HISTORY AND CIVILIZATIONS: IMPACTS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Emmanuel Kwesi Boon and **Charles Takoyoh Eyong**
TESA Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), Brussels, Belgium

Keywords: civilization, colonialism, history, marginalisation, sustainable development challenges, Sub-Saharan Africa

Contents

Summary

Some scholars assert that Africa had experienced a level of development that was at par with the West if not more advanced in some aspects prior to the arrival of Europeans (Fokwang, 1999; Rodney, 1981). For instance, "during the Middle Ages—when most of the people of Europe suffered disease, fear, ignorance, and oppression—the Soninke people of the Empire of Ghana enjoyed a world that was rich in culture and famous as a center of learning and trade" (Green, 1998). A historical review of some great empires of Africa such as the empires of Mali, Mwanemutapa, Songhai and the Swahili Kingdoms also reveals that pre-colonial Africa had a rich history, culture, economy, politics and governance structures. These former centers of trade, culture, tradition and politics are largely failed states today. The grave consequences of the inhumane slave trade, colonialism and the forcible introduction of western civilization and modernity wiped out the development promise and rather produced economically, socially and ecologically non-resilient societies in Africa. The situation has been made worse by today's fast growing technological civilization and its massive psychopathologies and unending economic, social and ecological disasters. Western imperialism, which is embedded in the phenomenon of globalisation, is spreading dominant cultures and values through trade, production and consumption patterns and communications. It is clear that colonial contact and conquest in SSA was all about domination and oppression. The unmastered modernisation, which Africans are subtly and brutally forced into through the globalisation process, is impeding Africa's sustainable development prospects. Both national and international attempts have been made to remedy the situation but these have yielded little dividends due to the dictatorial international development arena, where the rich powerful nations bully and exploit the poor powerless. It is time for SSA to realise that the sustainable way to over-turn the downward spiral of African history rests in Africans themselves.

1. Introduction

History is the art and science of past and present with a view to predict the future events of human civilizations. This carefully gathered body of knowledge about human societies presents a continuum or a time line of events. History can exist in oral and written forms. African societies have verbal, visual, and written art forms of preserved knowledge about their past. Historical information can be gotten from trusted individuals whose superior wisdom and training equip them to remember and interpret vast stores of information about the community. In centralized states and chiefdoms, religious or political advisors to royal power keep written records of their past and

present. Records and narratives kept by African historians are among the most informative sources for the reconstruction of pre-colonial history on the continent. In sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), people who inherited and acquired special knowledge about history, genealogies and music, have performed a variety of vital social and political roles and continue to do so today. Ancient praise songs are now aired on television and over the radio and during live performances. They form important components of contemporary African ways of life such as weddings, religious and national holiday festivities in Ghana and other African countries.

Civilization on its part represents a particular society at a particular place and time. It can also be a social process whereby a society becomes enlightened through the influx of ideas, knowledge, values and material sophistication of an "advanced" people from a different place and time. Civilization can also represent the quality of excellence in thought, manners and taste. For instance, an African who refrains from drinking local liquor or palm wine but consumes whisky or assorted beers can be seen as a 'civilized' person. In the same vein, the invasion of Iraq was largely publicized as a civilizing mission and coalition soldiers who died in the war were seen as heroes of civilization and democracy. To the holders of this view (including President George W. Bush who declared the war on Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and Terrorism), 'democracy' represents 'civilization'. Civilization can result from a clash of two or more cultures. For example, Swahili is primarily a Bantu language with some Arabic elements. It is the outcome of the civilization of the Coast of East Africa where a mixture of the Arabic and Bantu cultures took place. History also tells us that Europeans civilized America.

Looking at the current sustainable development situation in SSA and reflecting into her past, a weak link between her past, present and the future can be discerned. This chapter is a *capita selecta* of key historical events and experiences in the civilization of Africa and which ended up weakening her sustainable development drive. This contribution is not an attempt to repeat history but one that uses a number of historical events and experiences to explain and give more meaning to the sustainable development challenges in the region.

The first part of the chapter looks at early empires and civilizations in SSA while the second part mirrors the slave trade era and colonialism. It goes further to elaborate on the impacts of colonialism. The third section focuses on contemporary sustainable development challenges in the region while the fourth section outlines their possible causes. The last part provides possible ways of solving the identified problems so as to give the millions of Africans a way forward in life.

1.1. Empires and Civilizations in Africa

Africa is the origin of human civilization and therefore has a rich history. Archeological evidence points to the fact that present day Egypt was the origin of ancient civilization. Also, the lens technology had developed and was in use in Africa many years before colonial rule. For instance, Robert Temple (2001) reconstructs the wholly forgotten story of light technology in ancient civilization, which dates back to at least 2600 BC in the Old Kingdom of Egypt, but unknown to archaeologists and historians. To him, a

science of optics and a sophisticated technology for the manufacture of lenses was widespread in ancient Egypt. He provides archaeological evidence to prove that magnification technology was not merely for making and viewing small carvings; its most important use was in telescopes, that became widespread.

