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Between Development and Dependence

> What gives place its specificity is not some long internalised history, but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of relations, articulated together at a particular locus [...] A large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are actually constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself, whether that be a street, a region or even a continent.[1]

In Ader life goes on. Continuities and changes affect different people in different ways, as has been the case over the entire period covered in this book. While Charles Gouraud crossed Ader with his cases of French wine thinking about how to govern this arid new addition to the French empire, Makhammad Amenokal of the Kel Denneg hid in the desert clinging to his old habits and avoiding contact with the French intruders. And while Italian aid workers thought they were defeating the desert in the name of development, Ader's women found short-lived security in the cereals of the World Food Programme. Clearly, imperial conquest and the developmentalist turn had profound effects on Ader's history. But at any one time there was no *leitmotif* across the histories of individuals and groups, no common essence, only their co-presence and mutual shaping. People asserted their sense of self as they took stances in specific circumstances, their contextual choices representing to themselves and to others the ultimate proof of who they thought they were: loyal servants or ex-slaves seeking emancipation; imperialists or irreducible resistance fighters; benefactors or beneficiaries. The history of Ader derives unity from the

[1] Massey, 'Power-geometry', p. 66.

interaction of mutually constitutive experiences that brought together various groups in Ader's society, but also set them apart as differently positioned in relation to each other and the material world. This book's perspectival approach to history has attempted to convey the plural historical experiences of groups and individuals whose identity is not 'an essence, but a *positioning*'.[2] The main continuity has been the desert's edge, which posed specific challenges and offered limited options.

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY AT THE DESERT'S EDGE

Throughout the twentieth century no welfare state or social security developed, except for the religious injunction to give alms to the poor. Although at the beginning of the twentieth century slavery was abolished and the organs of Tuareg rule were suppressed, the strong ties that brought people together – some rooted in past slavery – could not be forgotten in a few generations. The passing of colonial and national laws, often inspired by foreign normative principles, had a relatively small impact upon Ader's villages. As new political institutions made empty promises that they repeatedly broke, conditions of life changed slowly: the hierarchies of the past survived in nuanced form, and new hierarchies took shape following the old logics which never ceased to inform the practice of everyday life.

So what changed, what stayed the same, and how did change and continuity affect people's choices? Over the period examined in this book Ader remained the last stretch of cultivable land before the barren Sahara. Yet, Ader's environment was not static: it slowly but progressively dried up. Concurrently, Ader's land–labour ratio underwent a dramatic alteration. For pre-colonial times, our interpretations of demographic change are limited by lack of precise data and we must rely on impressionistic observations derived from the accounts of travellers, most of whom visited adjoining regions, but not Ader. One important exception is the description of Birnin Ader provided by the pilgrim Mohamed to Ulrich Seetzen in Cairo in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Mohamed emphasised abundance rather than scarcity. He described cotton and wheat farming, irrigation of wheat-producing lands, and hunting of a varied range of abundant wild game by the local animist population. In 1901 Captain Brescon described the villages surrounding Tamaske as follows:

[2] Hall, 'Cultural identity', p. 266. Italics in original.

The group of Tamaske is located at the end of a large basin which contains lakes
filled with water all year long. This humidity renders the soil very fertile. Wheat
grows well and yields an excellent flour [...] Cotton, too, grows well. Finally,
onions reach a decent size: onion farming requires little care except for digging
narrow irrigation canals.[3]

In the second half of the twentieth century, for which data are more
reliable, Ader's environment became more arid, and its population multi-
plied fifteen-fold: the administrative region of Tahoua went from 176,303
people and a density of 1.60/km² in 1946 to 2,741,922 people and an
average density of 26/km² in 2011.[4] These transformations rendered
more acute people's need to diversify production by engaging in a range
of income-generating activities both *within* and *outside* Ader. Meanwhile,
slavery was made illegal, travel became safer, and slave descendants
acquired the faculty to control their mobility. But not everyone could
choose when and how to travel. The majority of labour migrants were
men. Women had fewer options.

   Within Ader, the problem of low returns to labour induced by environ-
mental factors and population growth conditioned the peculiar endurance
of dependent relations of a personal nature and the vestiges of past
slavery, in spite of the decreasing political acceptability of unfree labour.
With the exception of a few wealthy traders and landowners, the majority
of Ader's population complements local income with income derived
from migration. Those who cannot travel, especially in the poorest
groups, must accept subservience and seek protection from extreme desti-
tution by offering their labour at a low cost, sometimes simply to be fed.
For Ader's poor, dependence has remained necessary to avoid subsistence
failure from the times of slavery to the times of aid.

