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“Unresolved Colonial Bureaucracy Narratives in The Post-Colonial State: Rupture and Continuity Question”

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ABSTRACT

The emergency of colonialism in Africa generated numerous perspectives regarding the arguments that have been raised on the continuity of the colonial bureaucracy in the postcolonial state in terms of the present form, nature and organisation of the state as a replica of the colonial state through embracing African history and culture. In trying to deal with the question of the colonial legacy in the modern nation-state, nationalist historians have often emphasised the role of the colonial state in this process. To them, the postcolonial state cannot be understood without an analysis of the institutional colonial state¹. Mamdani points out the nature and logic of colonial and postcolonial power and argues that the latter is a replica of the former as far as bureaucratic institutions and processes are concerned.² The argument Mamdani makes is that the nature of the contemporary African state together with the politics in post-independence Africa including the bureaucracy is just a result of the institutional legacy that colonialism left behind.³ Mamdani points out the nature and logic of colonial and postcolonial power and how the latter is a replica of the former as far as bureaucratic institutions and processes are concerned. On the other hand, most recent scholarship has come out to challenge such a line of thinking by claiming that no single designation can be found to describe the period that follows the post-colonial era, as it is

¹ See for example Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, 2nd ed. (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2017); Mahmood Mamdani, *Define and Rule: Native as Political Identity*. Cambridge: Massachusetts/MISR, 2012).

² See Mamdani Mahmood (1996 [2017]). *Citizen and Subject*:

³ See Mamdani (1996 [2017]). *Citizen and Subject*; See also Mamdani Mahmood (2001). *Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identity: Overcoming the Political Legacy of Colonialism*, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Oct., 2001), pp. 651-664, Cambridge University Press

characterized by crosscurrents and contradictions. To them, just like the colonial state was a moment in the history of Africa, the post-colonial state should be seen in the same way. This line of thinking has argued that the postcolonial state ended in the 1990s due to the crisis that saw the African states and the power of most African governments weakened in this process.⁴ At the same time, Schneider Leander in her intervention in the debate on colonial bureaucracy in the postcolonial state, argues that there is an ardent need to be cautious of histories of development which deny colonial genealogies by creating boundaries between the exploitation of empire and humanitarian development. This paper, therefore, engages the two schools of thought to understand the nature of the post-colonial state. As such, the paper demonstrates the weakness of looking at world history as having just two temporalities i.e., the colonial and the postcolonial as if there is no pre-colonial or beyond the current postcolonial. Even the postcolonial itself is not universal and similar.

Keywords: Colonial Legacy, Postcolonial State, Colonial Bureaucracy, African State Formation, Postcolonial Theory.

Introduction

Almost everywhere, the colonial regime had articulated its agenda as one of civilisation, modernization, and development (Chabal, et al 2015). Ironically, the concepts were often forced onto the societies whose lives the colonialists wanted to improve. To actualise the colonial agenda, divisionism, exploitation, force, violence and utter cultural disintegration were repeatedly applied. Scholars who have consistently concerned themselves with the study of Africa continue to prove that the puzzling political trajectory of postcolonial Africa was pioneered by the colonial regime, and cannot have been solely birthed by the postcolonial period outside the legacies of colonialism. The militarism and militant leadership, corruption, ethnic and tribal rivalries, unimaginable violence, precarious democratic terrain, economic encumbrances and educational backfires have their history in the colonial interaction with the African region. To understand part of the problems of Africa, unravelling the colonial socio-political and socio-economic interaction with the empire is always imperative. Over six decades after independence, the colonial experience continues to plague the African states. Academicians emphasise the realisation of the colonial legacy in Africa. (Rodney 1972, Mamdani 1996).

⁴ See Crawford Young, (2004), The End of the Postcolonial State in Africa? Reflections on Changing African Political Dynamics, African Affairs, 103, 23-49

While most of the consulted rightly place the events in the debates on patrimonialism, developmentalism, tribal divisionism and ethnicity, militarism and violence in Africa, laying a background for a critique of the postcolonial state, many fail to pursue the critique but assume the opportunity to only read out charge sheets against the postcolonial regimes with little effort to question why the postcolonial state, born out of a nationalist movement, has come to sometimes acquire an even worse political image than the one created by the colonial regime to go beyond the colonial fingerprints [legacies]. In speech, strategy and action, the leaders that assumed political power in the successive years after the fall of the Union Jack, acted like their British predecessors or took over as compradors, consequently propagating the earlier inaugurated tribalism, ethnic divisionism, corruption, militarism, and political violence⁵, and presiding over an ailing externalised economy.