The Ghana Empire in West Africa, the earliest known empire of the western Sudan, had a flourishing history and culture from about 750 to 1076. The empire's legacy is still celebrated in the name of the present day Republic of Ghana. The empire represented a long-distance trade based on gold and salt. The king was the centre of political power. There was a cordial relationship between traditional religions and Islam. As Rebecca Green (1998) points out, Ghana, the famous "Land of Gold," was said to possess sophisticated methods of administration and taxation, large armies, and a monopoly over notoriously well-concealed gold mines. To her, the King of the Soninke people who founded Ghana never fully embraced Islam, but he fostered good relations with Muslim traders.

The Swahili Kingdoms were also an attractive pool for merchants and traders from the Muslim world and Indians, who began to settle there. They realized the strategic importance of the east coast of Africa for commercial traffic. Arab and Persian migrants were significant players in the growth of Swahili civilization, yet the cities here were run by a hierarchical nobility that was African in origin. Below the nobility were the commoners and the resident foreigners who made up a large part of the citizenry. The Swahili civilizations had far reaching tentacles touching territories in Mogadishu, Barawa, Mombasa in Kenya and Sofala in Zimbabwe. These kingdoms began to decline in the sixteenth century as Portuguese trade disrupted the old trade routes and made the Swahili commercial centres obsolete. The Portuguese did not want native Africans to have a share in African trade so they began conquering the Islamic city-states along the eastern coast.

The forest Kingdoms of Oyo (Yoruba) and the Kingdom of Dahomey played an active role in European slave trade and derived immense wealth from it. The Oyo Empire existed as a result of the expansion of the slave trade in the eighteenth century. The Benin State, one of the longest lasting civilizations in Western Africa and the most powerful of the forest kingdoms, stayed out of the slave trade completely but suffered a great deal from the slave wars. It was still a powerful and imposing state when the European powers began zealously seizing territory in Africa in the nineteenth century. Conquering the Benin State was an uphill task for the Europeans, but it was finally invaded and dismantled by the British in 1897. This leads to an important link in African and European history.

Rapid advancements in Western Europe and America in the 1800s brought Africa to the limelight of human exploitation and degradation. The age of enlightenment in Western Europe was accompanied by massive industrialization and the domination of capitalist modes of production and consumption. The drive to produce and consume more was the ultimate objective. For instance, while "the period between 1820 and 2000 marked an economic boom of over 15 fold in per capita GDP in Western Europe", Africa seems to have witnessed a decline after the 1970s. Some scholars have asserted that prior to Africa's contact with Europe, the former had experienced a level of development that

was at par with the latter if not more advanced in some aspects (Fokwang, 1999; Rodney, 1981).

2. Sustainable Development in Africa: The Slave Trade and Colonial Trajectory

Sustainable Development (SD) is a recent creation that has been around the development discourse for less than two and a half decades. The famous definition of SD by the Brundtland Commission stressed the issue of 'needs'. SD is "development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs" (WCSD, 1987). It is a planned economic, social, and environmental change for the better. This change requires active co-operation at all levels by all stakeholders for the wellbeing of the masses. It is long termed, fosters inter- and intra-generational equity and does not foul the air, nor poison the water, pollute and degrade land (Weaver *et al*, 1997). The implication is that in using the current resource base to meet our own needs, care should be taken to ensure that the future generations and members of the same generation will be able to depend upon the same resource base to meet their own needs.

In the light of the above definition of SD, one wonders if history and civilization have helped Africa's sustainable development process in any significant way. Continuous injustice and inequity are the lot of SSA in the world economy. The massive depletion of SSA's natural resources by western multinational corporations has contributed significantly towards the existing unacceptable levels of poverty in the region. Given that both slavery and colonialism were to the advantage of the western countries, it is clear that these events have made SD in Africa a near impossible task. This chapter argues that the grave consequences of these events have produced economically, socially and ecologically non-resilient societies in SSA.

2.1. Slavery and Slave Trade

Slavery and the slave trade era represent a cruel and unsustainable development period in the history of Africa and Africans. Early enslavements involved Europeans and native Americans but these slaves escaped and blended easily amongst the populations. Attention was then focused on black Africa and by the seventeenth century, the traffic in human slaves from Africa flourished. As far back as the early 1500s, the first contingents of captured slaves were taken to America to serve as labour on plantations, especially in places like Jamestown, Virginia, New Orleans, Louisiana and many others. Human traffickers from Portugal and other European countries came to West Africa to capture slaves for auction as chattel. Human beings were chained and transported in cramped vessels to be sold to slave masters. These journeys led to many deaths. Those who ventured to escape were given snake-beatings. This dehumanizing act became out-lawed in the United States by 1806 and since then various attempts were made to recapture and repatriate African slaves to Liberia and Sierra Leone on the coast of West Africa.

Cries for slave trade abolition also came from within African societies. By the end of the eighteenth century, merchants in countries bordering the Gulf of Guinea, who had become rich, thanks to the slave trade, began to distance themselves from the practice

and sent their children to Britain to train in the sciences and other professions useful for the development of commerce. Throughout the nineteenth century, African societies had no trouble responding positively to the inducements of industrialized Europe, which had converted to "lawful" trade the produce of the land and was henceforth hostile to the "unlawful" and "shameful" trade in slaves (Le Monde Diplomatique, 1998).