   In Ader's gender system women do not engage in long-distance migra-
tion and rely on fewer socially acceptable ways to make a living than men.
While in pre-colonial times slaves included both men and women, grow-
ing reliance on labour migration has mobilised primarily men, leaving
poor women particularly vulnerable to recurrent food crises in Ader's
villages. Surely, the voluntary choice to carry out domestic work for
wealthy patrons in return for a daily meal, or to enrol in food-for-work

[3] Captain Brescon, Monographie du Cercle de Tahoua, 1901, ANN 17.1.3.
[4] The information for 1946 comes from the *Rapport d'Ensemble du Premier Semestre 1946*,
ANN1E33, and for 2011 from Niger's national census. The surface of the administrative
region of Tahoua changed slightly over this period: it was calculated at 110,000 km² in
1946 and 106,677 km² in 2011.

schemes, is not slavery. Hunger has been possibly more effective than coercion as an incentive to accept harsh working conditions, but the workers who had actively sought these employment arrangements turned out to be safer than others who could not, or would not, make these bitter choices.

Working without a salary only to be fed, either by the local better-off or by aid projects, is an exploitative condition, but insofar as those who have to endure it cannot be sold or forced to work against their own will, they are not slaves. This said, in some cases dependence continues to take the form of enslavement. Lawrance and Roberts have argued that contemporary trafficking in African women and children should be analysed from the perspective of the deep historical roots of these phenomena.[5] They are right: as this book has shown, African societies perceive present-day practices as recent evolutions of earlier dynamics. Moreover, a long-term perspective reveals that change is faster or slower for different groups. A combination of historical legacy and gender ideology have ensured that the vestiges of slavery affect women of slave descent more than their male counterparts, as suggested by the higher price of ransom for women than for men (Chapter 6), and by the continued practice of concubinage, which does not have a masculine counterpart.[6]

The well-known case of Hadijatou Mani's enslavement happened in southern Ader. Hadijatou Mani was sold at the age of twelve to a friend of her mother's master, who took her as his concubine. In 2005, she refused to marry her master after having been manumitted. This triggered a series of legal proceedings, in which international and national anti-slavery law competed with local perceptions of the legal and religious duties of slaves and wives. It is clear from this case that women's dependence, and sometimes their enslavement, is broadly acceptable to a large number of people in this region, even to some official state representatives: on 16 June 2006 the higher tribunal of Konni (*Tribunal de Grand Instance de Konni*) reversed the lower tribunal's decision that there had been no legal marriage between Hadijatou and her owner, and ruled that under customary law she was de facto 'married' to her master.

The lot of concubines like Hadijatou Mani attests to the circumscribed resilience of past slavery. Similarly, the lot of impoverished wives who depend on their husbands' remittances for their survival reveals a general feminisation of dependence. Legal abolition has surely increased the

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[5] Lawrance and Roberts, 'Contextualising Trafficking'.
[6] Allain, 'Hadijatou Mani' and Duffy, 'Hadijatou Mani'.

opportunities of men of slave descent, but it is not clear how far, if at all, it improved the plight of women. If male and female slaves were equally exposed to the whims of their owners, gender inequalities amongst slave descendants would seem to have risen after emancipation.[7] As shown by the case of Fatimata (Chapter 6), who was secluded by her husband of slave descent and forced never to work on the project worksites; or of the *femmes de Keita* who after the project's departure from their villages faced exposure to hunger whenever their migrant husbands did not support them from abroad, women have fewer options than their husbands and brothers, cannot control their choices, and are more vulnerable to impoverishment. This does not mean that they are worse off today than in the times of slavery. But, in Ader's patriarchal society, their condition has not improved as much as that of their male counterparts.

Concurrently, during the twentieth century travel outside Ader became both more necessary (because of the growing shortage of cultivable lands) and more accessible (because of 'pacification', emancipation, and the introduction of new means of transport). After slavery's abolition, employers – be they local warlords, colonial administrators, or foreign development workers – underpaid their employees (if they paid them at all). These circumstances acted as incentives for workers – primarily male – to leave permanently or seasonally and sell their labour abroad, where its value was higher. For those who could travel, labour migration gave access to resources that in Ader are not available, or not available in sufficient quantity for everyone.

