

# **WEST AFRICAN NATIONALISM REDISCOVERED**

**By**

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## **Abstract**

The contacts of West African people with people from Europe, North Africa and America have resulted in some changes in the conception of life of the inhabitants of West Africa. This study therefore investigates how the trans-Saharan and Atlantic influences prompted the nationalistic movements in the sub-region. The study employed historical and archival materials for investigation. Works of Africanists, historians, political scientists, anthropologists and literary scholars served as useful sources of information. The work covered West African Francophone and Anglophone countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, Republic of Benin, Senegal, Mali, Niger, Gambia and Burkina-Faso. The study shows that the introduction of Christian and Islamic religions into West Africa brought about conflicts among the traditional and the two foreign religions. The study further reveals that through these two foreign religions, literacy spread among West African people. The University of Timbuktu enhanced human development where scholars, like Ahmad Baba, were trained and later became lecturers in the same university. He challenged the occupation of the Sudan by the Moroccans. The West African elite trained in the European way were not left out in the defence of the integrity of their culture, defence which later cumulated to the struggle for freedom. The work underscores the need for a natural marriage and development of cultures. It is therefore imperative to make adequate plans to encourage cross-cultural integrative skills useful in an interdependent world.

**Key words:** Nationalism, Trans-Saharan, Atlantic, Culture, West Africa

## **Introduction**

The first eminent visitors of Africa south of Sahara were the Arabs and Berbers who spread Islamic religion and Arab cultures among people in the sub-region of West Africa. The visits of the Europeans to West Africa cumulated into France adopting the policies of assimilation in St. Louis and Goree, declaring equality among all men within its jurisdiction regardless of the race, the colour, and the religion. France extended French citizenship to the inhabitants of the occupied lands, but later limited the privilege to only Senegal. Sierra Leone was governed from Britain. The elite trained by the missionaries wanted a free colony governed by West Africans in the manner of Liberia, a decision, which Britain denied them. Conflicts and agitations were inevitable. The educated West Africans started organising themselves in political parties. Here lies the origin of the nationalistic movements that brought to an end the European rule in West Africa. This study examines the nationalist tendencies born out of the trans-Saharan and Atlantic contacts with West Africa.

### **Ahmad Baba, the nationalist**

Before the colonial era of Africa south of the Sahara, West Africa had known humanity and civilization . The intellectual level attained then was mostly influenced by Islam and Arab culture. Ahmad Baba whom Davidson named as one of the forerunners of West African nationalism (Davidson, 1965:168), was a product of the Islamic influence in the Sudan. He was a celebrated scholar of 16<sup>th</sup> century West Africa. (Cissoko, 1966:171) Ahmad Baba whose complete name was Abu Abbas Ahmad Al Tadruri, Al Massufi was a descendent of the Sanhaja. Ahmad Baba was a man of impressive achievements in the intellectual arena. Cheikh Anta Diop called him the most celebrated Ahmad Baba, Baba

Ibrahim Kake preferred to see him as the most representative of the black intelligentsia in the era preceding the modern times, Sekene- Mody Cissoko while classifying the scholars of the University of Timbuktu concluded that Ahmad Baba was the most brilliant erudite scholar of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Ahmad Baba was a result of the meeting of Arab, Negro, and Berber cultures. He proved his worth at Marrakech amidst the Arab intelligentsia in the public lectures he gave after his partial release from detention. While answering questions from his Arab entourage, he gave eloquent and scholarly responses on matters that related to Islamic law, Islamic faith, and others. As a lecturer at Marrakech University, he introduced the study of fikh and hadith. He wrote several books on grammar, and Maliki principle of jurisprudence, but his main book is *Al Dibadi Al Mudhahhab fi ma' Rafat a' Yan (Ulama) Al Madhab* (Cissoko, 1966:172). The fame of Timbuktu, the gold and the prosperity of the Songhai Empire, and the salt mines of Taghaza prompted the Moroccan invasion. In November 1590, 3000 armed men under the leadership of a Spanish renegade the Pasha Judar launched an assault on the Songhai, which surrendered in 1591 (McEWAN, 1969ed). After the defeat of Songhai, Pasha Judar managed the empire with direct orders from Mulay Ahmad Al- Mansur in Marrakech who thought Judar was not good enough for the type of results expected. Mahmud Zarqum replaced Judar. He massacred Timbuktu and environs (Diop, 1960:144). Ahmad Baba at the head of the Sudanese intelligentsia challenged the occupation of Songhai which he considered illegal. While the Songhai army adopted the guerrilla warfare system of defense, he, Ahmad Baba and others refused to recognize the authority of the prince at Marrakech. Later Ahmad Baba, his family, relatives and those who opposed the Moroccan colonization, were arrested and deported in chains to

