

From Archaeological Problems to Developmental Issues and Beyond

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Peoples in developing countries today have to cope with the various knowledge they dispose of, under different representations : 1. the scientific or western one including technological or professional ones, 2. theirs, controlled by their world vision ethnically or locally defined and 3. difficult to grasp, which is the mixture of the two. Drawing aside from this formulation which, as usually with old words and under the Modern Constitution, would strongly tend to reduce their connotation to something definitely

stilted, we have tried here to ponder upon this possible moving entity which is not only under the pressure of multiple and changing situations and constraints, but also, under the threat of a scientific knowledge whose indisputability is taken for granted nowadays on the side of Nature and also, consequently, on the side of Culture and cultures analyzed and defined by social sciences. This essay - drawn from my own archaeological fieldwork experiences and transferred, from anthropological knowledge on North Cameroon populations and from other examples - will be then epistemological and political in linking knowledge to situations including many other dimensions and entities. For developing peoples, it aims at illustrating the general issues of development which are built on Science, cause and product of Western European development.

From general point of view, admittedly, Development has often failed in non-western societies, except by aping itself when in new countries or being copied by groups interested by some of its products, material as well as spiritual (Hobart 1993b : 1). But a question still lasts: is it a success, a wreck or a non-failure? Examples have been picked up from archaeological fieldworks, publications and transfer on the spot, as well as from historico-archaeological debates today scattered worldwide (as the so-called *Afrocentrism* question), which point at sociocultural problems where knowledge on identity (racial, ethnic, national) are at issue. These examples will appear - I believe - meaningful for development problems' and for development in general. Defining and selecting criteria for action and argument depend on different knowledge and of their weight, including of course the scientific ones. Any decision, any choice, relies upon the knowledge available and the ways it becomes available or not, manageable or not. "*Le transfert des techniques des*

disdained for a long time by Science (Brokensha et al. 1980), but it may be useful regarding the difficulties and consequences met (Hobart 1993b). Agrawal (1995) wrote a sound short review and restatement of this domain but did not advance a solution towards its possible co-working with scientific knowledge.

If modern knowledge did not succeed to solve development issues and sometimes raised new ones like the "*demographic bomb*", because - in my opinion - the nature, definition and links of this knowledge have not been investigated enough *per se* (*op.cit.*: 433), and also because this knowledge has been imposed. If a scientific component is totally or partially integrated in it, it is an unknown mixing of knowledge which carries any decision along.

Its composition thus, should be thoroughly examined not only through the words and claims but also during the building, in the field or in the lab, or during ordinary daily

1. Black Africa as cradle of mankind and black cultures as origins of all the other^I, vs ,
2. Black Africa as an ahistorical, wild, backward and borrowing continent, full of tribes and sorcerers (Geschiere 1999 : 212).

There are also various other positions occupying the conceptual space between these extremes. They all depend on the problem of the knowledge's value and their strength, and on the availability and translatability of knowledge on this topic. These are being tied also with their reciprocal treatments during confrontation-combination which induces the sociopolitical questions of the distribution of powers and rights in the societies concerned (free press, free opinion, free communication vs any totalitarianism and free from any *délit d'opinion*).

A lot of publications and conferences concerning West's (*i.e.* European mainly), responsibilities, insufficiencies and guilt have sprung. Within this domain of discussion upon the 'race notion' and reassessment of black Africa's history, a lot of publications have been made (*e.g.* Diop 1954 and 1979, Ki-Zerbo 1978, Lugan 1989, Bernal [1991] 1999, M'bokolo 1992, 1995, Froment 1996, Lefkowitz and Roger 1996, Fauvelle-Aymar *et al.* 2000, Marliac 2001a, Obenga 2001) and they have been followed by numerous books or articles from pros and cons. They are more or less situating themselves on the verge of the domains of history or archaeology^{II} but appear to be intertwined with these disciplines at least by their words, the content of which being vague.

Sometimes, people involved, even involuntarily, in a case, do not escape from being prosecuted in courts as for the Kennewick Man file in the USA, or the Ayodhya mosque case in India (Ganesh *et al.* 2003).^{III}

Finally, exemplifying this shaky situation, nowadays some knowledge - concerning Black Africa's past - completely out of the current scientific stream are, nevertheless, published (*e.g.* Dika Akwa 1985).