Today, migrants send back a part of their earnings in the form of remittances. Preliminary inquiries suggest that this constitutes a substantial contribution to the regional economy. If over the period 1984–99 the Keita Project's average annual expenditure had amounted to about US$4.3 million, the migration remittances received by three official Western Union agents in the town of Tahoua in the year 2006 alone amounted to about US$20 million.[8] This was only a fraction of the transfers sent to the entire administrative region through a variety of other avenues. Although these are impressionistic figures, there can be no doubt about the importance of the migrants' contribution. However, the livelihoods of migrants and their dependants are highly sensitive to

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[7] Myriam Cottias documented a similar situation in the West Indies; see Cottias, 'Gender'. See also Austin, 'Cash Crops and Freedom', p. 26.

[8] Garba, *Transfers d'argent*.

economic and political upheavals in neighbouring countries. Moreover, their position abroad can be extremely insecure.

While the bulk of regional regulation reiterates the principles of free movement of persons and goods and freedom of residence, different ECOWAS countries have different employment legislations: some require foreigners to obtain resident status or work permits, or to demonstrate their capacity to support themselves financially during their stay.[9] These requirements have costs that many migrants from Ader cannot (or choose not to) afford. Not all rural Nigerien migrants possess the appropriate travel or other documents required to work legally at their destination.[10] These migrants populate the indefinite spaces of the so-called informal economy. They keep their distance from the law because they are aware that they are breaching it, and because they are the targets of exactions by corrupt bureaucrats and policemen, as well as by fraudsters who take advantage of their vulnerable position as foreigners.

Given the significance of the migrants' financial transfers, one wonders if facilitating their labour migration and increasing their security abroad would not be a more sensible aid objective than supporting the hordes of international and national development bureaucracies that populate an endless list of aid GOs, IGOs, NGOs, and INGOs. In Niger, the spread of these development institutions signalled a transition in rationales of national and international governance that started after the Second World War and underwent meaningful variations in the following decades, while retaining development as its main theme.

AID, SUBJECTIFICATION, AND SUBJECTION

In the 1960s FAC-funded activities had been grounded in a sense of the political liability of France towards its ex-colonies. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s the diversification of donor countries went hand in hand with an increased depoliticisation of the development relation. Donors developed countries on the basis of a generic humanitarian impulse, which in appearance was largely devoid of specific political content. In the late 1970s, Italy was anxious to establish itself as an aid donor. The choice of Ader had media-shock potential at a time when famine in the Sahel received heightened international attention. The UN's Food and

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[9] Apard, 'Dérives sécuritaires'.
[10] Boyer and Mounkaila, 'Niger, espace d'émigration et de transit'.

Agriculture Organisation and World Food Programme were based in Rome. They formed part of an international epistemic network, which interpreted desertification in a certain way and prescribed a set of methodologies for fixing it. In Niger, Kountché's Development Society supported solutions that at the time appeared promising, and would be funded by external donors.

The discourse of desertification provided a new rationale for interpreting the desert's edge and acting upon it.[11] It downplayed people's strategies of regional mobility, and instead emphasised the characteristics of a given territory and its carrying capacity. It largely ignored local hierarchies. International development organisations provided a humanitarian language that justified intervention to fight against poverty and desertification – ultimately to save generic human lives. On a global scale, this became a compelling discourse applied indiscriminately to a variety of Third World countries.

The association between international and national developmentalist agendas resulted in an offer-driven process, which in Ader prescribed remedies commensurate to the discourse of desertification.[12] In spite of its top-down character, developmentalist governance was predicated on the axiom of participation. In Niger the international discourse of 'participatory development' became coupled with the participatory rhetoric of the Development Society's single-party state. However, both international development agencies and the Development Society rooted participation not in any democratic accountability, but in the rhetorical assumption of the unquestionable desirability of 'development'.

Saving lives and improving the productivity of resources bypassed political scrutiny. Like an echo, this discourse operated through repetition. Potential beneficiaries had to reproduce the particular problematisations that donor agencies saw as the right ones. Grassroots development workers created a demand for the services that 'aid' offered by giving potential aid recipients access to these problematisations. Their role was illustrated in characteristically apolitical terms. Extension workers saw it as their task to sensitise people to 'become aware' of the problems that affected them and of the remedies for these problems. Sensitisation

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[11] For comparative analyses, see Glenzer, '*La secheresse*'; Fairhead and Leach, 'Webs of power'. For more general studies of the constructedness of environmental problems in Africa, see Fairhead and Leach, *Misreading*; Leach and Mearns, *Lie of the Land*.