Marrakech where he was detained for some years. The situation was pathetic, leading to the loss of several valuable scholarly documents. The Timbuktu scholar was so determined that the inhuman treatment did not demoralize him. He stood firmly first against the invasion, trying to defend legally the right to life of his people under no foreign authority, and later the right for the independence of the Sudan (Kake, 1966:36). Even while in exile, he was proud to write a poem describing his condition in detention to people in Timbuktu. Said he:

“...you that go to Gao, make bypass through Timbuktu, murmur my name to my friends and send to them my perfumed greeting of the exile who sighs the soil where inhabit his friends, his family, and his neighbours” (Cissoko, 1966:172).

After a partial release, he lectured at Marrakech University for some time and was later given his total freedom. He arrived at Timbuktu on 27 March 1607 where he continued as a lecturer in the University of Timbuktu. He died in 1627. Ahmad Baba, a patriot, a teacher, a theologian, a jurist, a man of courage and sound morals, he was (as Basil Davidson will come him) one of the forerunners of the West African nationalists. Later in the coming centuries, some other West Africans trained in the Islamic and Arab cultures, also teachers, were inspired to add to their teachings a new dimension which is the holy war or jihad. It then arose some jihadist movements in West Africa, dominated by the Qadiriyyah and the Tijaniyyah fraternities. If Islam remains an influential factor today in West Africa, credit should be given to jihadists and reformers such as Sheikh Usuman dan Fodio, Al Hajj Umar and others. The second phase of the spread of Islam in West Africa, was revolutionary in nature and characterized by Islam moving from the periphery into the very center of communal life. They were intolerant, exclusive, legalistic, but most importantly militant. They were more reformers. They wanted a new

vision for the Sudan, a rule in the name of God and his revealed laws. Several jihads were known in the sub-region such as jihads in Futa-Djallon, Futa-Toro, in Macina by Seku Ahmadu, in Hausaland, and in the Senegal River among the Tukolor. But some were more influential with the impact they had on the populace. The revolution of Usuman dan Fodio in the central Sudan of the pagan Hausa State of Gobir was spectacular in its results. Al Hajj Umar Tall, a formidable mystic and fervent adherent of the Tijaniyyah brotherhood also dominated the western Sudan (Kritzeck and Lewis, 1969:24-26). This revolutionary tone of Islam was not changing the religion, but was adding to it new dimensions like the Tijaniyyah and Qadiriyyah spiritual fraternities which are forms of Islamic mysticism.

### **Nationalism in pre-colonial West Africa**

West Indian by birth, Edward Wilmot Blyden was known to be erudite and a writer who worked mercilessly to defend the Negro race. A truly sincere and dedicated pan-Negro patriot, Blyden was always motivated in the service of his race. In 1890, he was welcomed in Lagos by Africans headed by James Johnson who called on him to help in the racial issue on ground with the following luminous words.

Africa's destiny lay hid in night,  
God said 'Let Blyden be, and all was light

The problem of Blyden, his African origin, is contained in his conviction that the freedom and salvation of the Negroes were in Africa. He opposed the views of R. F. Burton, Dr. James Hunt, T. J. Hutchinson and several others who were trying to explain biologically the status of inferiority. Blyden encouraged Negroes to pursue the policy of cultural identity and disregard European culture. He implored the educated elite to avoid mental slavery because the best way out of the European cultural mess was the satisfaction of