The worrying thing about slavery in Africa is that prime, young, healthy and able bodied men and women were captured, sold or exchanged for a "looking glass", salt or some other merchandise. During this period, clan heads became contact persons identifying and pin-pointing potential slaves from their communities in exchange for a "white-man's gift". The most powerful men and women in the working age population were taken away. In this way, African countries were deprived of a powerful workforce with little or no compensation at all. This "lucrative" business became a life-time source of riches for most slave dealers. Captured slaves were forced to work on plantations under hard labour and for long hours with no pay. Even after the abolition of slavery and the slave trade, the freed slaves were abandoned with little or no incentive to start-up anything lucrative for themselves. Perhaps this is not surprising given the reluctance of slave masters and slave merchants to cease the practices which humiliated humans and enriched themselves.

A number of ethical issues emerging from the slave trade era are worth noting. First, Africans were forcefully taken to the Americas where they worked and built the economy of what is today known as the United States of America. Second, the weak, old and very young Africans were left to their peril; the sustainable development of the continent was nipped in the bud. Third, there were unexpected deaths and loss of a huge number of Africans during slave raids and transportation across the Atlantic. Fourth, shipped Africans lost citizenship at home but were unable to claim citizenship in the New World. Fifth, the slave trade, which brought wealth to the forest kingdoms, was equally a bitter pill for these kingdoms to swallow. Kingdoms and city-states fought wars in order to obtain captives for the slave trade. This resulted in increased political and social instability in these forest kingdoms and thereby caused massive human displacements, the fragmentation of African civilizations, and the demise of sustainable development. Sixth, family members were separated and in most cases families lost their breadwinners forever. Even when recaptured slaves were brought back to the coast of West Africa (Liberia and Sierra Leone), they were simply abandoned and left on their own. Many were those who could not re-unite with their families. The humiliated, over exploited and traumatized slaves brought back to West Africa could not do much to improve the economic wellbeing of their new societies. Seventh, the abandonment of freed slaves without any means to start a decent life is an important contributor to the present problems of sustainable development in Africa. Armed with relatively nothing to start life, the only resort was to fall back on the natural environment to collect and harvest wild fruits, cultivate crops using rudimentary and land degrading methods. Hunting pressures, activities of illegal foreign poachers and over-fishing of the rivers exacerbated the environmental degradation and biodiversity loss in SSA.

2.2. Colonialism: The Successor to the Slave Trade

Colonialism is the process of establishing economic, political and social control over a sovereign state or people. It escalated in the period from 1550 to 1750 and marked the emergence of imperialism—"the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory" (Said, 1993:8). Colonialism is the universal, evolutionary progress of modernization, a particular strategy or experiment in domination and exploitation and the unfinished business of struggle and negotiation. In effect, colonialism emerged when slavery was already flourishing.

2.2.1 Colonialism and the Slave Trade

After dragging Africa down a dangerous path to unsustainable development through slavery, Western discourse on Africa centered on the "backwardness" and "savagery" of the continent (Rodney, 1981), a situation in which the West had played an active part. Such value judgments floating in the West prompted political leaders to finance anthropologists and missionaries to Africa to educate, civilize and evangelize the African people. The Western way of life was presented as a model for Africans to copy. Colonialism and imperialism invoked racial superiority. The former Western slave-trading states began speaking only of liberating Africa from "Arab" and African slave traders. The real intentions of domination and oppression—acquisition of territories and natural resources—which led to the destruction of well established African civilizations, received no mention.

Great care was taken by Western countries not to completely abolish the slave trade structures they met during colonization. Their argument was that any change would be gradual, and native customs would be respected. In this way, slavery persisted within the colonial system. Western countries created a new type of slavery in the form of forced labour to accelerate the exploitation of the continent's vast natural resources to feed the factories in the metropolis. Due to the efforts of African deputies like Félix Houphouët-Boigny and Léopold Sédar Senghor, forced labour was abolished in 1946 (Le Monde Diplomatique, 1998).

2.2.2 Colonialism and the Industrial Revolution

Colonialism accompanied the industrial revolution in Western Europe. Many factors accounted for the drive by European powers like Britain, France and Germany to aggressively compete for overseas territories in Africa between the 1880s and the outbreak of the First World War. The search for cheap labour, raw materials for their factories, and new markets for Europe's excess production was a fundamental reason. The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, which was the result of disagreement over an area along the River Congo basin, confirmed the partitioning of Africa along imaginary lines. Africa was arbitrarily partitioned into European-style states, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, language and religion. Individuals and groups became trapped within colonial state boundaries with no viable exit options in conflict situations. Doctrines of racial superiority in Europe denied the right of subjugated Africans to self-government. Guided by the works of missionaries and anthropologists who saw and described African societies as savage, primitive and barbaric (tribes), the colonial powers embarked upon a civilizing and modernizing mission to Africa; the acclaimed goal was to enlighten and civilize Africans.

2.2.3 Unsustainable Development in Colonial and Post Colonial Africa

The colonial experience seems to be a 'triple whammy'. First was the domination of physical space by the Western powers purely for economic and geopolitical reasons. Infrastructural facilities such as roads, railways and ports were built to facilitate the shipment of raw materials to the western factories located in the metropolis. Roads were mostly linking raw materials exploitation zones and seaports. The colonial masters separately resided in clean and often protected environments that were observably distinct and separated from the slums inhabited by the wretched Africans. The poor slum dwellers had to work for the rich in order to eke a living. Clearly, the colonization of Africa introduced dependence, underdevelopment, continuous subordination and a huge loss of selfness and direction amongst the African people.