[12] Neubert aptly defines this process as a 'supply-induced demand', Neubert, '*Rôle des courtiers locaux*', p. 256.

(*sensibilisation*) created a popular demand phrased according to the forms and formalities of prevalent development discourses.

Undoubtedly, many national development bureaucrats and extension agents acted in good faith and aimed to contribute to the improvement of the conditions of their less fortunate compatriots. But their room for manoeuvre was limited: for most Nigerien aid workers being employed by one or the other international aid agency was, and is, one of the very few secure livelihood options. In order to be selected by donors, they must display familiarity with the donors' developmentalist logics and willingness to reproduce and operationalise them.

The incentive of wages, and the security affordable through them, does not appeal only to Nigerien bureaucrats. Material rewards and the honour implied in 'humanitarian' work influence the motivation of administrative staff of all nationalities and backgrounds. In spite of the rhetorical representation of aid work as based on philanthropic expertise and a humanitarian impulse, the motivations of aid bureaucrats are not different from those that Max Weber has demonstrated to be at work in all administrative structures:

The administrative staff, which externally represents the organisation of political domination, is, of course, like any other organisation, bound by obedience to the power-holder and not alone by the concept of legitimacy [...] There are two other means, both of which appeal to personal interests: material reward and social honour. The fiefs of vassals, the prebends of patrimonial officials, the salaries of modern civil servants, the honour of knights, the privileges of estates, and the honour of the civil servant comprise their respective wages. The fear of losing them is the final and decisive basis for solidarity between the executive staff and the power-holder.[13]

International development aristocracies earn enormous wages and per diems in the name of humanitarianism and escape any real political or financial accountability to the 'beneficiaries'. The identities of 'donors' and 'recipients', 'experts' and 'peasants', 'project agents' and 'beneficiaries' are forms of subjectification that entrench political and economic inequalities. To be sure, a long critical tradition has not failed to expose the power inequalities implicit in the practice of aid:

The dialectic of charitable or welfare work in particular operates in this way, penetrating all relationships between men as a reflective form of the effort to dominate. The claim to understand the other person in advance performs the function of keeping the claim of the other person at a distance.[14]

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[13] Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', p. 80.   [14] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 323.

A 'false dialectical appearance'[15] characterises 'the production of dis-
course under conditions of unequal power' which Arturo Escobar sees
as intrinsic to developmentalist governance.[16] In development organisa-
tions knowledge of the other is sought in an instrumental way. This
happens at both ends of the relationship. Developers seek knowledge of
'the poor' to legitimise intervention, and the 'target population' tries to
manipulate development rationales in order to maximise their access to
the aid revenue. Yet, just as slaves did not choose to be enslaved and the
colonised did not choose to be conquered, choosing whether or not to
participate in one or the other aid programme is often not an option for
the 'beneficiaries'. The most vulnerable groups have the least power to
negotiate unequal relations. Their options are to move to places where
labour yields higher returns, or attempt to maintain some control over
their lives by manipulating hierarchy in surreptitious ways.[17]

If the demands of the poor were a priority to aid donors, worksites
would still be arranged on Ader's dry slopes, and workers would be paid
a decent wage. We may ask if this was ever a feasible option: could those
involved in 'developing' Ader (be they Italian, Nigerien, or from any other
country) have chosen to pay local labour standard wages? The answer
can only be affirmative. Funding was made available for a broad range of
items, including the salaries of national and international aid workers, the
air travel of consultants, expensive building machines, tractors, jeeps,
fuel, and spare parts. Mobilising concepts such as 'human investment'
and 'ownership building', too, is a choice, albeit an epistemological one.
One of the results of this choice is that an essentially exploitative relation-
ship passes as a will to aid. Developmentalist governance did not control
labour through coercion, but through enrolment in new interpretative
logics:[18] through sensitisation, 'peasant mentalities' were led to aspire
towards 'development' and participate in projects.

But workers embraced 'participation' only when they could turn it to
their advantage: after the abolition of forced labour, the participatory
discourse of the new developmentalist state – colonial at first, then inde-
pendent – could not force local people into volunteering when seasonal
work in West African cities was a more convenient alternative. However,
not everyone could travel to distant cities every year. In northern Ader aid

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[15] Ibid.   [16] Escobar, *Encountering Development*, p. 9.