one's integrity and identity (Ayandele,1979:196-202). Henry Wilson also said the same about Blyden (Wilson,1969:35). His defence of the African personality and Africa as a whole was being contested in some quarters. Some of his apologists sometimes wonder if a person who voluntarily migrated to Liberia for the sake of returning to his fatherland and who blamed his Liberian rulers for imposing a foreign system on their people, could be working in favour of colonisation. He supported a discriminative policy in the old continent as a price to be paid for the civilizing mission of the westerners (West,1971:250-251). West did not comprehend Blyden, whom Henry Wilson called the critic and adviser of assimilated Africans. For Wilson, Blyden wanted the African to explore his natural gift and the excellence of native African civilisation. West saw perhaps in Blyden a man who campaigned for the adoption of African dress and African surnames but himself maintaining his English name of Edward Wilmot Blyden and wore an English suit (Wilson, 1969:36). Ayandele supported West's position on Blyden but rather saw Blyden as a negation of African personality. According to him, Blyden was a black Englishman who was proud of his culture of the West (Ayandele,1979:208). Acknowledged to be the most influential pan-Africanist in the sub-region, he had unprecedented influence on other West Africans. Robert July was of the same point of view when he ascertained that the nationalistic position of James Johnson resembled that of Blyden who doubtless influenced him. Like Blyden, James Johnson was also against the theory of European Anthropologists on race inequality. The devotion of James Johnson to Christianity did not stop him from criticising foreign Christians while wanting Christianity to be fully integrated through African rites. He also as a mark of his struggle for African identity, baptised babies with African names. He preached against a

Europeanised mode of dress for young African men and women, which he saw as ridiculous. He argued that Africans had the ability to master European ways but this mastery should be in the right direction. James Johnson, assessing the contact of Africa with Europe concluded that having gained some of European civilisation, he found that his own African personality had disappeared. He was no longer African, he was neither European. He is left at the cross-road (July, 1968:281-282; 287-289). The nationalism of James Johnson was extended to education said Ayandele in *African Historical Studies*, when in 1896 he led some African intellectuals to push for a university to be sited at Ebute Metta. There, the traditional African society would be part of the norms guiding the society and which would be free from the infection of European civilisation. He was not against the contact with Europe but at the same time he was agitating for a marriage of cultures, which would preserve the moral, social values and the cultural heritage of the continent, the position which was later adopted and expended by Leopold Sedar Senghor. He wanted the omelette while keeping intact the eggs. James Johnson was not against education, he was rather supporting an education, which would leave the African essentially an African. The Africanness in education must be harnessed and this could only be achieved with an African language as a means of communication. Ayandele in his book titled *Holy Johnson, Pioneer of African nationalism 1836-1917* reported that F. Huggins, a British officer, specifically mentioned the anti-European activities of James Johnson in Sierra Leone, though he acknowledged James Johnson to be intelligent, energetic and honestly zealous both in the Church and among his countrymen (Ayandele, 1979: 84;153-154). Johnson, in one of his lectures, reiterated that God was not intending to confuse the races. Having acknowledged the contribution of England in Africa and

accepted that Africans were subjects of the British crown and having given the utmost respect to the country of Wilberforce and Buxton and the missionaries, he concluded, that “Africans we are and we shall remain, a status that is not negotiable”. The wind of defending African institutions had spread among African elite. Ajayi Samuel Crowther, despite his high position in the Church, urged his agents to recognise and respect African customs and institutions. Even James Africanus Beale Horton, a prophet of modernisation in West Africa, who was born of a recaptive Igbo father in Sierra Leone, also demonstrated his zeal and will to defend a culture he did not know. Horton knew nothing about the Igbo society to which he claimed to belong. He also knew nothing about the African cultural heritage, the African thought, mental world, and aspirations. Horton was more aggressive than Alexander Crummell, Edward Wilmot Blyden, Holy James Johnson, in challenging the biological explanation of race ability. Horton’s scientific experience and the available empirical data helped him to criticise the theory of Richard Burton, Winwood Reade and T. J. Hutchinson on race inequality. He also called on well wishers of Africans to accept with praises the courage and perseverance of the Black race which did not cease to be, despite the ill-treatment (Ayandele,1979:172-173). In *Back to Africa*, Richard West presented Horton as a spokesman and defender of Creoles against foreign critics. He fought for the establishment of a Freetown community. Being the most famous among the first three doctors from Sierra Leone, he supported the independence of Sierra Leone on the model of Liberia but with a monarchical system (West,1971:163-164). Wauthier in *L’Afrique des Africains, Inventaire de la Negritude* describes rather James Africanus Beale Horton as a faithful supporter of the colonial rule, which he served with zeal. Leopold Panet, l’Abbé Boilat, and Ahmadou Ndiaye Cledor

