Grove Press, 1953) and O.J. Chinweizu and I. Madubuike, *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature*, (Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980).

percent of the world's population controls thirty-five largely economically unviable states with populations below ten million, and ten states with a population under one million. Large multinationals, such as United African Company, Société Commerciale de l'Ouest Africain, Unilever, and Lohnro have remained intact and battered on the bilateral and multilateral funds destined "to develop" the African countries. To complicate matters, these states have been pulled along by the West into an increasingly consumer-oriented economy, which initially attracted the African elites and proved increasingly seductive to the urban masses and rural peasants.<sup>22</sup>

Ghana, Guinea, and Mali, which aspired to "socialist" economic development policies and left the sterling and franc zones respectively, found their new currencies worthless on the world market, and their states cut off from aid and loans for development from the capitalist international community. Ironically, the world's major socialist states, claiming adherence to the orthodox Marxist view that Africa had to go through a capitalist phase before socialism was possible, refused to help. For them, such a notion as African Socialism was a chimera developed by bourgeoisie still cognitively Western. Discouraged by both East and West, a number of leaders attempted to halt the importation of consumer goods which diverted dollars or francs needed for endogenous development. Such politics angered both the masses and the elites. The peasants smuggled their products to neighboring countries to obtain hard currencies, and the urbanites plotted revolutions. These groups refused self-sufficiency and African Socialism when these policies cut rather than enhanced their living standards. The experience of Ghana is a case in point.<sup>23</sup>

#### GHANA: A CASE EXAMPLE

Francis (later) Kwame Nkrumah, was not only an American and British-trained intellectual, but a fervent pan-Africanist and creator of the concept of the "African personality." He wanted to change the thinking of colonial Africans, to unite the peoples of the continent politically, and to change their mono-product economies. In order to do so, he was prepared to abandon the colonial structures which united British West Africa, and use part of the substantial amount of money garnered during World War II by the Gold Coast Cocoa Marketing Board. He built monuments hailing the "Black Star"

22. What many African leaders did not bargain for was that mercantilism had done its work and the export of raw materials was still the major economic link between these countries and the Western industrial economic system. Not all observers, however, believed that the emerging African elite were either prepared or able to transform their societies. Fanon warned that "Since the middle-class has neither sufficient material nor intellectual resources (by intellectual resources we mean engineers and technicians), it limits its claims to the taking over of business offices and commercial houses formerly occupied by the settlers . . . .The national middle-class discovers its historic mission: that of intermediaries . . . . Seen through its eyes, its mission has nothing to do with transforming the nation; it consists, prosaically, of being the transmission line between the nation and a capitalism, rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the mask of neo-colonialism." Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 152.

23. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Road to Independence: Ghana and the Ivory Coast* (Paris: Mouton and Co., 1964), 137.

and created an airline whose decals projected the "Black Star" over African and European skies. Ghana became the site of cultural festivals honoring the African past and the home of revolutionary exiles plotting how to expel the European invaders from the continent.

Foremost among Nkrumah's dreams was to indigenize and to diversify Ghana's mono-crop economy so as to develop his country. In an early effort to convince Ghanaians that the ideological concept "African personality" implied endogenous development, Kwame Nkrumah decided to manufacture a local gin to replace the Ghanaians' gustatorial favorite, *London Dry Gin*. The reaction was furious. Ghanaians feared that their social status would be jeopardized if they used a local product instead of a prestigious, imported one. They also complained that they preferred American cars to the Bristol cars assembled in Ghana as an example of import substitution which ultimately would lead to a full-scale automobile industry. One can argue that if Nkrumah really wanted to indigenize, he might have suggested that the locally produced palm wine be improved and used as Ghana's national drink. This, however, would have raised a greater storm — one involving charges of retrogression, paternalism, and cognitive dissonance. Ghanaians were intoxicated by the desire to modernize. A preference for palm wine contradicted this need to move ahead.

Nkrumah's major problem was that he had absolutely no control over the international price of cocoa. His country experienced hardship during the postwar economic recession when the price of cocoa fell, and that made him more determined than ever to industrialize Ghana. He decided to use his scarce resources to build the Akosombo Dam and with the power produced electrify all of Ghana, provide power for local industries, and most important of all, fuel the conversion of local bauxite into aluminum.<sup>24</sup> His ideological stance did not endear him either to the United States or to Great Britain, and therefore, he had difficulty in getting loans to build the dam. Through political pressure exercised in the United States by African Americans and others, Nkrumah did get an American loan but it was conditional: he had to permit an American multinational to use Akosombo's electric power to smelt bauxite brought all the way across the Atlantic to the Guaiñas.

Psychologically more devastating to Nkrumah was the local Ghanaian reaction. His attempt to use the scarce dollars for development by curtailing the importation of consumer goods was not accepted. Both the small elite group and the larger, market-women constituency were infuriated by not being able to purchase the goods they desired. Later, when Nkrumah could not get an emergency loan from the West because he criticized US policies in Vietnam, the military overthrew him and seized power. Even so, Nkrumah's fall did not solve Ghana's problems.