The colonial masters sowed seeds of disunity, conflict and war in Africa through the creation of political and administrative territories without regard for cultural and linguistic affiliations. In a state of anomie, it was possible to oppress and dominate Africans, and excavate and ship their natural resources to the west without any hindrance. In the ethnic "enclaves" created by Western powers was founded the second project of colonialism—the reformation of native minds. Colonialism also sought to empty the brains of Africans of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, colonialism "turns to the past of the oppressed people and distorts, disfigures and destroys it" (Fanon, 1986:170; Fokwang, 1999:48). Essentially, it was a big scheme to deny Africa of its rich history, culture and wealth. Clearly, slavery and colonialism are largely responsible for the marginalisation of the population and cultures of SSA and the sustainable development problems it is facing today. These two evils also helped to create a consumerist culture, which is very widespread in the region. Some of the impacts of colonialism and slavery in Africa are described in the next sub sections.

2.2.3.1 Political and Social Changes

Rodney (1981) argues that the arbitrary borders established by the colonial powers were for their convenience; it was done with utter disregard for the indigenous people, their histories or past animosities. Governance in Africa before the arrival of the white man was centred around communal leaders who, as individuals or groups, excelled in various ways. Moreover, governance was aimed at the collective improvement of the people. In many instances, secular laws were regarded as sacred, a commandment of the gods embodied by the elders and priests (Kalu, 2004). The radical replacement and consequent rejection by some Africans of their traditional religious practices paved the way for the invading Christianity and Islam, which changed governance structures to more centralised states.

The British and the French strengthened these structures during the colonial era either through the policy of indirect "or" direct rule. These systems of governance were actually variants of despotism. While direct rule denied rights to subjects on racial grounds, indirect rule incorporated them into a "customary" mode of rule, with state-appointed Native Authorities defining custom (Mamdani, 1996). By tapping authoritarian possibilities in culture and by giving culture an authoritarian bent, indirect

rule (decentralized despotism) set the pace for the rape of Africa. The French followed suit by changing from direct to indirect administration, while apartheid emerged relatively late: this was actually a generic form of the colonial state in Africa. These systems of administration were founded on the politics of divide and rule, which have now been perfected by successive African governments with the intention to oppress the masses rather than work for their common good and sustainable development in the region. Thanks to this system and due to the multi-ethnic character of Cameroon, the country is said to be easier to govern than it is to run a family (Nyamnjoh, 1999), but elsewhere in SSA, the objective reality is ravaging ethnic conflicts where bullets and not ballots influence politics. Guns, not votes seem to be a legitimate way of choosing leaders in the region, especially in Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Somalia, Cote d'Ivoire and Sudan.

However, the winds of change blowing across Eastern Europe since the late 1980s did much to revolutionise socio-political life in Africa. Since 1997, there have been about 20 internationally acclaimed transfers of power in Africa, yet participatory democracy might not germinate in the barren soils of Africa. The obstacles to democratization in Africa lie in the colonial legacy which was a bifurcated power that mediated racial domination through tribally organized local authorities, reproducing racial identity in citizens and ethnic identity in subjects (Mamdani, 1996). The "invention of tradition" using the image of "tribal" or "traditional" government under the aegis of "indirect rule" (Ranger 1983), the image of "other" government and the ethnocentric definitions of "modern" government were crucial to any form of colonial rule. At the same time, they are fundamental constraints to the objectives of sustainable development.

Today, Africans and their governments are bearing the blame for bad governance. However, it is a fact that at the time of flag independence, the colonial powers sort puppet rulers who were more than willing negotiators ready to mortgage the continent's resources and plunge it into the ecological, economic, social and political mess it finds itself today. These African rulers are people possessing western tastes and values but are only African in blood and complexion. They will stop at nothing to develop "faulty policies just to attain programmatic objectives" while the majority of the populations whose lives these policies should improve, are left to suffer in deprivation (Ascher, 2000). The question is 'What is responsible for this social indifference?' Exposure to western education, greed, egoism and the lust for all sorts of power are important factors that have shaped unsustainable attitudes, behaviours and practices amongst the ruling elite of Africa.

2.2.3.2 Cultural Impacts

Culture is the creation or recreation of ideologies, rules and practices that allow people to make sense of the world in both different and shared ways (Crewe and Harrison, 1998). The great French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu conceptualises culture as a system of durable transposable dispositions or organizing actions which are constitutive of particular types of environments that instil predispositions, tendencies, propensities or inclinations which produce habitus (Bourdieu, 1972). To him, the habitus are principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be

objectively "regulated" and "regular" without in any way being the product of obedience to rules.

In normal social situations, a person relies upon a large store of scripts and of knowledge of the world and this determines how she or he thinks and behaves. So culture fashions our attitudes, provides a recipe and guides our actions in our environments. Cultural systems change over time to adapt to environmental, social and ecological changes. Cultures are also affected through interaction with other people and cultures. A culture develops depending on a society's ability to learn and transmit the acquired traits to succeeding generations through the twin processes of intra-and inter-generational enculturation and acculturation of individuals in societal values, ethics, moral conduct, customs and beliefs. Socialisation in culture occurs as individuals grow in their given societies. The socialization process can take place at the primary level (the family) and/or at the secondary level (school, church, media and the community). Today, primary socialization still occupies a strong position in many African societies.