were also thinking like Horton (Wauthier, 1964:208-209). Other prominent nationalists known in the sub-region then were some young well equipped lawyers who had mastered British law and had a good knowledge and respect for traditional African institutions. They were T. Hutton Mills, John Mensah Sarbah, J. E. Casely Hayford, James Bright-Davies and S. R. B. Solomon. A hardworking and brilliant man, Sarbah studied with care the past of his people, including their political structure and found that the successive foreign powers had nothing better to offer. John Mensah Sarbah defended his people and mounted resistance to the encroachment of British power. Like his predecessors, Sarbah fought for traditional society. His philosophy was a moderate one. He accepted the inevitable change in the traditional structure of Africa, but adopted the theory of continuity of African institutions, which if properly utilised would serve both Africa and Europe. He wanted a balance between the old and the new. The last but not the least is the nationalistic tendency of Attoh-Ahuma who was known primarily as S. R. B. Solomon. He took the stand that Africans were to think for themselves, plan their nation and defend as usual African integrity (July,1968). All pre-colonial Christian West Africans contributed each one of them their little quota to the development of West African thought. Large or small, they were politicians, journalists, critics and most importantly, cultural nationalists who stood for the emancipation of the Negro and the defence of the African personality. While some were nationalists to the core, Blyden, a patriot in words though not in action, looked like a prophet. As Ayandele put it, he was a Jeremiah rather than a Moses who could have taken the sincere lead in the practice of the ideology they believed to defend. Those in the elite who were not smart enough saw that the colonial tide was too strong and they succumbed. By and large, the first African elite

were at the forefront of change and contributed to the rise of African nationalism. Those who accepted the western ways were styled westernised or “évolués”. In 1800, Africans were dealing with Europeans and Americans as equal. They resisted all forms of attacks and tactics employed by Europeans to subdue them. But surprisingly by 1900 Europeans were ruling the whole of West Africa, except Liberia. Also the European imperialists saw at the period Africa as a virgin land to be exploited. With Europeans having the full control of the old continent, Africa was to face a new challenge, a new orientation and different forms of agitation. Now it was no longer a question of equal citizens, but a question of colonial masters and colonised and assimilés, that paved way for a new style of nationalism.

#### **A new dimension in West Africa nationalism**

The modern West African elite behaved as if he was part of the decision making. Although the colonial master used him to suppress, and maintain his fellow Africans in peace. The French system of administering her colonies was the assimilation method first applied in St. Louis and Gorée and later in Dakar and Rufisque. The policy was extended to all French West African colonies because the French government was inspired by the ideals of the French revolution – liberty, Fraternity and Equality – which stipulates that all men are equal. The colonial system of administration both British and French created chiefs in the case of indirect rule and ‘évolués’ (in opposition to the indigénat under which one could suffer imprisonment without trial) for the assimilation policy. While some of them were fully assimilated others became nationalists (Ken Post, 1968:52) like the Creoles of Sierra Leone and the Senegalese citizens who were underestimated by the colonial rule (Crowder,1977:117). Indirectly, the colonial

administration gave birth to the nationalistic movements in West Africa. Boahen (1981:147) said that one of the consequences of the colonialism was the birth of nationalism which he defines as:

....the consciousness, on the part of individuals or groups of Africans, of membership of a nation-state either already existing or to which they aspire, and of a desire to achieve political and economic freedom, overall social and economic development as well as the cultural revival of that nation-state.

Although its origin in the sub-region could be traced back in the Islamic era of Ahmad Baba and followed by the first western educated West Africans like James Johnson. The modern nationalists were found among the modern West African elite. The West African elite of the colonial era became the nationalist leaders that outlodged the colonial rule (Post,1968:52). About the elite created by the colonial rule, von der Mehden said:

Paramount in almost all of the new states of Afro-Asia and steadily increasing in strength elsewhere is the 'new' elite, comprised of nationalists generally characterized by their relative youth, their ties to urban and ..western culture, their tendency toward secularism and various forms of Marxism, and their demands for social and economic reforms (von der Mehden, 1969:80).

Most Africans were marginalized. The marginal African later formed a common front to make their grievances known, which cumulated to protest. Some of them were made through books, newspapers and leaflets. Africans who were given education, with the help of their counterparts in other continents, protested against the colonial order by publicising the corruption and injustice perpetrated by the colonial master. Also the contribution of Africans during the first and second World Wars demystified the claim of superiority of the colonial master. For instance, N. Sithole wrote:

World War II .. has a great deal to do with the awakening of the people of Africa. During the war the African came in contact with practically all the peoples of the earth. He met them on a life and death struggle basis. He saw the so-called civilised and peaceful and

orderly white people mercilessly butchering one another just as his so-called savage ancestors had done in tribal wars. He saw no difference between the primitive and civilised man. In short, he saw through European pretensions that only Africans were savages. They had a revolutionising psychological impact on the African (Sithole, 1984:32).