Race

The common accepted and 'correct' answer, spread all over the planet, is that 'race' is a wrong term to classify Human beings. Science has already argued (Froment 1996), that men share many common features and that 'race' has to be abandoned. 'Race' has, scientifically, no value. But the question is then how is it scientifically established or destroyed? And what is Science?^{IV} Nevertheless, this one way 'dogma' that 'Science tells the truth', is still widely dominating opinions over the world. It has taken place everywhere, from primary schools up to universities, media, films, TV shows, exhibitions, courts, etc. and lately in Durban, South Africa. It could be baptized *à la mode* and neglected, however, it is only confined to writings, private meetings and films. But it is impossible, in the view of the quarrels, claims, slaughters, riots and wars sometimes, which spring everywhere arguing from these writings and claims to. interpret any

event along the races differences⁵. Peoples still rely on 'race' as a distinguishing factor and consequently many countries have become unfriendly.

At different levels and places (universities, unions, students' associations, various clubs and parties..), constructed theories, models and "facts" founded on this apparently balancing world vision, overtly or not, wind around the 'race' notion. They are most often, used for a political discourse and sometimes political actions^V. The scientific knowledge is almost always mobilized, but if science is the touchstone claimed on both sides: Afroamerican scientists and their momentary allies^{VI} vs their opponents, there must be a contradiction somewhere. Bernal vs Lefkowitz and Rogers McLean's debate is, from this point of view, typical.^{VII}

I have tentatively showed by analyzing the notion of 'race' used during the arguments aroused by Diop's publications, that it is the use of this term as a resource and not as a problem which raises the quarrel (Marliac 2001a). In a way, C. A. Diop - justifiably motivated by its own status as a black - drew nearer to the fundamentals: how to define **race**. But he failed to solve the problem.

In fact, race is everyday and everywhere recognized by common ordinary knowledge, and consequently has its value. This one is denied any signification by some scientific analyses (Froment 1996) which are, I think, largely insufficient even from their own point of view. 'Race' still remains conspicuous anywhere and always, for passers-by as well as for forensic pathologists studying human bones (who thus contradict some other scientists; see Gill 2000), and for visitors in various Museums around the world.^{VIII} Diop's hesitation upon the notion of 'race' (Marliac 2001a) is explained by his blind trust in Science (as he conceived of), tied up with the however throbbing query: what is Truth for his every day's life as 'black' and for his black brothers, individually everywhere in the world? This short review shows how historico-archaeological knowledge is easily controversial and bound with political conflicts at once^{IX}.

Locally

Peoples in Africa are not - except the *élites* (and to which degree?) - trapped through education by the Nature/Culture constitution - that I will further explain - within which the scientific knowledge is encapsulated, even if schooling^X would catch them up in near future. (see also Field 2000, Golan 1991). They keep mingling, juxtaposing, adapting, translating units from one set to another, or flatly ignoring some of them, new as well as old. I easily believe that any other common people would do the same. The problem is to know how and to which degree it proceeds. How peoples are, slowly or rapidly, engaged in integrating pieces of this modern knowledge, while introducing ideas, theories, pictures, engines, items and commodities from the West in their lives?

Representative democracy can be conflictual with respect to cultures within which peoples want to live and which they want to promote for their children. Golan (1991)

shows how confusely Inkhata, the Zulu political association, writes a Zulu history which would turn to be also a nationalist history for any black people in South-Africa. A 'one man one vote' philosophy of democracy, by the way clearly supported by Golan, is contradictory to the respect due to any minority/majority, be it ethnic, or cultural, as in Canada (See Taylor 1994)^{XI} or, due to *horresco referens*, overtly or covertly racial, as today's South-Africa, Zimbabwe and in some other countries.

In Ivory Coast, the Eotile people revived their ethnic history, language and customs (Perrot 1988) in 1960's, by taking advantage of the collapse of their conquerors, the Sanwi. They returned back to the islands they originated from, found artefacts and then gathered at their founding village Monobaha from where they carried back many things, such as, pipes, grinding stones. The path leading them to the past was constructed from traditions, visions, dreams and material cultures, and finally materialized by recent cement-made steles.