This paper investigates the politics and dynamics of the colonial bureaucracy in the postcolonial state. It tries to underscore the nature of the postcolonial state by questioning whether there are continuities and ruptures in the post-independence period that span from the colonial system and technology of administration and management. The paper argues that there is a need to pay closer attention to the different dynamics of power that shape the postcolonial state's practices and the different temporalities that shape its existence. Much as the postcolonial state can be fond of colonial continuities and so colonial legacies, I argue that we need to consider certain aspects outside the colonial bureaucratic practices. In other words, the postcolonial state constitutes both ruptures and continuities of the colonial logic of bureaucracy. Some of the problems and the form of rule of the postcolonial are far beyond the mere legacy of the colonial architect as they can be traced both to the precolonial and the postcolonial present or beyond. By doing that, the paper demonstrates the weakness of looking at world history as having just two temporalities i.e., the colonial and the postcolonial as if there is no pre-colonial or beyond the current postcolonial. Even the postcolonial itself is not universal and similar.

The paper begins by tracing some of the arguments that have been raised on the continuity of the colonial bureaucracy in the postcolonial state. It looks at how the present form, nature and organisation of the state is a replica of the colonial state. The second section examines how the dilemma of the postcolonial state beyond colonialism by embracing African history and culture. The paper then proceeds to reflect on some of the recent conceptualisation of the postcolonial itself. Some of the authors engaged in this section question how the postcolonial state is. Does it then mean we need to drop the postcolonial and forget the colonial and postcolonial moments and focus on something new? In so doing it questions whether the postcolonial state today needs to overcome the colonial past.

⁵ Mahmood Mamdani's bifurcated state is here too invoked

Situating The Past in the Present: A Debate on Colonial Continuities

The continuities and legacy debate has attributed the postcolonial problems [social, economic and political] to the historical legacy of colonialism and argue that there is a need to re-evaluate imperial rule and its “problematic history”. Decolonisation these scholars argue did not deal with colonialism fully instead left an inheritance that weakened efforts aimed at strengthening national unity, ensuring effective democratic and constitutional politics. These independent states got dwarfed right at birth [independence] given the continuity of colonial institutions and cultures. This section, therefore, delves into this debate on colonial continuities and argues that no doubt there is a colonial legacy and this has affected the operation of the post-independence state. The chief architect of this legacy debate is no doubt other than Mahmood Mamdani whose work has been so influential in recent years as he traced the African problems to the history of colonialism⁶

Mamdani’s book *Citizen and Subject* which has attracted numerous debates in the twenty-first century regarding colonial and postcolonial relations [rupture and continuity debates] has offered an explicit narrative on the colonial legacy in the postcolonial African state drawing on examples from Uganda and South Africa. Mamdani points out the nature and logic of colonial and postcolonial power and argues that the latter is a replica of the former as far as bureaucratic institutions and processes are concerned.⁷ The argument Mamdani makes is that the nature of the contemporary African state together with the politics in post-independence Africa—including the bureaucracy—is just a result of the institutional legacy that colonialism left behind.⁸ Mamdani argues that in trying to understand the bifurcated state as the legacy of colonialism, “political analysis cannot extrapolate the nature of power from an analysis of political economy” but instead must focus on “the organization and reorganization of power.”⁹ Other than focusing on political economy to understand this legacy, he invites us to think of the law. In other words, he offers a critique of the underdevelopment scholars like Walter Rodney who studied how colonialism exploited Africa in more economic terms but did not make any attempt to examine how colonialism governed or ruled Africa yet it was this technology of rule that facilitated the exploitation.¹⁰ The form of the postcolonial state was a bifurcation and as such, it was characterised by two domains of rule i.e. the civic and the customary with the former excluding the Africans and the latter making tribal Africans subjects of indirect rule despotic local state. This bifurcation was created by a chain of dualisms that set

⁶ Cf Mamdani Mahmood (1996 [2017]). *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Wits University Press and Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR): Johannesburg and Kampala

⁷ See Mamdani Mahmood (1996 [2017]). *Citizen and Subject*:

⁸ See Mamdani (1996 [2017]). *Citizen and Subject*; See also Mamdani Mahmood (2001). *Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identity: Overcoming the Political Legacy of Colonialism*, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Oct., 2001), pp. 651-664, Cambridge University Press

⁹ Mamdani, 2017, *Citizen and Subject*, p.23

¹⁰ Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*.