[17] Scott, *Everyday Forms*; Scott, *Domination*; Torres, *The Force of Irony*.

[18] Mosse applies Latour's notion of enrolment to the anthropological study of development;
Mosse, *Cultivating Development*, p. 8.

made possible the continued employment of cheap labour. A large part of
local labour opted out of this relationship. Those who, for various
reasons, had no alternatives, made a virtue out of necessity and enrolled
in poorly remunerated activities. As 'development' was better than noth-
ing, people chose to work under the label of 'human investment'. As
noted by Edelman, this system:

Can survive and maintain its frustrating institutions, only as long as it is possible
to manipulate the discontented into conformity and docility and to isolate or
incarcerate those who refuse to be 'rehabilitated'. The helping professions are
the most effective contemporary agents of social conformity and isolation. In
playing this political role they undergird the entire political structure, yet are
largely spared from self-criticism, from political criticism, and even from political
observation through a special symbolic language.[19]

In the early twentieth century it appeared obvious that colonial powers
had to civilise African societies. Today it is taken for granted that donor
countries must save African lives. By mobilising a normative language
rooted in values considered universal at any one time and place, insti-
tutions are largely spared from criticism.[20] But the forced labourer and
the aid recipient contributing 'human investment' to his/her own develop-
ment are categories that say less about the identity of their bearers than
about the ideologies of the dominant groups who conceived them.

   Hegemonic knowledge produces inequality through claims to under-
stand the other better than the other understands him/herself. To be sure,
inequalities are real: the *femmes de Keita* faced the threat of hunger, and it is
because of their vulnerable position that they wished to work on the pro-
ject's worksites, or in the households of former elites, as the case may be. But
their circumstances can be represented and analysed differently, as either
charitable aid to the poor, or as exploitation accepted to ensure survival. It is
not that these relationships were not beneficial to persons faced with starva-
tion: indeed, they were. But had these persons had better options, probably
they would have embraced them, as did the ones amongst them who were in
a position to migrate, or to engage in trade, or to obtain well-paid jobs in the
development apparatus. The point is not that aid was not useful to some
people at certain moments, but that it was not 'aid'.

   For Frederick Cooper, despite its shortcomings, development has 'pro-
vided a basis on which the people of impoverished, ex-colonial countries
could make claims'.[21] This is surely the case, but in spite of participatory

[19] Edelman, 'Political language', p. 310.   [20] Douglas, *How Institutions Think*.
[21] Cooper, *Decolonization*, p. 470.

rhetorics development policy and funding have been controlled by donors, who are unaccountable to the communities in whose lives they intervene. The Keita Project and World Food Programme eventually stopped funding environmental restoration worksites. Criticism did not come from the workers employed on the worksites, but from the development institutions themselves, which feared that the long-term continuation of food-for-work would 'create dependence'.[22] And it did, indeed, though in several additional ways beyond the ones foreseen by development agencies. With the end of the Keita Project's labour-intensive activities, Keita's poorest groups fell back upon traditional forms of dependence, some akin to slavery. Development aid has been replaced by emergency interventions which – by definition – are not aimed at addressing the long-term causes of poverty. When and if a famine is declared, emergency aid workers come to feed the starving and save lives, at high cost and with limited employment of local labour that is increasingly dependent on jobs in foreign countries.

THE EXPERIENCE OF DEPENDENCE

Where might an emphasis on dependence lead us? Let us first consider where it should not lead us, namely, along the paths of *Dependencia* and some of its main critics. Modernisation theory looked at Africa in order to illustrate a particular stage of economic growth.[23] Like modernisation theory, writers in the *Dependencia* tradition analysed Africa's history and society to confirm their view of what African futures ought to be. Rooted in a theory of unequal exchange thought to sustain the inequalities between the world's 'cores' and 'peripheries', the theory of dependency, or underdevelopment, was first formulated to explain the economic marginalisation of Latin America.[24] Its main exponents in the study of African political economy have been Walter Rodney, Immanuel Wallerstein, and Samir Amin.[25] These authors' thought that Africa's predicament was the result of global forces that actively construed

[22] See GICO, *Valutazione*, p. 37, and Smart, *Rapport sur le futur rôle du PAM*.

