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Theme

Migration and Urbanization and their Consequences on Development

Session 13 : International Migration in Africa

Topic : Africa, the Parable of the Failure of the West, Works

Presenter : Prof. Gilbert E. M. Ogutu

University of Nairobi

E-mail: gemogutu@yahoo.com

Preamble

Speaking at the International Congress on "*The Debated Globe*" (Venice, Italy, October 5, 2000), Professor Serge Latouche, the French Professor of Economics at the University of Paris-Sud-Sceaux, sees Africa as '*a parable of the failure of the West*'. He says;

When I go to Africa I am amazed by a reality that is incomprehensible in the light of the Western logic: I meet happy people; well-dressed, well-fed children, popular neighbourhoods where the people live with dignity, despite the poverty and austerity of the surroundings. 800 million people are able to survive thanks to their capacity for self-organization. This is due to the wealth of social ties, the famous African solidarity, which allows people who do not have an official job, to produce for one another outside the logic of the market, and to find the necessary goods and services to live and not just survive.

When a youth leaves his village in Africa, because he can no longer survive there, and arrives in a slum neighbourhood of the metropolis, he immediately tries to form part of a clan, to have the most extensive relations possible. Thus he finds a certain mutuality, a life insurance, unemployment insurance. It is the clan that creates sport societies, as well as theatre and prayer groups. They are the ones

who calculate the dowry of a girl who is to marry, and organize funerals for those who die. In a word, they take charge of all the aspects of social life.

Africa has extraordinary creativity, which is expressed, among other things, with incredible prophetic flowering. This creativity is also a form of do-it-yourself work... Our (Western) situation is very different. We are on a meteorite that is traveling at a crazy speed, without a driver, without breaks, and now runs the risk of not having fuel. We must abandon it, before it crashes into the wall.

The Perennial Scramble for Africa

More than a decade ago, May 2-6, 1990, the theme for the Third Pan-African Conference of Professors World Peace Academy was *The Second Scramble for Africa*, candidly presupposing a first scramble, which many academic disciplines have taken for granted. The term "Scramble", was coined by histo-political scientists. It describes what had been happening in Africa for centuries but which reached a climax in the nineteenth century.

Scramble, yes scramble. Scramble for space, scramble for human resources, scramble for raw materials, scramble for minerals, scramble for political control... scramble, scramble, scramble. The Greeks, the Phoenicians scrambled for space in Mediterranean Africa, assuming the area was a southern extension of Europe. The Romans needed Africa to settle their soldiers following the Punic Wars (264 -146 BCE) and to feed themselves, culminating in the partition of northwest Africa into Roman provinces, viz. Mauritania Tingitania, Mauritania Caesariensis, Mauritania Stifensis, Numidia, Africa Proconsularis, Byzantium and Tripolitania. The Arabs scrambled for space in the entire northern Africa, viewing the area as a western extension of Arabia. And so, on and on, the scramble continued, call it International Migration for the purposes of this paper and conference.

Industrial revolutions in Europe were pivotal to later scrambles for Africa. The invention of the locomotive, yes, the locomotive. Calico goods were brought to the Atlantic coasts of Africa, bartered for slaves, who were then ferried to America to work on the plantations and the raw materials sailed to European factories: Manchester, Liverpool and the like. One wonders what happened that led to the incident known as "the Boston Tea party of December 16, 1773"? Really what happened or specifically,

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what were those trends that culminated in the declaration of independence by the American states!

When independent American states decided to 'do their thing', and stopped supplying raw materials to Europe, the implications for Africa were crucial. Christian Europe, claiming philanthropic tendencies, decided to hit America very hard by declaring Africa ripe for a more humane trade, and that slave trade or the ferrying of labor force from Africa to the Americas had to be brought to a halt. And so at Senate House, Cambridge, Dr. David Livingstone (1813 - 1883) could declare: "*I go back to Africa to make an open path for commerce and Christianity, do you carry out the work which I have begun? I leave it to you.*"

Political Partition of Africa

Livingstone could have left it to them, the missionary-cum-explorers had made known to their kith and kin in Europe, the unlimited wealth of Africa in human resources, natural resources and minerals, as well as Africa's potentiality to supply all the raw materials that Europe needed. The Germans, Belgians, French, Italians and the British were all over the place prospecting for resources. It is not surprising that the drama degenerated into a chaotic scramble which King Leopold II of Belgium insisted on putting to order by summoning Berlin Conference in the winter of 1884/85 to partition Africa into European spheres of influence. The administration of the new spheres of influence led to the establishment of effective colonization which prompted the arbitrary creation of territorial boundaries. It is against this background of events and activities that we want to look at *the mystery, the paradox, the parable that is Africa* within the frenzies of the broad-based theme of Migration and Urbanization and the Consequences on Development in Africa, that is, International Migration in Africa.