“customary law” against the discourse of “rights” in the legal realm, and despotic customary authority against a “modern state” on the institutional level. Such dichotomy for Mamdani created a dualism between the urban and the rural and earmarked Africans in the rural as native subjects who were organised into distinct tribes and subject to customary law and the Europeans who occupied the urban as modern subjects to modern civil law.¹¹ The despotic nature of colonial rule came due to such bifurcation and the end result was a local bureaucracy under customary power which was unaccountable to its subjects, with administrative and judicial power. What becomes interesting is that Mamdani’s notion of a bifurcated state is not uncommon to the postcolonial state as Mamdani argues that “the most important institutional legacy of colonial rule lies in the inherited impediments to democratization”¹² *after independence [emphasis added]*. Other than reforming and dismantling the bifurcated colonial state institutions, the postcolonial states reproduced part of the legacy and ended up creating their own varieties of despotism¹³

For Mamdani, the crucial question to ask about postcolonial bureaucracy and despotism is therefore, “How does this institutional inheritance, with its legally enforced distinctions between races and ethnicities, civil law and customary law, rights and customs, subject races and subject ethnicities, play out after colonialism?”¹⁴ The dilemma with the postcolonial state for Mamdani is three-fold:

I will speak of three postcolonial dilemmas. The first arises from the growing tendency for indigeneity to become the litmus test for rights under the postcolonial state, as under the colonial state. The second dilemma arises from the fact that we have built upon this foundation and turned indigeneity into a test for justice, and thus for entitlement under the postcolonial state. The third dilemma arises from the growing tendency to identify a colonially constructed regime of customary law with Africa’s authentic tradition.¹⁵

For Mamdani, the logic of the post-colonial state using indigeneity as a litmus paper for rights, which was a logic of the colonial state and that indigeneity has therefore been used to determine justice and so access to entitlements constitutes a problem that the post-independence African state faced¹⁶. Thus,

to understand why the link between indigeneity and rights continued to be reproduced after colonialism, we need to focus on the character of conservative—mainstream—nationalism. Mainstream nationalism shared with its radical counterpart a common effort to de-racialize civic rights. In contrast to militant

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Mamdani, 2017, p.25.

¹³ Mamdani, 2017, p.8

¹⁴ Mamdani Mahmood (2001). Beyond Settler and Native as Political Identity: Overcoming the Political Legacy of Colonialism, p.567

¹⁵ Mamdani Mahmood (2005). Political Identity, Citizenship and Ethnicity in Post-Colonial Africa. Arusha Conference, “*New Frontiers of Social Policy*” p.3; Mamdani, 2001, Beyond Settler and Native, p.657

¹⁶ Mamdani, 2001, Beyond Settler and Native, p.567.

nationalists who were determined to deethnicize the customary sphere, however, mainstream nationalists pledged to reproduce the customary as the authentic tradition of Africa. As a consequence, mainstream nationalists reproduced the dual legacy of colonialism. This time around, though, they hoped to privilege indigenous over nonindigenous¹⁷