However, culture has been seen in rather fragmentary senses in terms of its functionality in society. For example, the colonial masters set to "modernise" all that was African and in doing so codified and promulgated traditions that transformed flexible African customs into hard prescriptions (Rangers, 1983). An important project of cultural change was the development of language. Prior to colonisation, communal and social cohabitation resulted in the development of a system of expression, which "employs symbols, like objects, feelings, ideas and so forth"; this facilitated the socialisation function of the family. It is alleged that with language, ancestors in Africa were able to institutionalize and teach norms, mores and other cultural practices such as mythic-religions and beliefs that explained such mysteries as nature, birth, sickness, life and death.

Colonial masters invented tribal identities and Africans moved in and out of different identities, defining themselves at different times according to chief, clan or tribe. Africans were forced to speak European languages and today a modern African is one who owns a TV set, a radio set, a car, speaks English or French fluently [but can hardly speak his/her own language], obtained western education, owns a mobile phone or uses and even owns an obsolete computer. Those who own such artefacts distance themselves from the poor.

The clash between colonial and African cultures has produced cultural mosaics which African youth identifies with today, thanks to the influence of the media and the fast evolving new information and communications technologies (ICTs). However, it is important that when two cultures clash the populations are able to select the elements of the two cultures they find suitable in their social contexts. Every attempt should be made to avoid blind copying of 'exotic' values. For instance, the culture of the United Arab Emirate is being affected by rapid technological changes. However, students in this country have demonstrated that users of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) technologies in diverse cultural contexts are not simply the hapless victims of new technologies and globalization. Rather, they are able to determine for themselves which elements of the local and the global influences they will accept, preserve, or

reject in an active process of self-development in dialogue with multiple cultures surrounding them (Piecowye, 2003).

A different but compelling example of the influence of the new technologies on developing countries is Fokwang's description of language in the context of competing cultures in a globalizing world. To him, evolved and well read African men and women who can articulate with superior mastery of their dialects or vernacular will stop at nothing to dissuade their offspring from learning anything of these languages. Since the 1980s, it was observed in Kenya that "men at the top fume in fury at fellow Africans who mispronounce English but laugh with pride at their own inability to speak a single sentence in their own African languages (Ngugi, 1981). Hence, it is difficult to encourage 'modern youth' to express themselves in their local African languages or dialects. A random survey on Africans in Brussels, Belgium, was conducted in January 2004. A total of 63 students from West, East and Southern African countries were randomly asked the question "How do you say this or that in your African language?" Ninety-two% were not able to say something in their own language. When asked how they felt at that moment, most of them just laughed and tried to defend themselves by saying that English or French is their official language.

The introduction of western style education, religious practices, mass media and governance structures was a clear reminder that all that was African, was inferior, backward and primitive and needed to be rooted out. These vehicles of western civilization and individualism are especially firmly ingrained in the life of the population of SSA and are net contributors to the region's impoverishment. The quality and quantity of African schools are never like their western counterparts. Whether a Christian or a Muslim, the African still relies on traditional practices to appease the gods. So, whichever way we look at it, colonialism has been the major cause of marginalising populations, societies and cultures in SSA with a profound negative impact on its sustainable development prospects.

2.2.3.3 Economic Impacts

The third project of colonialism in SSA and the derailment of sustainable development in the region was the integration of local African economies into those of the West, and the capitalist search for higher profits through colonial conquest. Capitalism, an economic system in which capital or wealth is put to work to produce more capital, revolutionized traditional African economies and induced social and political changes that drastically affected African societies. For example, maximizing production and minimizing cost did not necessarily coincide with the traditional, seasonal patterns of agricultural production in SSA. The ethic of wage productivity was thus, in many respects, a new concept to supposedly 'idle natives' who were accustomed to traditional patterns of production. Balanced subsistence-based economies were replaced by specialization and accumulation of surpluses. Tribal states or empires, organized along precarious, unwritten cultural traditions, also adopted the division of labour which is based on the legal protection of land and labour. These were once inalienable, but are now commodities to be bought, sold, or traded. For instance, in West Africa, palm oil was traditionally produced on land owned by the community. In pre-colonial times, anyone who planted a tree had full life-time rights over its products; this was true for

men as for women (Fokwang, 1999). The arrival of the colonial businessman who organized large-scale production of palm oil for the industrial citizens of the 'west' destroyed the fragile, complex social and economic systems of the non-industrial Africans. The outcome is a precarious condition as the formerly self-sufficient people of Africa now sell their labour to western companies to eke a living. It is precarious in the sense that these former landowners cannot determine the price of their labour or the world market prices of their produce, and neither do they have the power to determine their conditions of work.