In Diamaré (North Cameroon), the Zumaya, today assimilated as Fulani, once used sherds of their own culture, which they buried secretly at night in the fields of another people, to claim afterwards these lands as theirs! It reminds of what the Poles did at the end of WW II about Silesia within the newly established Oder-Neiss border, to prove that Slav presence antedates the Germans' arrival, not to speak of the Israelis in the Sinai and of the Chinese in Sinkiang and Tibet. Things are good evidences when they bear indisputable marks of their cultural making.^{XII}

In North Cameroon, where I have made fieldwork for years (Marliac 2003), the question remains to be explored out of the University audiences which generally followed C. A. Diop and the Afrocentrist stream (Essomba 1992). We still clearly need studies (and field works ones too) on the state of affairs, e.g. in schools curricula, villagers, public opinion, *élites* and among decision-makers and medias leaders, to define, if possible, what these audiences have done with archaeological results (*i.e.* with published general studies, mainly within the historical or today's realms). It is impossible to measure or estimate now properly, to what degree did archaeology influence national history as learned and taught, from home to school and college, and then during a lifetime. Research is still strongly needed.

Knowledge co-operations

The mixing of the two knowledge (or more), would need careful and precise fieldwork examination and record of including the *mediator* at work on the case, with the help of other sciences such as anthropology, linguistics, psycho-sociology, etc. It goes from a 'zero choice', where one of them - generally the one coming from outside and thereby, alien - is flatly rejected, misunderstood (or unpalatable) to the total assimilation of one, generally the techno-scientific one through different **reworkings** (Horton 1982 : 222), borrowings, passive assimilation and translations. Thanks to multiple treatments of the knowledge at hand!

From a general point of view, the mixing/seizing^{XIII}, begins as soon as the anthropologist studies the other cultures and as soon as the archaeologist excavates. The vestiges unearthed can not but be recognized by the model/pattern^{XIV} in place in the researcher's brain and by the ordinary 'ethnic' knowledge of the observers sitting at the top of the pit. The excavation itself changes the minds of the villagers living near it and sometimes related to it. But it remains unknown to what degree and how the people recognize such and such items of 'material culture' as theirs, or those of other groups when a transmitted tradition is named for years after such or such place. These attributions are of course debatable but not always out of reach and comprehension (Seignobos 2001). In Central Diamaré, what appears during excavations is often attributed to pagans (*haBe/kaado* or *kirdi*) with whom Muslim inhabitants do not want to have any kinship.

As an archaeologist, instead of asking, "*I have always wondered about what sense these partners*^{XV} *made of the published conclusions*" of my excavations (Marliac 2000a : 205), I should have noticed that people - becoming aware of my more or less sophisticated results or other published material - kept engaged, as elsewhere in the world, in making :

- Either new knowledge out of the two_(or more) knowledge at disposal, e.g. my archaeological published facts and explanations + their histories and myths + histories from their neighbours or past conquerors (Fulani in my region) + local ideologies or religions (mainly Islam in the case considered here). For this amalgamation thanks to different recipes including the school systems' ones, more or less replicated from the western ones, and the media systems broadcasting from inside and outside (Marliac 2000b).

- Or nothing, depending on their needs, will and situations.

Socio-political Archaeology

The first paragraph describes the archaeological public stage where peoples, experts, racists, liberals, journalists and so on, struggle over definitions, pictures, claims, etc., which are obviously related to sociopolitical questions, without straightly blaming archaeological science itself. But adaptations, *collages*, mingling, being still debatable, archaeology can not finally dodge the question of its own definition and status.

Archaeology as a science

Hall (1990: 64) broadly hinted to previous (*i.e.* white) South African archaeologists' works which were deliberately written under formalized language in such a way that prohibited understanding by white settlers, (as well as by black peoples, I would like to add), because it could have questioned their political supremacy^{XVI}. It also crosscuts Diop's contradictions between his personal feelings, need of *reconnaissance* as a black individual, and scientific 'facts' resumed and listed in so many writings (e.g. Froment 1996)^{XVII} concerning 'being black' or as said former President L. S. Senghor rightly:

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