As much as the attempt to deracialise rule was universal, the postcolonial state's attempt to reform the inheritance of the colonial bifurcated state followed two different yet incomplete trajectories i.e., "the conservative and the radical"¹⁸. If the former preserved the rule of chiefs and customary authority over ethnically defined realms, the latter sought to eliminate the ethnic divisions and so abolished and or under-looked the authority of chieftaincy. With the conservative trajectory, the nature of state power persisted for it relied on rule based on customary and despotic power of chiefs which Mamdani terms as "decentralised despotism" of the conservative regime. For the radical trajectory, there was a shift and the relevance of chiefs was disregarded along with a multitude of separate customary laws. Mamdani notes that "*the result, however, was [the development of] a uniform, countrywide customary law, applicable to all peasants regardless of ethnic affiliation, functioning alongside a modern law for urban dwellers*"¹⁹. In instances where the radical state is said to have dealt with the tribal question and removed it out of despotic rule, the bifurcated nature of the state remained with a division between the rural and the urban: with the urban having a deracialised civil society of citizens constituting the radical postcolonial state's reform ego while the rural remaining in a sense that the state [postcolonial] continued to treat the peasants as the prototype subject of despotic rule²⁰ just like the conservative state treated the prototype subject to bear an ethnic mark. By drawing on such history, Mamdani states that the colonial state created a history of "a new form of colonial governmentality born in the aftermath of the mid-nineteenth-century crisis of colonialism"²¹. Therefore, Mamdani shows how the postcolonial African state failed to democratise and to reform the colonial mode of indirect rule thus maintaining a continuity of the colonial bureaucratic system and institutions. The postcolonial state Mamdani argues has continued to envision the colonial bureaucratic management of difference and divisions²².

Drawing on the experience of India and Africa, Partha Chatterjee has tried to point to the continuities of the colonial in the postcolonial by arguing that "the colonial state, we must remember was not just the agency that brought the modular forms of the modern state to the colonies; it was also an agency that

¹⁷ Mamdani Mahmood (2005). Political Identity, Citizenship and Ethnicity in Post-Colonial Africa, p.9

¹⁸ Mamdani, 1996 [2017], Citizen and Subject, p.25; Also, Mamdani Mahmood (2005). Political Identity, Citizenship and Ethnicity in Post-Colonial Africa. Arusha Conference, "New Frontiers of Social Policy" – December 12-15, 2005

¹⁹ Mamdani, Citizen and Subject, p.25

²⁰ Ibid., p.26.

²¹ Cf Mamdani, 2005 p. 6.

²² Cf Mamdani, 2005.

was *never* destined to fulfil the normalizing mission of the modern state because the premise of its power was a rule of colonial *difference*, namely the preservation of the alienness of the ruling group.”²³ The end of colonialism did not bring an end to the colonial logic of rule by difference. Such a mode of rule was embraced in the postcolonial and continued to separate the new indigenous rulers from their people—i.e., rulers from the ruled.²⁴ The new nations formed found themselves lingering in the colonial legacy/continuity and so could find it hard to be independent as they had envisioned. Chatterjee adds that: “...the autonomous forms of imagination of the community were, and continue to be, overwhelmed and swamped by the history of the postcolonial state. Here lies the root of our postcolonial misery: not in our inability to think out new form of the modern community but in our surrender to the old forms of the modern state”.²⁵ Even in instances where the new institutional practices of the economy, polity but also the social in the post-independence state were becoming “disciplined and normalised” in what came to be known as “development and modernization”, he argues nationalism became relegated to particular histories of their colonialists.²⁶

Blanton et al. have stated that the postcolonial state has been confronted by differences in patterns of stratification based on the style of colonial administration which was practiced in the colonies. The colonialists left the colonies with systems of ethnic stratifications and these structural differences which were left behind have greatly affected the postcolonial state by being the source of conflicts which are ethnically based.²⁷ In the French colonies for instance, the distribution of resources, social-economic status, power and opportunities were unfair across the different ethnic groups during colonialism. Upon assuming power, the postcolonial elites used the colonial machinery of ethnic differentiation to “assert its hegemony within the postcolonial state”.²⁸

It would be naive to imagine that the continuity of the colonial can only be seen in terms of institutions and leadership but also through other different dimension like development studies. Uma Kothari offers a postcolonial critique to development studies by exploring the colonial antecedents of development studies through examining the lives and experiences of individuals with careers that go far in varying historical moments including colonial administration and development studies establishment.²⁹ She shows the

²³ Chatterjee Partha (1993) *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p.10

²⁴ Chatterjee, 1993, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, p.10

²⁵ Ibid., p.11

²⁶ Ibid., p.3

²⁷ Blanton Robert, Mason David and Athow Brian (2001). Colonial Style and Post-Colonial Ethnic Conflict in Africa. *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 38, No. 4, p.480.

²⁸ Blanton et. al, 2001, *Colonial Style*, p.480.