Faith and the Flag

When you take away a man's treasured possession, his historical identity, it is courting disaster not to give him something of value to replace it. Jesus Christ did not mince his words; nor did he hide his intentions when he articulated his famous command

to his followers: *-All power and authority has been given me, both in heaven and on earth. Go therefore, and make all nations my disciples; baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have taught you.*

Looked at from a political point of view, Jesus claimed all power and authority and with that mandate, commanded his followers to create '*an empire*' for him. Was this going to be a struggle or a scramble? Time would tell.

In Africa, what started with the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch, extended to the conversion of the Berbers of Numidia, the Copts of Egyptian desert, the Nubians of the Nile corridor and the varied races of Ethiopia. When the Arabs came into the scene, in the sixth and seventh centuries, there ensued a fierce scramble for African souls that the Copts and the Ethiopians fought hard to survive. Northwest Africa, Lower Egypt and Nubia could not survive the onslaught of Islam. But the African contribution to the universal church, spearheaded by theology giants like of Augustine of Hippo and Cyprian of Carthage as well as the ascetics and monks of the Egyptian desert, was irreversible. Africa made European Christianity.

The attack of Spain by the Muslim 'moors' did not please the Portuguese who resolved to attack the 'moors' from the rare. The immediate consequence was scramble for African souls in Sub-Saharan Africa: east, west and central. Christian Portugal saw it as her responsibility to make African nations *Disciples of Christ*. The encounter between Islam and Christianity in eastern Africa epitomized by Mombassa martyrdom of 1631 portrays a real and vigorous scramble that was to be continued and expanded by the European missionaries-cum-explorers some two hundred years later.

What came first: Faith or the Flag? For Islam they came together, and the primary intentions were clear. For Christianity, the story is complex otherwise there would be no need spending time and money organizing conferences and seminars and writing treatises like this one, nor would it become immediately clear why we advocate for and invoke religious factor in the process of international migration and urbanization in Africa.

It was Paul of Tarsus who introduced an otherwise sect of Judaism to Europe through his three missionary journeys. When, nearly three centuries later, Emperor Constantine declared Christianity the religion of the Roman Empire in 324 A.D, the deal

had been sealed for the entire continent of Europe. Christianity was the religion. But that was Europe. What of Africa?

In eastern Africa, the explorers-cum-missionaries were coming from Christian Europe. Their desire was to see their religion, way of life and civilization planted on the 'savage' continent of Africa. For example, writing to the *Daily Telegraph*, in October 1875, the then 34 year old Henry Morton Stanley (1841-1904) could say:

Until I arrived at Mutesa's court, the King delighted in the idea that he was a follower of Islam; but by one conversation, I flatter myself that I have tumbled the newly raised religious fabric to the ground, and, only if it were followed by the arrival of a Christian mission here, the conversion of Mutesa and his court to Christianity would, I think, be complete. It is not the mere teacher, however, that is wanted. It is the practical Christian tutor, who can teach people how to become Christians, cure their diseases, construct dwellings, understand and exemplify agriculture, and turn his hand to anything like a sailor...this is the man wanted. He must be tied to no church or sect, but profess God and live a blameless Christian life. He must belong to no nation in particular, but the entire white race. Such a man Mutesa invites to repair to him. I assure you that in one year you will have more converts to Christianity than all the missionaries united can number. You need not fear to spend money upon such a mission as Mutesa is sole ruler, and will pay its cost tenfold with ivory, coffee, otter skins of every fine quality, or even in cattle, for the wealth of this country in all these products is immense.

From this it is important to recall that the reports the explorers sent home, and which were published in the local dailies, sparked off the eighteenth and nineteenth century missionary zeal leading to the founding of more missionary societies, most of which found their way to Africa: *the hopeless continent*. As Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Stead referring to experience in Southern Africa have put it,

The foreigners had to approach the community through the chiefs. After an initial period of mistrust the chiefs accepted the service of the missionaries...In the eyes of the chief the missionary represented desirable power: political power

necessary for contacts with the European government...The missionary, it seemed, was bound to have cosmological influence with the Almighty, Giver or Holder of Rain. The power of the word was something with deep traditional roots and was, with arrival of the missionary, to acquire new meaning.