The Second World War came as a factor of enlightenment for the struggle of the Black man for his independence. During the struggle for freedom, especially cultural freedom, Africans were confronted with certain challenges expatiated by Ashby in the following words:

More and more in proportion as we adopt Western manners and the Western way of life, the native cultural patterns lose their sharpness.... Are we to abandon all the values of our traditional life for those of the alien culture? ..... The best thing is ..... to try to have it both ways. We must accept the lingua franca that history has already forced upon us but we must fight tooth and nail to preserve our own languages in all the instinctive aspects of our culture (Ashby, 1964:43).

It is in line of African nationalism that Pan-Africanism should be placed. Even though it has an external origin and influences, it should be accounted as a child of African nationalism which according to Boahen started in the 1870's British colonies whilst the political demands of French West Africa dated about the 1950's (Boahen,1981:151). The new waves of nationalism in West Africa were prompted by the colonial era and it was at the Manchester meeting of 1945 that the movement has known a formal organised beginning. Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Kwame Nkrumah of the Gold Coast and Akintola of Nigeria were present at the meeting. Davidson wrote both in *Which Way Africa* and *Africa: History of a continent* that among the aims of the meeting were the demands for 'autonomy and independence'. In *Which Way Africa*, he was more explicit about the resolutions of the delegates who stipulated 'We are determined to be free'; they said, 'But if the western world is still determined to rule mankind by force, then Africans, as a

last resort, may have to appeal to force in the effort to achieve freedom...(Davidson, 1972:65-66). Infected by the seed of the philosophy dominating pan-Africanism, Africans became more active in the movement whose head office was transferred to Africa. The meeting of Manchester in Britain had no representation from Francophone Africa. At the end of the meeting, Kwame Nkrumah of the Gold Coast and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya returned to their countries to implement the resolutions of the Congress, taking up the struggle for local independence. The road to independence in Africa started in Manchester, which thus became a historical town for Africans. The struggle for independence is one of the impacts of the pan-Africanism movement in West Africa.

### **Kwame Nkrumah and the United States of Africa**

Kwame Nkrumah is a consequence of the impact of the colonial rule in West Africa and a leader of pan-Africanism. The nationalist Nkrumah, after the victory of his party, the C.P.P. spoke and expatiated on the impact the new nation Ghana could have on the rest of Africa. On March 6<sup>th</sup>, 1957, he declared.

We have a duty to prove to the world that Africans can conduct their own affairs with efficiency and tolerance and through the exercise of democracy. We must set an example to all Africa (F. M. Bourret, 1960:202).

At the independence of the Gold Coast he declared that his objectives were the liberation of the entire Africa and her union. The independence of the Golf Coast:

N'a aucune valeur si elle n'est pas accompagnée de la libération de tout le reste de l'Afrique...Rechercher d'abord votre liberté politique, tout le reste vous sera donné en compensation (Francis Bebey, 1973:97).

Has no value if it is not followed with the liberation of the rest of Africa...First, seek for your political freedom, all shall be added in compensation.

The idea of United Africa was so great in the mind of Nkrumah that there was a provision in the Constitution of Ghana, to give up sovereignty, the National Sovereignty of Ghana, if need be for the birth of the United States of Africa (James, 1977:163). All African leaders of newly independent states were faced with the pressing need to invent one system for their people. It was in view of this need that Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere adopted socialism while leaders such as Kamuzu Banda were more traditionalists and were hostile to socialism (Forster, 1994:481-482). In later years, Hountondji in his *African Philosophy, myth and reality* reported that Kwame Nkrumah was careful in the use of the terminology 'African socialism'. For Paulin Hountondji, Nkrumah would not like to define Africa as a world apart, all societies being subject to the same laws in the world and felt that the African revolution should not be separated from world revolution. In view of this, Nkrumah preferred to use 'socialism in Africa' rather than 'African socialism' (Hountonji, 1996:138). *Africa Today* described Nkrumah as a person of vision whose fame was echoed in Ghana and outside. His pan-Africanism politics and his assistance to refugees made him gain popularity (*Africa Today*, 1991:976). In his classification of African leaders, Dessarre insisted on the fact that Nkrumah was one of the African leaders who had faith in the unity of Africa and for whom no sacrifice was too great in order to forge the union. Dessarre also classified Sekou Toure and Modibo Keita along with Kwame Nkrumah. However, Houphouet Boigny, Leopold Sedar Senghor and Fulbert Youlou were not clearly supportive of the question of union, which they regarded with suspicion. Even if Senghor saw in the policy of Nkrumah an intelligent vision, he was reserved about the future of the vision which he