The introduction of monocultures took root during the colonial era. Vast areas of land with rich biodiversity were cleared to introduce monoculture cash crops like rubber, palm oil, tea, cocoa and coffee. This is completely unsustainable compared to the traditional modes of mixed cropping, bush fallowing and crop rotation. For example, plantation agriculture was introduced in SSA for producing cash crops mainly for export to the western countries, but the so-called cash crops failed to generate any significant cash to finance the sustainable development of the region. Small-scale producers deceived by capitalist production methods opened up large areas of land and planted cash crops like cocoa and coffee. When the 'world market' prices fell drastically in the late 1980s, there was mass hunger, poverty and misery among farmers principally because many of them had shifted from the cultivation of food crops to the cultivation of cash crops.

Moreover, the abusive use of fertilisers and irrigation systems in the region caused serious land degradation and loss of soil fertility. Salinisation, sodicisation, and waterlogging are commonplace. Underground water pollution is further worsening the problems of food insecurity, shortages of drinking water, environmental diseases, and so on. These are "silent emergencies" (UNDP, 1993) and problems that have to be urgently dealt with in the region.

Another problem associated with plantation agriculture is labour exploitation. Just like the colonial masters did during the slave trade era, children, women and the youth continue to be subjected to desolate work conditions in SSA. For instance, child labour is no secret in cocoa plantations in Ghana and Nigeria, yet what they earn is a pittance in relation to their labour. In rubber plantations in Cameroon, a rubber tapper is expected to tap over 550 trees of varying diameters, collect all the latex in an eight hours working day for a wage equivalent to 1.39 euros.

2.2.3.4 Ecological Impacts

The vast natural resources of SSA were massively plundered during the colonial period. These include palm oil, diamonds, bauxite and copper. The roads, ports, cities, transportation and power grids created by the colonial masters were designed exclusively for the extraction and export of these resources. Even today, large foreign timber exploitation companies continue to clear, cut and convert dense forests to deserts without paying the commensurate timber royalties. Unsurprisingly, these commercial logging companies mostly originate from former colonial masters. The unsustainable exploitation of these resources to satisfy the raw material demands of the growing industrial base in Western countries remains the most serious cause of biodiversity loss

in SSA. Habitat alteration and loss, over-harvesting, the introduction of exotic species and diseases, increasing pollution, climate change, demographic upsurges, poverty and inequality, poor public policies, market failure, imposed macroeconomic policies and structures, negative social change and the implementation of inappropriate development projects are other reasons for the loss of biodiversity and the general environmental degradation in SSA.

-
-
-

TO ACCESS ALL THE **35 PAGES** OF THIS CHAPTER,
Visit: http://www.eolss.net/Eolss-sampleAllChapter.aspx

Bibliography

ActionAid, (2004). The Cotton Dispute: A Victory For the World's Poor Farmers, ActionAid Press Release, London, UK; http://allafrica.com/stories/(2004)06170658.html

Al-Marhubi, Fahim, (2004). *The Determinants of Governance: A Cross-Country Analysis*, Contemporary Economic Policy, Vol. 22, N° 3, July (2004), 394-406

Arizpe, Lourdes (ed) (1996). *The Cultural Dimensions of Global Change: An Anthropological Approach.* United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation Publishing, pp259

Ascher, W. (2000). *Understanding Why Governments in Developing Countries Waste Natural Resources* in Environment, March (2000). pp 8-18 [This article is a review of 16 case studies and a proper reflection why governments in developing countries misuse their natural resource to fulfil programmatic objectives]

Avery, D.T. (2004). *WTO cotton ruling would benefit U.S. farmers, consumers and help poor nations' economies*, eTaiwan News.com,opinion page 20 June, 2004. http://www.etaiwannews.com/Opinion/2004/06/20/1087702675.htm.

Boon, E. K. (2003). *Sustainable Development in Africa: An Analysis of the Economic and Social Dimensions,* in Nierynck, E. et al. (2003). Making Globalisation Sustainable? The Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development and Beyond, VUB Press, Brussels, pp137-171

Bourdieu, P. (1972). *Outline of a Theory of Practice (*R. Nice, Trans.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, p5-90

Boyce, J.K. and Ndikumana, L. (2000). *Is Africa a Net Creditor? New Estimates of Capital Flight from Severely Indebted Sub-Saharan African Countries,* Political Economy Research Institute, University of Massachusetts Working Papers series, N° 5, 2000, pp51

Boyce, J.K. and Ndikumana, L. (2002). *Africa's Debt: Who Owes Whom?* Political Economy Research Institute, University of Massachusetts, Working Paper series, N° 48, pp12

Brown, Lester R. 1981 Building a Sustainable Society New York, U.S.A. W. W. Norton & Co, Inc. 31 December, 1981, pp448

Caldwell, J. and Caldwell, P. (2002). *The Fertility Transition in Sub-Saharan Africa.* Department of Social Development and Human Sciences Research Council Pretoria, South Africa, Oct. (2002), pp6

Crewe E. and Harrison E. (1998). Whose development? An Ethnography of Aid. London: Zed Books, 1999, pp30-48.

Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DMFA), (2002). *Culture and Development Strategy and Guideline,* Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Information Office, Denmark, September 2002, pp26

Electronic Mail & Guardian, (2000). Year of Lost Chances for Mbeki Mail & Guardian Newspaper, South Africa, 2 July 2000.