[23] Cf. Rostow, *Stages*; for a critical overview of theories of economic development see Arndt, *Rise and Fall*; Arndt, *Economic Development*; Hunt, *Economic Theories*, chapters 2 and 3.

[24] Prebisch, 'Commercial policy'; 'System and social structure'. On the theory of unequal exchange see Emmanuel, *Unequal Exchange*; Amin, *Fin d'un débat*.

[25] Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*; Wallerstein, *Modern World System*; Wallerstein, *Capitalist World Economy*; Amin, 'Development and structural change';

Africa's dependence.[26] Their analyses, especially in the case of Wallerstein
and Amin, also tried to explain more specific circumstances of particular
groups, such as labour migrants.

These studies put forward clear arguments which attracted a consider-
able amount of valuable debate. But they were hopelessly reductionist.
Amin treated labour migrations as an outgrowth of the interests of global
capital: 'they emigrate because the colonial system requires money of
them'.[27] Perhaps they did. But labour migrants were full-fledged historical
agents, not merely victims of new forces they could not control.[28] Most
labour migrants looked for wages in cash to operate in the new colonial
economy. But some also migrated to cut ties from former masters, others
to join established trade diasporas or Islamic brotherhoods, others yet to
find productive lands to farm. Dependency approaches failed to see these
motivations because they prioritised the researcher's political and intel-
lectual concerns over an analysis of the historical experience of migrants.

Jean-Francois Bayart criticised dependency theory for portraying
Africans as passive victims of European action. He suggested that
Africans had been the active agents of their own *mise en dépendance*.[29]
For all its important merits, his formulation collapses under one all-
embracing interpretation centuries of history and diverse societies:
'Unequal entry into the international systems has been for several centuries
a major and dynamic mode of the historicity of African societies, not the
magical suspension of it. *Their internal structure itself stems from this
relationship in the world economy.*'[30] Even if cases *were* found that con-
firmed the rightness of this interpretation over the last five hundred years, it
is unclear in what sense a whole society can be said to be defined by
extraversion. Does this imply that documented cases of political and
military resistance to European power should be seen as exceptions to
the manipulation of a consciously accepted dependency? And how does
this paradigm apply to the lives of peasants, herders, slaves, concubines,
religious students, and seasonal migrants? Are the vagaries of their lived

Amin, 'Underdevelopment'; Wallerstein, *Modern World System*; Wallerstein, *Capitalist
World Economy*.

[26] For critical discussions of these theories, see Snyder, 'Law and development'; Cooper,
'Africa and the world economy,' pp. 3–8.

[27] Amin, 'Migrations in contemporary Africa', p. 31. Similar arguments have been advanced
by a large number of authors. See Painter, *Migrations*, p. 2; Main, 'Workers', p. 239;
Copans, 'Sahelian drought'; Watts, *Silent Violence*.

[28] This point has been vividly illustrated by Francois Manchuelle in *Willing Migrants*.

[29] Bayart, *State in Africa*, p. 27.   [30] Bayart, *State in Africa*, p. 27, my italics.

experience to be seen as determined by their rulers' strategic manoeuvring within their dependent relation with external powers?

Under the heading of extraversion Bayart lists phenomena as different as the transatlantic slave trade and contemporary international development. By highlighting what these phenomena supposedly have in common, that is, the instrumental use of an unequal relationship with international powers as a 'major resource in the process of political centralisation',[31] patterns of causation specific to different African regions, at different periods, and involving different social strata and groups, are lost. Like the dependency theories he criticises, Bayart ultimately sees the relation with the external world as the determining condition of African history: 'the paradigm of extraversion appears to capture the dynamic of a dependence which is, without doubt, the reality of sub-Saharan Africa'.[32] A similar position characterises Mbembe's work on what he calls the 'post-colony': 'from the fifteenth century, there is no longer a "distinctive historicity" of these societies, one not embedded in times and rhythms heavily conditioned by European domination'.[33] But could any society, at any moment in time, be said to have had a 'distinctive historicity' that was not influenced by (unequal) relations with the external world?