²⁹ Kothari Uma (2006). *From Colonial Administration to Development Studies: A Post-Colonial Critique of the History of Development Studies*, in Uma Kothari (ed) *A Radical History of Development Studies*. London: Zed Books, p.47

relationship between colonialism and development studies by engaging the historical relationship and colonial legacy of development studies. She argues that development studies is one way or the other colonialism because colonialism survives post-independence periods in form of political, social, economic and cultural relations and representations.³⁰ In other words, development studies is reminiscent of the colonial economic, social and political exploitation and domination. Colonialism and development for Kothari both embrace and articulate notions such as modernity and progress which terms were used to justify domination and exploitation.

She further argues that there is an ardent need to be cautious of histories of development which deny colonial genealogies by creating boundaries between exploitation of empire and humanitarian development. In other words, humanitarian development aid is itself colonisation and together with empire exploitation are one and the same. She calls upon researchers on development and development studies to go beyond 1945 as a starting point of development initiation since that would mean being ahistorical.³¹ He raises this argument based on the fact that development has been separated from the imperial project which attempt works to conceal the colonial history. This creates and maintains the divide between colonialism and development with the former being bad, exploitative and oppressive and the latter good, humanitarian and moralistic.³² This further hides the fact that development work has within it power and various forms of rule, authority, inequality and exploitation reminiscent to that in the colonial period and this has been a political project.

In order to illustrate her argument, she uses personal narratives for analysis claiming that previous researchers on the subject relied so much on institutional narratives. Using this approach made her conclude that former colonial officials transferred their skills and experiences from colonial period to the post-independence development. She argues that the individual and collective histories show that there were links between colonialism and development institutionally but these were later embedded in the personal.³³ Therefore, colonial continuities are borne in the experiences of colonial officers who later joined development studies when they travelled overseas from Europe. In order to avoid generalisations of the colonial continuities in development and making the whole experience look homogenised, she uses individual experiences to illuminate how the development industry works between in and against the

³⁰ Kothari Uma (2006). From Colonial Administration to Development Studies, p.49

³¹ Kothari, 2006, p.50

³² Kothari, 2006, p.51

³³ Kothari, 2006, p.55

colonial past.³⁴ This does not only challenge the official colonial accounts but also the orthodox history of development.

Bernhard et al. (2004) have argued that since underdevelopment is directly associated with colonialism and the ardent correlation between higher levels of development and democratic stability, postcolonial governments can hardly maintain democracy. The reason given is that colonialism creates “patterns of development that often leave countries highly dependent on exports from monocrop agriculture or resource-extractive industry”.³⁵ This leaves postcolonial economies exposed to volatile prices for primary goods on the world market. Not only are the postcolonial states affected in terms of development and economic aspects, even postcolonial ethnic and religious fragmentation has its roots from the colonial fragmentation. This is because the territorial boundaries drawn by the colonial state to serve administrative and military affairs still spilt over to the postcolonial state.³⁶ This is very true in the African context as he writes that, “some large ethnic groups were split between colonial states, while others with little in common, save in some instances a history of warfare and enmity, were drawn together into the new state boundaries”.³⁷ The question of social fragmentation in the postcolonial state Bernhard et al. argue became complicated given that colonial rule was built upon status differentiation and economic stratification based on ethnic divisions.³⁸ The colonial legacy they argue left behind elites and populations which were not prepared for democracy and this would have a negative impact on the postcolonial bureaucratic operations. This means that the colonial continuities are very visible in the postcolonial elites, structures of power and populations. The nature of the postcolonial state which they describe as being predatory is to be blamed on nothing but colonialism. The “authoritarian nature of the state” in Africa during colonialism was carried over to the postcolonial period.³⁹

Njoku (2005) in trying to understand the source of Africa’s modern state of corruption especially in the public service points to the conclusion that Uma Kothari makes. His conclusion is that high corruption tendencies in Africa today is due to the fact that the leaders are colonial elites whose mode of rule is borrowed from the colonial period. The colonial state he argues had socio-political practices which were malicious and such bred the habits of corruption in the public service in contemporary Africa.⁴⁰ This

³⁴ Ibid., p.62

³⁵ Bernhard et al., (2004). The Legacy of Western Overseas Colonialism on Democratic Survival, *International Studies Quarterly* (2004) 48, p.229

³⁶ Bernhard et al., (2004). The Legacy of Western Overseas Colonialism on Democratic Survival, p.229