The unprecedented scramble for the African soul was even more dramatic and far-reaching cataclysmic refugee movement, beginning in Natal and speeding along with irresistible force annihilating everything on its way, affecting everybody, until it appeared to have spent its force just short of Lake Victoria. But that was not to be.

In East Africa alone, for example, we had Church Missionary Society; Church of Scotland Mission; Congregation de Saint Esprit (Holy Ghost); St. Joseph's Society for Foreign Missions (Mill Hill); London Missionary Society; The Society of Our Lady of Africa (White Fathers), among several others. By the end of the 19th century, all were with us in the name of a response to Jesus' great command, but under the civilizing mission of their motherlands. Of interest to us however, is: who did the work? James Jamieson Willis, Archdeacon of Kavirondo, later bishop of Uganda, has the answer. Quoted by F.B. Welbourn and B.A. Ogot he says:

With two or three exceptions the entire work of evangelization and education has been the work of native teachers, Kavirondo born. In this matter Kavirondo independence has asserted itself. Trained or half-trained in mission school, the convert returns to his native village and is lost to sight. Next time the missionary meets him he is in self-imposed charge of a little congregation of readers, from which in due course a little group of candidates emerges. So the work grows out in its initial stages and is carried on in entire independence of the European.

Something of Value

These missionary societies got support from the congregation back at home and so their allegiance to the motherland was unquestionable. They needed protection from their brothers in the administration, who also needed their support in the arduous process of pacification. In some parts of Africa the flag was ahead of the cross, in others, it was the cross that led the way. In other parts of Africa the partition at the Berlin Conference (winter 1884/85) reversed the order. And so there developed political scramble as far as

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European nations were concerned and religious scramble for souls waged by different missionary societies. The race for Christ continued unabated right through the colonial period. They came, they saw, they conquered. They polluted our CULTURE: *Our Something of Value*.

Indeed, it needs no emphasis that Africans found themselves so buffeted, displaced, manipulated and degraded through the years of slave trade, imperial conquest, resource despoliation, and economic marginalization that, by the end of World War II, the African had reached a depth of despair and wretchedness. This pathetic situation often translated into POVERTY: *poverty of direction, poverty of imagination, and poverty of enterprising vision*. This being the case, African nationalist leaders came to the conclusion that if we, as Africans, were to move forward, we had to recreate our own self-designed road to material richness and psychic or cultural peace. We had no choice but to find our lost glory. We held the key to our success and prosperity. But only '*when we redefine where we come from shall we know where we are going*'.

As we attempt to pinpoint the consequences of international migration and urbanization in Africa during the colonial period, we want to emphasize that it is this same technique of destroying a people's historical memory, their sense of myth and legend, the obliteration of their consciousness of who they are, that leads to the replacement of their vision for the future with the conqueror's own vision of what the colonized ought to cultivate as their future. It is this bewildering greater universe of the conqueror's own vision, that entrenched Africa's dire need for legitimate socio-economic development and for cultural emancipation : the capacity for self-organization and the desire to live with dignity outside the logic of Western market; the famous African solidarity and clan culture.

But has the battle been won? In 1996, the then Vice-President of South Africa, now President, Thabo Mbeki, gave a keynote speech to *Friends of Africa* in America in which he said:-

There exists within our continent a generation, which has been victim to all things which created this negative past. This generation remains African and carries with it a historic pride which compels it to seek a place for the African equal to

all the other peoples of our common universe...It knows and is resolved that, to attain that objective, it must resist all tyranny, oppose all attempts to deny liberty to resort to demagoguery, repulse the temptation to describe African life as the ability to live on charity, engage the fight to secure the emancipation of the African woman, and reassert the fundamental concept that we are our own liberators from oppression, from underdevelopment and poverty, from the perpetuation of an experience from slavery, colonization, to apartheid, to dependence on alms.