In the colonial period, and most clearly after the Second World War, the international politics of colonial and independent governments can be usefully analysed as forms of extraversion. Under colonial rule, this is hardly surprising, as West African subjects had to negotiate with the colonial order that was imposed upon them. They – like other dominated societies – often did so by trying to turn to their advantage their dependent relationship, although in many circumstances specific groups resorted to confrontation and resistance. Political independence left many African states in a relation of economic dependence upon former colonies and richer countries. This said, attempts to extend this framework to earlier periods are problematic, especially in the region considered in the present study.[34]

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[31] Bayart, *State in Africa*, p. 23.   [32] Bayart, 'Africa in the world', p. 234.
[33] Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, p. 9.
[34] Bayart mentions, in passing, some regions that cannot be included in his study. His formulation is not entirely clear as to whether the 'north of Nigeria' can or cannot be included: 'Apart from the fact that they demand their own problematisation, these facts make it impossible for us to include in our study, *if not the intermediate historical configurations of the politically centralised, socially hierarchical and culturally polarised complexes of the north of Nigeria*, of the Swahili coast or the area of the Great Lakes,

Neither Ader, nor Aïr, nor the Hausa areas integrated in the Sokoto
Caliphate, were insulated from global currents and events.[35] But Europe
did not play a major, let alone determinant, role in the history of these
regions before direct colonial occupation. The initial reaction of local
rulers towards Europe's representatives had been one of open hostility
and direct confrontation. In the case of many elite Tuareg groups this
attitude continued well into colonial rule. The Emir of Zinder told
Cazemajou's interpreter Badie Diara: 'I killed the two whites [Cazemajou
and Olive] because they were unbelievers [*keffirs*] and I do not want an
unbeliever to spoil [*souiller*] my country.'[36] The reply of the Sultan of
Sokoto to the British High Commissioner Lord Lugard leaves no doubt as
to the sultan's inclinations towards European endeavours in northern
Nigeria: 'I do not consent that any one from you should ever dwell with
us. I will never agree with you. Between us and you there are no dealings
except as between Mussulmans [sic] and Unbelievers [*Kafiri*]: War, as
God Almighty has enjoined on us.'[37] Hardly extraversion.

One might argue that the central Sahara and Sudan, by geographical
accident, were too distant from regions where European commercial
interests were more likely to establish extraverted relations with African
polities. But even in coastal West Africa, the nature of relations with
European political or commercial ventures – African dependence or
assertiveness – varied in time. It also varied with relative geographical
closeness to, and/or political affinity with, particular European represen-
tatives.[38] Generally, I am sceptical about historical interpretations that see
dependent relations with the external world as the dominant historical

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then at least some of the clearly atypical situations such as the Maghreb, Libya, Egypt and
the north of the Sudan (since the uncontested dominance of Islam has integrated them
into the Arab world), the Republic of South Africa (since it underwent a true industrial
revolution in the space of a century), Ethiopia and Madagascar (since these centralised
monarchies, having little to do with the kingdoms of the rest of the continent, rested on
different agrarian structures).' Bayart, *State in Africa*, p. 35, my italics.

[35] For example, slaves captured in the Sokoto jihad were sold across the Atlantic and played
a decisive role in the Male revolt in Bahia. Lovejoy, 'Background to Rebellion'; Reis,
Slave Rebellion. See also Adamu, 'Delivery of Slaves'.

[36] Report by Chief of Battalion Crave on the disaster of the Cazemajou Mission following
the declaration of the interpreter Badie Diara and other survivors of the mission, Ouaga-
dougou 20 August 1898, ANS 1G 222.

[37] Letter received about May 1902. Published in Hiskett, *Occupation of Hausaland*,
pp. 13–14.

[38] This, at least, is how I read Robin Law's detailed historical studies of African–European
relations in coastal West Africa, cf. Law, *Ouidah*; Law, 'Royal African Company'; Law,
'Abolition'.

'paradigm' of an entire sub-continent for five hundred years. There still is
a large amount of work to be done on the *microstoria* of African societies
and on internal political relations between African states and societies.[39]
This work is likely to highlight the relevance of internal causes for the
political history of specific African regions. And, inevitably, this will
nuance Bayart's generic emphasis on the determinant role of external
political relations in the long term of suspiciously undifferentiated 'Afri-
can' societies.