Eriksen, T. H. (2003). *Class, Nation and Identity: The Anthropology of Political Movements.* Published by Pluto Press, April (2003), pp 256

Eyong and Mbuagbo (2002). *Assessment of the Hygiene and Sanitation Campaign in Cameroon* Journal of Environment, Development and Sustainability, Volume 4, Number 4, pp 391-402

Eyong C.T., and Mbuagbo, O.T. (2002). *Assessment of the Hygiene and sanitation Campaign in Cameroon,* Journal of Environment, Sustainability and Development. Vol. 4 No 4 2002. pp 391- 402

Eyong C.T. (2003)b *Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development in Cameroon,* published online in the Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa Vol. 5, No. 2, Fall, 2003, pp30-58

Eyong C.T. (2003)a *Potential Effects of Relocation on a Forest Village in Cameroon* Masters thesis submitted to the Department of Human Ecology, Faculty of Pharmacy and Medicine, Free University of Brussels, Brussels, September 2003. pp77

Eze E.C. (1997). *Introduction: Philosophy and the (post). Colonial:* In Emmanuel Chuckwudi Eze (ed), 1997. Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader, Blackwell Publishers, pp384

Fanon F. 1986 *The Wretched of the Earth,* New York, Grove Press, pp256

Fokwang, J. T. (1999). *The African Youth, Competing Cultures and the Future of Peace,* in South-South Journal of Culture and Development, Vol. 1 (1), June 1999, pp46-65

Gardner, K. and Lewis, D. (1996). *Anthropology, Development and the Post-Modern Challenge,* London: Pluto Press, November 1996, pp208

Glasby G.P. (2002). *Sustainable Development: The Need for a New Paradigm* Environment, Development and Sustainability, Vol. 4 No 4 2002. pp 333- 345

Green R.L. (1998). *The Empire of Ghana: A First Book,* New York, Franklin Watts, pp 64

Hall D. and Robin de la Motte (2004). *Dogmatic Development: Privatisation and Conditionalities in Six Countries,* a Public Services International Research Unit (PSIRU). report for War on Want, UK, London, February, 2004, pp41

Jubilee Research (2004). *Doing nothing for Ethiopia: A briefing on Ethiopia's debt*, a publication of New Economics Foundation (nef), February 2004, pp4

Kalu K.A. (2004). *Globalization and its impact on Indigenous Governance Structures* in Southwestern Journal of International Studies, March 2004, p34-74

Kate, C. (1997). *The Fractured Community: Landscapes of Power and Gender in Rural Zambia,* University of California Pres, Berkely, p55-62

Kazancigil, Ali (2003). *Strengthening the role of the social sciences in society: the World Social Science Initiative,* International Social Science Journal Vol. 55 N°3, p377-380

Korup Project (1999). *The Socio-Economic Impact of the Relocation in the context national park management:Tthe case of Ikondo Kondo I Pilot Project.* Korup Project Report, June 1999. pp I – 56.

Kottak P. (1991). *Anthropology:Tthe Exploration of Human Diversity*, 5th edition, USA, McGraw-Hill, pp 496.

Lamb R. (ed). (1997). *People and Parks: Wildlife, conservation and communities* In Panos Media Briefing No. 25 June, (1997), pp21.

Lancaster C. (1999). *Aid to Africa: So much to do, so little done,* University of Chicago Press, Chicago, USA, pp. 272.

Le Monde diplomatique (1998). A Hundred and Fifty Years after France Abolished Slavery: The impact of the slave trade on Africa (Translated by Barry Smerin), April (1998). http://mondediplo.com/(1998)/04/02africa

Mamdani M. (1996). *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism,* Princeton, Princeton University Press, pp344.

Mudimbe V. 1988 *The Invention of Africa*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, pp241.

Nana-Fabu Stella, (2001). *High Fertility and Development in Cameroon* in Journal of Social Development in Africa, Vol 16, No 1, (2001), pp23-42.

Nath B. (2003). *Environmental Education: the Johannesburg Summit and Beyond*, in Nierynck, E. et al. (2003). Making Globalisation Sustainable? The Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development and Beyond, VUB Press, Brussels, pp173-190.

Ngugi Wa Thiongo, 1981 *A Writer's Prison Diary* London, Heinemann publishers, p29-62.

Ngugi Wa Thiongo, 1986 *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature,* Heinemann Publisher, July 18, 1986, pp114

Nkrumah G. (2002). Africa, Aid and sanctions: A Tall Order, in Foreign Policy in Focus Magazine, July 12, 2002.

Nnoli O., 1985 *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria,* Enugu, Fourth Dimension Publishers, Nigeria pp486.

Oxfam International, (2000). Growth with Equity Briefing Paper of Oxfam Community Aid Abroad, Fitzroy Victoria, Australia 2000. pp 10

Piecowye J. (2003). *Habitus in Transition? CMC use and impacts among young women in the United Arab Emirates.* Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication -JCMC- Vol 8, N°2, January .2003.

Ranger T. (1983). *The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa*, in Hobsbawm, E. and Ranger, T. (eds.). 1983 The Invention of Tradition, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp328.

Rodney W. (1981). How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, Revised edition, Howard University Press, December 1981, pp312.

Said W.E. 1993 *Culture and Imperialism*, Knopf/Random House New York, p8.