acclaimed doubtful (Dessarre, 1961:30; 171-172). His suspicion is based on the fact that Africa unity must not be linked to only anti-colonialism for fear of given it a fragile foundation. He wanted the unity of Negro Africans be based on their common values summed in what he called “Africanité”. This “Africanité” of Senghor takes into consideration non-Black Arabs and Berbers of North Africa (Onésimo Silveira, 1976:113). Sékou Touré was influenced by Kwame Nkrumah to opt for autonomy when all other French colonies of Africa South of Sahara voted in favour of cooperation in 1958. A pan-Africanist, Sékou Touré as described by Charles-Henry Favrod in *l’Afrique Seule* was an African leader who admired and supported the ideas of a free Africa (Favrod, 1961:240). In *Expérience Guinéenne et Unité Africaine*, Sékou Touré declared:

Enfin, depuis le 28 Septembre, le drapeau de la liberté, de l’indépendance et de la souveraineté est hissé, soulevant l’admiration et la fierté de tous les peuples africains, de toutes ces masses qui,... n’avaient à perdre, en accédant à l’indépendance qu’une partie de leur misère et de leur humiliation (Touré, 1960:354).

Finally, since September 28, the flag of freedom, of independence and of sovereignty has been hoisted, raising the admiration and the pride of all African peoples, of all these masses who,..had to loose, by getting their independence, a portion of their misery and their humiliation.

Sekou Touré was ready, like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, to alienate the sovereignty of Guinea for the United States of Africa. Also he could tolerate class struggles on the basis of the survival of African solidarity. According to the Guinean leader of *Le Parti Démocratique Guinéen*, one single party in the State was democratic enough, for it reflected the general interest. The birth of OAU in 1963 was as a compromise between the point of view of the Casablanca block and the opinion of the Monrovia group. It was the first attempt of unifying Africa, which was the main focus of pan-Africanism that

opposed colonialism, oppression, racism, and exploitation. The transposition of OAU into AU in Lusaka, Zambia in 2001, was an institutional shift from the main focus of pan-Africanism (Ayele Bekerie, 2001:2). Now pan-Africanism with African Union is:

Reaffirmation and redemption centering on the empowerment and development of all African people (Bekerie, 2001:2).

Soon after, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was created to alleviate the suffering of the Africans. Nigeria was not alone in the campaign to oppose the vision of the United Africa of Nkrumah, there were also Felix Houphouet-Boigny, Haile Selassie and others who were suspicious of the Accra government in attempting an internal recolonisation of Africa. Ayele Bekerie was of the opinion that:

As Africa emerged from colonialism in the 1960s, leaders such as Ghana's Dr Kwame Nkrumah argued that Africa could only survive as a single entity. Others such as Felix Houphouet-Boigny of Côte d'Ivoire and Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia believed that the newly independent countries must first build strong nation states (Bekerie, 2001:8).

The end of Nkrumah's government marked the beginning of the end of pan-Africanist ideas in Africa. These ideas will reappear with the wind of globalisation. For Ayele Bekerie, it is time for an African Union to make Africans more efficient and effective in the management of world affairs (Bekerie, 2001:10). Thus the failure of Nkrumah's politics was an echo of the failure of other African governments. Whatever might be his shortcomings, he was known to be the most eloquent pan-Africanist and nationalist in West Africa. He was a devoted, courageous and intelligent leader who knew that the strength of government was in the masses and the workers. No one will doubt his devotion to African unity. According to Hountondji, Nkrumah believed that the creation of the United States of Africa was the most urgent necessity in the struggle against neo-