The post World War II restoration scenario began with the nationalist movements in Africa. The missionaries found themselves identified with their colonial brothers who had to leave to pave way for political independence. There had to be independence at the religious sphere as well. Some missionaries did pack and left as the Africans took over. Others signed new contracts and accepted to work under Africans hierarchies. Their minds were at peace because, as they would say, "*we trained them (the Africans) to think the way we do. They have no theology of their own so they will continue to need financial support and so it appears we are going to be here for quite a while. After all, we are brothers and sisters in the Lord.*"

African Response and the Christian Moratorium Debate

But the African priests and the laity alike had begun to think differently. We need Christianity made in Africa. We need a theology based on African values. We want to interpret the Bible and the command of Christ in our own way, and within the limits of our religious language. And so friends, granted, you are our brothers and sisters and have labored selflessly to plant the faith in our midst, but, *leave us alone for a while.*

This, then, is the moratorium debate, namely, temporary authority and/or agreement to postpone, delay, or suspend an activity aimed at fulfilling an obligation, in this case the command of Jesus Christ: Make all of them my disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

But, have the Euro-American missionaries left us alone? Has international migration come to end, if not, is it a legitimate concern of a Population Conference in the 21st century Africa?

The New Missionary Zeal

Writing to the Sunday Standard in 1990, Fred de Vries gave the gist of what the situation had persistently been like. *"Evangelism for which Billy Graham is the godfather has become a major export industry in the United States. It is big business. The US movement, Campus Crusade for Christ, (he sites as an example), covers 95 countries"*. Characterized with excitement and thrills, the new zeal works through music, ranting prayers and promises of instant healing through prayers: the blind will see, the deaf will hear, the lame will walk: name it!

Initially the target was Latin America and now a scramble for the poor African souls! And so the American and German evangelist must have easy rides from Nigeria to Kenya, South Africa to Zaire and Ghana to Uganda. The evangelistic vandalism is not only multinational but also frighteningly multi-denominational. Things must be made to work in Africa. New Religious Movements, and International Non-Governmental Organizations must just come in.

What is this rush and hurry for? What is the problem in 21st century? Whence cometh this new zeal for evangelization of Africa while the West is becoming less and less Christian? Summary answer to these questions is that: in the Western eyes, *Africa is a hopeless continent; a dying continent*.

Meanwhile, the mainstream Churches have generally been Africanized as far as the hierarchies are concerned, but even here, the aid or alms the so called 'mother churches' give to the mushrooming young African Churches and evangelists have created a relationship of dependency; (a spiritually lethal dependency syndrome) regardless of what the young churches and the *get-rich-quick* young African evangelists would like to make us believe. We have often been advised that to fend for themselves our churches must initiate income generating activities including getting into ventures with multinational co operations. And there comes the trap: *in the name of Christ we find ourselves business partners and ideological allies*. In the words of Christ we must "do unto others what we would like them to do unto us." Despite this the call still sounds: leave us alone for a while! But the one being addressed retorts: "what do you mean?"

When will you people ever learn to be grateful for the many things done for you?" But as far as their 'rape' of African culture was concerned, the missionaries were no better than *traiditores* whom the Donatists condemned for handing over holy scriptures to be burnt.

Our 21st Century Challenge

We, who have been attracted by the timely theme of this 5th African Population Conference, namely, Emerging Issues on Population and Development in Africa, are in a relatively puzzling situation, close to a dilemma. For effective all round development we must call on our own norms and values. Our great scholars have given us the dictum that "*religion permeates every aspect of African life.*" But, it must be admitted that through the industrial establishment and mass media, Western religious values have had firm grip on us, in our homes, in fact, in everything we undertake to do and to undo. The desire to evolve a theology of work for effective development requires that we interpret the Bible in our own way and that our paradigms for analysis and interpretation be derived from our life's experience. And to avoid confusion and conflict we must be left alone for a while.

The aim of this brief rejoinder to Professor Serge Latouche's objective observation has been to table the Population issue at stake, namely, the African Church's call that we be left alone to work our destiny within the context of Jesus' great command. Given that in most African countries, Christianity is the dominant religion, we are concerned about the motive behind the ever-continuing zeal to make disciples for Jesus in Africa. Aware of the response effectively meted out by independent church movements in Africa, we query the aims and objectives of new evangelical movements flocking into Africa. Alongside the threat of technological intervention and economic manipulation we see *the dangers of being culturally, politically and economically fenced in under the guise of religious proselytization.* And this is why I find Professor Serge Latouche's observation intriguing and eye-opener to the 5th African Conference particularly with reference to international migration. The question being: When will the West stop suffocating us while by the coming of *the Age of Modernity* they had lost *their Something of Value?*

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The thinkers of the West: the philosophers, historians, theologians, reformers, essayists and anthropologists, tried in vain to weigh the essential worth of their newfound civilization, analyze its components, detect its direction, identify its values and mark its shape and substance. For example, for Karl Marx (1818-83) it was *millennial age of proletariat*; for Oswald Spengler (1880-1953) it was *the twilight of civilization*; for Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900) it was *decadent and yet the door to new possibilities*; for Mikhailovik Dostoevsky (1821-81) it was *dangerously demonic*; for the Spanish essayist and philosopher Jose Ortega (1885-1935) it was *the upward rise of the barbarian*; while, for Franz Kafka (1883-1942) it was *a nightmare*.. Interestingly, at the beginning of the 21st century, Professor Serge Latouche is able to say "*Africa works*".