   African historiography has only just begun to answer Kwame
Nkrumah's call to explain African history in its own right.[40] This entails
looking at historical dynamics within specific African regions. To be sure,
at certain moments in time these dynamics were defined by foreign
domination: Islamic conquest in medieval north Africa yielded changes
possibly as profound and dramatic as European colonialism and, more
recently, developmentalism. It is undeniable that the tension between
foreign political institutions and indigenous ones deserves ad hoc analyt-
ical treatment. Political pluralism differs from contexts where 'the same
history inhabits both habitus and habitat, both dispositions and positions,
the king and his court, the employer and his firm, the bishop and his
see'.[41]

   In African Studies the notion of pluralism was developed in relation to
the cultural, political, and legal divide that separated colonial and indi-
genous constituencies.[42] A pluralist approach was progressively extended
to the analysis of ethnic pluralism *within* African social systems.[43] This
work yielded important contributions to the study of political systems in
the West African Sahel and is directly relevant to the history of Ader and
its multiple social constituencies.[44] Nevertheless, a pluralist approach that

[39] Tom McCaskie's work on Asante is exemplary; see particularly *Asante Identities*,
pp. 19–23.
[40] 'Our history needs to be written as the history of our societies, not as the story of
European adventures. African society must be treated as enjoying its own integrity; its
history must be a mirror of that society, and the European contact must find its place in
this history only as an African experience, even if as a crucial one.' Nkrumah, *Conscien-
cism*, p. 63. See also Boubacar Barry's response to Nkrumah's challenge, *Royaume du
Waalo*, pp. 55–64.
[41] Bourdieu, 'Men and machines', p. 306.
[42] See Furnivall, *Colonial Policy*; Gluckman, *Analysis of a Social Situation*; Mitchell,
Tribalism.
[43] See Kuper and Smith, *Pluralism in Africa*; Cohen and Middleton, *From Tribe to Nation*.
See also Roberts on the Middle Niger Valley, *Warriors, Merchants*.
[44] For example, Smith, *Government in Zazzau*; Whitaker, *Politics of Tradition*; Azarya,
Aristocrats.

examines the positions and perspectives of different categories of actors is not the same as a reductive binary opposition between an African 'distinctive historicity' and 'a generic colonialism – located somewhere between 1492 and the 1970s – [that] has been given the decisive role in shaping a post-colonial moment'.[45] The methodological implication of this way of reasoning is an essentialisation of 'coloniality' that silences internal relations and debates. Africans, irrespective of individual biography, are reduced to subjects locked in an existential dialectic with Europeans. A presumed 'duplicity' is seen to characterise relations between Europe and African societies,[46] as if such 'duplicity' did not characterise other types of interaction within African society and culture, for example between syncretic religious practice and official Islam.[47] Experience is local and individual, not generically 'European' and 'African', although some experiences may coincide across persons, groups, and regions.

These approaches are representative of an epistemological megalomania that is only capable of explaining 'Africa' in relation to historical institutions familiar to the exegete.[48] They obfuscate internal dynamics and the dialectic of change and continuity within any one time and place. This dialectic has been one of the main lines of inquiry of this book, for it exposes the changing positions of different groups and persons in relation to each other, the immediate environment, and relevant facets of the external world. I have suggested here that one of the tasks of African historiography is to explain these contextual positions, how they are experienced, negotiated, and transformed. To do so, it is less helpful to imagine that history follows abstract paradigms (of modernisation, dependence, extraversion), than to start from the experiences and perspectives of real people.

'We cannot have love without lovers, nor deference without squires and labourers',[49] and, we may add, we cannot have anti-colonial resistance without an old Tuareg nobility striving to retain its prerogatives; we cannot have emancipation without the slaves' fight to end their exploitation; we cannot have development without the developers' will to develop or the beneficiaries' acquiescence; we cannot have migrations

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45 Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, p. 13.
46 See, for example, Bayart, 'Africa in the world,' pp. 229–30; Mbembe, 'Provisional notes', pp. 3–37, p. 4; Bhabha, 'Of mimicry and man', pp. 125–33.
47 Cooper, 'Conflict and connection', p. 1527.
48 Cf. Mudimbe, *Invention of Africa*, p. 10. See also Chabal, *End of Conceit*.
49 Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, p. 8.

without migrants responding to the push of an arid land, the pull of
higher wages, the dream of a place where one's past can be temporarily
forgotten. These positions are not fixed. Slave descendants opportunistic-
ally retrieve the memory of forgone ties when they seek the patronage of
former masters, and the latter bury reminiscences of their past glory when
they need a favour from a Hausa mayor. Understanding what changes
and what does not, for whom, when, and why, requires placing experi-
ence at the centre of the analysis, while accounting for its material context
and ideological conditionings. From this perspective, even at the desert's
edge, dependence is not a destiny, but a positioned, contextual, and
reversible relationship.