colonialism because the main instrument of neo-colonialism was balkanisation (Hountondji,1996:138). Besides Hountondji and others, Dennis Austin in *Politics in Ghana* portrayed Nkrumah as not merely the 'Hero of the Revolution' but 'Africa's Man of Destiny'. This is better interpreted by the words of the pan-Africanist: 'Our victory in the forthcoming general election is Africa's hope. We ...are determined to be free and to use our position as a free independent sovereign state to help in the redemption of all Africa' (Denis Austin,1970:214). Dessarre in her book *Quel sera le destin de l'Afrique?* attested to the commitment of the Ghanaian leader of the C.P.P. She saw that he was resolute and ever determined for the cause of Africa. Despite all, Dessarre said, there was no pan-Africanism, and there was no Africa. Africa was still searching for herself. *Consciencism* and *Africa must unite* were the two books, which summarise the ideology, philosophy and orientation of the African visionary, Kwame Nkrumah. In *Consciencism*, he concentrated more on the contribution and impact of the philosophies on equality in the society. The traditional African society is socialist; a society where a human being is spiritual, full of dignity, integrated and equipped with values. The rules and regulations of the clan explain African communalism where everybody works for the society and where an individual is defined in relation to the society. He raised the alarm that the peaceful coexistence of the Africans was brought to an end by the forces across the Sahara and the sea. The new African society is submerged and influenced by traditional, Islamic, and Euro-Christian ideas. The new situation in Africa called for an appropriate ideology. This ideology or rather this philosophy should take in consideration African humanism. The philosophy which will manage the three conceptions of life, the African, the Islamic and the Euro-Christian shall be called philosophical consciencism, said Kwame Nkrumah

(Kodjo,1987:168). While advocating socialism as the best adapted ideology for the African situation, he observed that colonialism, imperialism, disunity and underdevelopment are obstacles to the development of political consciencism, thus affecting social justice and natural equality. The effective application of consciencism lays on the level of education and awareness of the populace. The principal theme in *Africa must unite* is centered on the independence of European colonies of Africa, a freedom which must be obtained at all costs. After liberation, the independent states of Africa must unite, because for Kwame Nkrumah the force and power of Africa lay in her unity while the strength of imperialism is found in disunity. He rejected in *Africa must unite* the theory of race inequality suggested by some Western anthropologists, position adopted by the first nationalist, Africanus Beale Horton, duBois, James Johnson. He insisted that the struggles for political independence should be intensified and other needs would be added to it. At independence, Ghana needed a new orientation. This led Nkrumah to the invention of an adapted ideology. He wanted the ideology to be called socialism in Africa rather than African socialism. Kwame Nkrumah and his party embarked in the unification of Ghana and changed the constitution of the country to reflect African realities. While recalling the principles of pan-Africanism and the contribution of the Congress of Manchester in 1945 and the role he played as secretary of the organisation, he insisted on the unity of independent African states. Only in unity can Africa contribute her own quota to the management of the world affairs.

### **The cultural and literary movement of Negritude in West Africa**

Negritude is a consequence of the foreign influences particularly the Europeans on Africans. It was an immediate reaction to the policy of acculturation adopted by the

colonial officers. Negritude was a means of protest, a weapon in the struggle to attain equality (Davidson, 1971:74). Every student of African origin wanted then to identify with the Negritude movement, which was set to culturally free the African. “Engagé” or not, converted to Christianity or not, militant or not, some African elite were at the same time writer and political elite, and all of them had the same focus: Africa. It is interesting to note that these West African elite, writers and politicians who were aware of the colonial master’s culture, spearheaded the struggle for independence. This elite had no choice than to write and talk in the language of the colonial master such as English and French (Wauthier,1964:24-25). It should be noted that Tovalou Houénou, a native of Dahomey, today known as Benin Republic, might be called the forerunner of the negritude movement. After taking his degree in law at the University of Bordeaux, he established his chambers in Paris. He was greatly influenced by the pan-African movements. He wrote *L’Involution des métamorphoses et des métempsychoses de l’univers* where he questioned the right of some to dominate others. He defended the equality of race, attacked Eurocentrism and the assumption of cultural superiority. Houénou in his attempt to fight racism published also two journals *Ligue universelle pour la défense de la race noire* and *L’action coloniale*. An anti-colonialist, he published also *Les continents* (Langsley, 1973:291-292; 294-295). Other people, however, refer to duBois as the founding father of Negritude. He published in 1914 *The Souls of Black Folks*, considered as a reference book to all militant protest groups against the ill treatment of the Negro by the West. Senghor’s main target was the defence of African culture and realities like his predecessors, James Johnson, Dr. James Africanus, etc.. The defence could only be carried out through writing. At the International Congress of Black Writers and Artists held at the Sorbonne in 1956, Léopold Sédar Senghor declared that African literature was a literature of struggle and