Schmidt-Soltau K. and Cernea M.M. (2003). *The end of forced resettlements for conservation: Conservation must not impoverish people* in Policy Matters, 12, (2003), p42-51.

Shah, Anup (2004). High Military Expenditure in Some Places: U.S. Military Spending

http://www.globalissues.org/Geopolitics/ArmsTrade/Spending.asp?p=1, Wednesday, June 16, 2004.

Simms A. (2001). *Who owes who? Ecological debt: the biggest debt of all.* A Jubilee Research article, London, October (2001). http://www.jubilee(2000)uk.org/ecological_debt/Articles/Ecologist_climate_debt.htm

Temple R. (2001). The Crystal Sun: *The Most Secret Science of the Ancient World*, Arrow Publishers, UK, February 1, (2001). pp653.

The Globalist (2003). Carbon Emissions: A Global Overview in 10 Points, August 20, 2003.

http://www.theglobalist.com/DBWeb/printStoryId.aspx?StoryId=3285

Turner M. and Hulme D. (1997). Governance, Administration and Development: Making the State Work. Kumarian Press, China, pp288.

United Nations Development Programme (1993). *People's Participation* In Human Development Report, Oxford University Press, New York, USA, p1-7.

United Nations Development Programme (2002). *Deepening democracy in a fragmented world* In Human Development Report, Oxford University Press, New York, USA, p13-49.

United Nations Habitats Programme (UNHABITATS) (2003). Press Briefing on (2003). Human Settlements Report, EarthScan, UK, September 2003, pp310.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (2003). Trade Performance and Commodity Dependence, UNCTAD secretariat, New York and Geneva, 2003. pp84.

UNCTAD (2004). *The Least Developed Countries Report (2004): Linking International Trade with Poverty Reduction,* United Nations publication, Sales No. E.04.II.D.27, Geneva pp414

USAID (2001). *HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa: Background, Projections, Impacts and Interventions. Policy Project Bureau for Africa.* Office of Sustainable Development, Washington DC, (2001), p1-58.

Vubo, Y.E. (1998). *The discourse and Politics of Indigenous/Minority People's rights in some metropolitan areas of Cameroon,* Journal of Applied Social Sciences, Vol. 1 N° 1, p25-41.

Weaver H. Rock, M. and Kusterer, K. (1997). *Achieving Broad-Based Sustainable Development: Governance, Environment and Growth with Equity*, Kumarin Press, Connecticut, USA, p2-14.

World Bank (2004). World Development Indicators (2004), The World bank, Washington DC, April (2004), pp400

World Bank (2004). *World Development Report (2004): Making Services Work for Poor People*, New York, Oxford Press pp286

World Bank Group (2001). *HIPC MAP* Washington DC, USA September (2001). Also available on this link: http://www.worldbank.org/hipc/about/map/map.html.

World Bank Group (2003). *Culture and Poverty: Learning and Research at the World Bank.* A publication of the World Bank Group Washington DC, September, (2003), pp33.

World Commission on Environment and Development Report, 1987 *Our Common Future* Oxford University Press, Oxford UK, p1-8.

Zanganeh, L.A. (2004). *Timbuktu was Paris of Islamic intellectuals*, New York Times, April. 25, 2004. http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/news/articles/0425timbuktu251.html.

Zulu J.J. (2003). *Leaning against Economic Winds: Zambia's Problems with HIPC*, Research Report for Jubilee Research-Zambia, Monday, 03 November, 2003, pp12.

Biographical Sketches

Emmanuel Kwesi Boon obtained his B.A. in Economics and Geography at the University of Ghana in 1979. He also has a Master's in Industrial Location and Development from the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) in Belgium. After obtaining an M.B.A. Degree from the University of Antwerp (UFSIA), he received his Ph.D. in Economic Sciences from VUB in 1986. He lectures at the School of Administration of the University of Ghana in Accra and is a visiting professor to several universities and institutions in Africa, Asia, Europe, and South America. Currently, Prof. Boon teaches four courses to the postgraduate students of Human Ecology at the VUB: "Research Methods and Practical Skills", "Environment and Development", "Communication, Leadership Skills, Multi-media, and GIS", and "Issues on Gender, Youth, Age, Culture, and Ethnic Groups". He is also actively involved in research, consultancy, and extension projects. He is the founder and chairman of the International Centre for Enterprise and Sustainable Development (ICED) based in Accra, Ghana.

Charles Takoyoh Eyong holds a B.Sc. (Hons) degree in Sociology/Anthropology with a minor in Journalism and Mass Communication from University of Buea in Cameroon. He holds a Post-graduate Diploma and a Masters degree in Human Ecology and is currently pursing a Ph.D. programme in Sociology at the Technological, Economical and Social Changes and Labour Market Research (**TESA**), the research unit on Sociology of Work and Labour Market Policy of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), Belgium, headed by **Prof. Dr. Jacques VILROKX.** His research interests cover a wide range of topics ranging from poverty and sustainable development, environmental protection, sustainable natural resources management, hygiene and sanitation, culture, African political organizations, tradition versus modernity, medicine and society and the African Youth. Currently, Mr. Eyong is working on the topic

"Toward an Alternative Education for Work and Sustainable Human Development in West Africa" for his doctoral thesis.