As regards the malignant poverty and violence in Africa, the 5th African Population Conference must be reminded of the words of Professor Tinbergen, the Dutch Nobel Laureate who, in 1971 while addressing ICFTU World Conference in Geneva had the following to say;

More understanding for the poor countries is needed. We should be quite clear about the situation in which our world finds itself. Outside a relatively small part of it, consisting of North America, Europe and Oceania, with less than one billion inhabitants living in relatively good conditions, there is a vast part, with 2.5 milliards of inhabitants, of which the large majority is miserably poor and increasing at the rate of more than 2.5 per cent per annum. Sociologists have shown us with careful investigation, that the poorer an area, the more likely it is that conflicts will multiply. Moreover, for a man in such an area to become a soldier often is relatively attractive. Governments in trouble are often looking for adventurous maneuvers to distract attention from the problems they face. Unfortunately, national or even tribal rivalries can be easily exploited for such purposes. This means that misery can easily lead to wars.

This being the case, *Race for Christ and International migration and globalization*, yes, but why not leave us alone for a while so that we may discover ourselves and have Christ speak to us directly, rather than by proxy? Why plan, finance, execute and then condemn our wars? As we project our attention to poverty, population

and health on our continent in the next decade, we remain wary of the consequences of globalization and international migration.

Conclusion

In brief, we would like to appreciate that there is a *Second Scramble for Africa* and that the external forces are hitting us from all fronts. We also appreciate the fact that Africa cannot remain in isolation. We need the rest of mankind in various aspects of human endeavor, call it globalization. In certain aspects of our lives we must be and remain ourselves in our cultural setting. For, after all, *"despite its poverty and violence, Africa works ... in a way that would baffle most westerners"*.

What are we doing with this Euro-American Lunatic Meteorite driven by self-styled Evangelists, International NGOs and the freewheeling lifestyles, power, prestige and corruption of the multi-billion dollar aid business, before it crashes into the wall?

What do we make of those institutions Graham Hancock calls *'Lords of Poverty'* and goes on to observe *"If a project is funded by foreigners it will also typically be designed by foreigners and implemented by foreigners using foreign equipment procured in foreign markets. It would seem, then, that official development assistance is neither sufficient nor necessary for development: the poor thrive without it in some countries; in others, where it is plentifully available, they suffer the most abject miseries. Such suffering often occurs not in spite of aid but because of it"*. All that this seems to amount to is big business corruption for which the West are experts.

When Catherine Caufield correctly identifies Breton Woods institutions as *"Masters of Illusion"*, we are tempted to concur with her when, quoting the political scientist Kari Lewitt she observes: *"Development ultimately is not a matter of GNP, or money, or physical capital, or foreign exchange, but of the capacity of a society to tap the roots of popular creativity, to free up and empower people to exercise their intelligence and their individual and collective efforts to achieve better life"*.

Indeed, *things work in Africa* although the circumstances are very different in our age and time. What this conference needs is to seize the opportunity and face the challenges for progress to be realized in the next decade.

Abstract

There have been migrations into Africa since the time of the Greeks, Phoenicians and the Romans. The Arabs also took their turn and occupied Mediterranean Africa. Following European exploration and missionary activities, Africa was partitioned into European spheres of influence followed by further migrations and colonization. The consequence of these international migrations was that Africa lost something of value, which they sought to recover at independence. But globalization and the new missionary zeal have created opportunities and posed challenges to the 21st century Africa. However, the argument of this paper is that in spite of the migrations, interference from outside, its poverty and violence, Africa works in a way that would baffle most westerners. This being the case, all that is needed is to tap our indigenous knowledge systems and experience although the circumstances are very different in our age and time. Thus, what this population conference needs is to seize the opportunity and face the challenges for progress to be realized in the next decade for the requisite benefit of the fast growing and relatively youthful populations of Africa.