Due to a continuing decline in the price of cocoa and corruption in high places, Ghana could not repay the debts incurred during the attempts to endogenize its economy. Desperately short of food, subsequent military gov-

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24. Kwame Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom: A Statement of African Ideology* (New York: Praeger, 1962), 242.

ernments in Ghana launched programs such as "Operation Feed Yourself" and "Industrialize Yourself." But the country's economy continued to decline. The elite and the masses fled abroad to more prosperous countries, only to be later expelled. After a succession of military and civilian leaders who could not

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solve Ghana's problems, Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings seized power. Initially, he attempted to use his own methods to rescue the country's economy. Pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Reagan regime forced him to adopt a rural strategy and even to advocate privatization. The Ghanaian economy improved for a time, but there is strong feeling that Rawling's experiment will have difficulty in succeeding.<sup>25</sup>

#### CUTTING THE STRINGS

Africa's lamentable experiences with the use of exogenous models have forced some scholars to suggest development strategies more in keeping with their own traditions and current realities. The question is: What strategies will succeed after African economies and societies have been linked so long to the West? Samir Amin, among others, has advocated "uncoupling" from the capitalist West, and seeking salvation in autonomy and "development from below or from the masses." This is how Samir Amin puts it:

In order to serve the mass of the peasantry, industrialization must first be made to concentrate on improving rural productivity. Similarly, in order to serve the urban masses, it is necessary to give up luxury production for the local market and give up exporting, since they are both based on the reproduction of a cheap labor force.<sup>26</sup>

There are a number of technical, environmental, and cognitive/ideological problems involved in such strategies. First, there is a difference between endogenous or culturally-specific development (starting from an autonomous base), and industrialization (a set of interrelated processes, tools, and ideas characteristic of the West). How to meld those two approaches is worthy of serious philosophical debate. A second concern is the question of whether the

25. Gwendolyn Mikell, *Cocoa and Chaos in Ghana* (New York: Paragon House Publishers, forthcoming).

26. Samir Amin, *La deconnection. Pour sortir du système mondial* (Paris: La Decouverte, 1986).

people in many African urban areas are prepared to undertake such experiments. Paradoxically, few Africans, even those who are anti-Western, or Marxist, display any interest in endogenous development. Either they believe that endogeneity is so much nationalist humbug or suggest that "development by the rabble" would fail. These persons insist that the Japanese success with development, instructed by tradition, is due to their having not been colonized by the West.

The ambiguity that many Africans feel toward strategies of development is due mainly to the failure of so many development projects in their countries, whether attempted from the "top-down" or from the "bottom-up," or whether in the hands of Western-trained developers, Africans or Europeans, or American expatriates. The epithet "WAWA" (West Africa Wins Again) still is used to express the frustration of developers in the face of project failures. Whether judged either in theoretical or practical perspective, however, it is clear that "WAWA" is symptomatic of a gross misunderstanding of the cognitive universes in which developers and Africans have found themselves. Africans have always adapted to changes in their physical and sociocultural universes. People in urban and coastal areas have adapted more readily than those in rural interior regions. The issue is that contemporary adaptation cannot be comparable to that of the colonial or immediate post-colonial epoch, but must take into consideration the spread of an all-embracing, planet-wide civilization.<sup>27</sup>

What a carefully crafted approach to development should take into consideration is that African traditional cultures can provide the philosophical justification for looking to their own culture and existential condition for the strength to modernize. This would involve a systematic and judicious analysis of the worthwhile elements surviving from the past, those of the complicated present, and those elements of the global civilization that are impinging on the entire world. Many of these elements can be beneficial to all humanity; others are harmful; and still others are neutral. Faced with the need for new institutions, Africans should look to their own societal systems for the answers, and adopt or adapt local ones whenever possible. On the other hand, when given the opportunity to contribute what Alfred Kroeber called their "own proper peculiarities and originations" to the contemporary world, they ought to do so.<sup>28</sup>

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27. According to Ali Mazrui, this process is characterized by "the spread of literacy, the role of technology in affecting lifestyles, the acceleration and facilitation of international travel, the international distribution on a world-scale, the impact of radio and the consolidation of external broadcasting services to all parts of the world as an aspect of foreign policy have all combined to introduce the beginnings of shared values, shared tastes, and shared images . . . . At one level the homogenization manifests itself in the cruder form of pop. Certain American singers and musicians are heroes to teenagers in Iboland, Hong Kong, Bombay, Mombasa and Rio de Janeiro. In other words, certain tastes in music, films, sports and magazines have become almost global." Mazrui, *A World Federation of Cultures: An African Perspective* (New York: Free Press, 1976).

28. Alfred A. Kroeber, "The Ancient Oikoumene as an Historical Culture Aggregate," in *The Nature of Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 378-395. Robert F. Murphy recently wrote: "It is questionable that all cultural differences will be submerged by these convergences, but there is no doubt that similarities will increase and the more riotously colorful forms of diversity will disappear. We are heading

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for a worldwide culture of a sort, but there are too many imponderables to allow a prediction of exactly what it would be like . . . . We only know that we are on the frontiers of unknown country, a time when the institutions of the past will be nullified by the future. This is a period of great indeterminacy and peril, and ever greater possibilities." *Cultural and Social Anthropology* 2nd ed. (Englewood, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1986), 214.