liberation. In fact the African writer at the time had the colonial situation as a point of reference in developing his theme (Wauthier,1964:154). For Senghor, Negritude was the only and best ideology, which could give the best interpretation in his entire life of the African Negro. Négritude, an ideology and literary movement of the French-speaking Black intellectuals became a comprehensive weapon to fight the unwanted colonial situation. The literature of Négritude was to reposition the Black man in relation to his past. Senghor said that the conceptions of the world differed depending on the people, the race and the civilization. While Africans are noted for being emotional, European rationalism dictates the path to a logical way of seeing things. Both ways of interpreting the world are valid and summarised in the well-known dictum of the poet-President. This famous, controversial and questionable formula explains why some concerned African intellectuals were calling him to order.

### **The colonial era and the modern West African literature**

Several African writers emerged during the struggle for decolonisation and independence, the struggle for African identity. The francophone and the anglophone West African writers are the consequence of dramatic political, social and cultural transformations on the West Africa sub-region. They are a product of colonialism. These writers were bent on to fighting social injustice and the existing order that gave the colonial master all the rights over the colonised. They were also prepared to defend the rights of the Black 'race' which "has been the most divided, despised, humiliated throughout history" (Reader,1999:19). Most of the time, they either attack the influence of the outside world on the peaceful coexistence of African societies, or they expose the side effects of the colonial era. Sometime also, they criticise the slave traffic, but mostly

they condemn acculturation and reject the new culture. On the other hand, these writers praised African tradition, describing its beauties and realities. The second phase of the African novel is mostly dominated by the disappointment orchestrated by the failure of independence to solve the problems of the continent. Writers stood firmly to attack the enemies of progress and ask for better conditions of living. The modern West African writer is generally seen to be revolutionary in contrast with the conservative nature of the oral narrative. Most West African writers adopt one or other aspects of oral literature, giving to modern African literature its communal spirit and social cohesion. After genuine restoration of the lost dignity of the African with the pen of Westernised Africans, West African writers turn their pens to criticise the new rulers. They call for self-examination, political and economic control of the continent, while outlining the failure of the new leaders (Akubueze, 1980:4-6).

### **Conclusion**

The Sankore University in Timbuktu produced scholars of high repute and nationalists such as the greatly learned Ahmad Baba and Abd al-Rahman as-Sadi, *Tarikh as-Sudan* (Historian of the Sudan). The second cluster of influences in West Africa was prompted by the Atlantic contacts. Educationists but also nationalists, they stood firmly to defend the African personality, each one in his various capacity. They all fought however for the emancipation of their people and defended the African integrity and personality. Reputable people such as Orishatuke Faduma, Attah-Ahuma and Casely Hayford wrote to emancipate others. The era of colonisation came eventually to change the ideological structure of the continent and to give it a new direction. The colonial occupation had a serious cultural impact on West Africa with its western education, social, religious and

political ideas that discouraged the old social order dominated by the belief in gods and ancestors. After several centuries of reorientation a new set of leaders emerged with new ideas and currents of thought. West Africa in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s was dominated by some important ideologies namely Pan-Africanism, Negritude and African socialism. African socialism was a child of circumstances to fill the vacuum left by African nationalism. Both Pan-Africanism and Negritude defended the African personality and respected African values. After the independence the two ideologies were forgotten and abandoned to give way to African socialism, which took Africa nowhere, except to the anarchy that led to the coming into power of the military which is presently forced out of government offices by national and international pressure groups with the only aim to promote civil rules. African writers rose to the challenges to criticise the African leaders for their inability to manage to expectation the independence states of Africa. *Les Soleils des independences* of Ahmadou Kourouma is an example of such literature that describes the disillusionment, in which alienation becomes the self-conscious instrument of challenging the terms by which Africa is to be represented. The Nationalist-ideological philosophy of Kwame Nkrumah and Léopold Sédar Senghor aimed to liberate Africa and to establish a genuine traditional African humanism. Professional philosophers like Kwasi Wiredu and Paulin Hountondji want to be rather creative, progressive and move with the scientific development.

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