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Njoku, Uzochukwu J. (2005) “Colonial Political Re-Engineering and the Genesis of Modern Corruption in African Public Service: The Issue of the Warrant Chiefs of South Eastern Nigeria as a Case in Point.” *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 14(1), p.99

conclusion portrays a message that the corruption we are seeing today in the bureaucratic and political institutions exhibited by leaders is nothing but a continuation of the colonial policies and administration. But to ask Njoku a question, don't African leaders have any agency in the corruption practices they indulge in? He does not only show that he disagrees with the debate on the agency of the postcolonial leaders in the acts they do but also fails to acknowledge that there is a debate which exists and points to the agency of the indigenous intellectuals and leaders thus being blind to the agency debate.

In fact, Fanon in his insightful book *The Wretched of the Earth* argued that the African nationalist that took over power from the colonialists just wanted to change guards, not to change the status quo of the colonial regime but to replace and take over their position and privileges (Fanon, 1961). Fanon's evocation suggests that the focus was not on changing the colonial mode of rule nor doing away with it completely for that sake but on becoming new colonisers and beneficiaries. This kind of leadership cannot front a vision of reforming the state—its orientation, composition, nature and form and commit to it but can only focus on sharing the benefit of the national cake.

Away from the colonial vestige: Reflections on the postcolonial ruptures

The legacy [what I call continuity] argument has been critiqued by thinkers who do not attribute the bureaucratic undertakings and challenges of the postcolonial state to colonial legacy but to factors internal to the African state within the postcolonial and precolonial periods. The continuity debate has been charged and indicted for being ahistorical by paying attention to the near history of colonialism and not going deep into the precolonial period. Richard Reid has argued that postcolonial scholars have not paid sufficient attention to precolonial Africa.⁴¹ Similar arguments have been made by numerous scholars including Jan Vansina, and Ballantyne Tony among others. For instance, Ballantyne has in the conclusion of his 2010 article titled *The Changing Shape of the Modern British Empire and Its Historiography* expressed disappointment in the way the postcolonial scholars and scholars of empire emphasise the colonial and postcolonial as if there is no pre-colonial. He argues that there is a “tendency for some works within the field to offer a thin treatment of pre-colonial social structures, economic practices, and mentalities”.⁴² There is a need to go beyond the colonial periods and traverse the pre-colonial histories and pre-colonial life in order to

⁴¹ Reid Richard (2011), Past and Presentism: *The 'Precolonial' and the Foreshortening of African History*,” *The Journal of African History* 52 (2011): p.135–155

⁴² Ballantyne Tony (2010). *The Changing Shape of the Modern British Empire and Its Historiography*,” *The Historical Journal* 53 (2010), p.451.

...identify the anchor points bridgeheads upon which colonial power was built. If the social structure, relations, cultural practices, and the pre-existing patterns of social change colonized communities are not fully countenanced or even discounted, produce readings of colonialism that can easily misread the extent to changed things. But this omission also allows historians to see as always being the primary historical actors, unfettered and unchanged communities they interacted with the ways in which colonial regimes were forced to certain indigenous beliefs and practices, even as they worked to suppress elements of local culture, contain descent and reshape the socio-economic order”⁴³

Studying empire for him calls for putting a limit to earmarking colonialism as a tool to explain the postcolonial conditions but also being able to identify boundaries to colonial power. This means that colonialism is not an end in itself when it comes to understanding the colonial bureaucracy in the postcolonial state. If the postcolonial is not taken into consideration it would amount to a misrepresentation of how colonialism actually changed things. And this neglect for him “also allows historians to see the British as always being the primary historical actors, unfettered and unchanged by the communities they interacted with and ruled over”.⁴⁴ In other-word there can be an exaggeration of the colonial contribution to the postcolonial state craft. It is for this reason that Johnson Douglas offered a critique to Mamdani by arguing that European colonialists found themselves having to adapt to already existing structures and mentalities of power and behaviours just like the rulers that came after ‘decolonisation’. For him, Mamdani assumed that the people of Sudan “are a *tabula rasa* on which external powers can inscribe their own vision. The reality of the colonial encounter in the Nile valley suggests otherwise, that the colonial power adopted indigenous categories and terms to describe the peoples it governed.”⁴⁵

Even when the postcolonial logic of rule based on ethnic stratification is theorised, it is always attributed to the colonial. This position has seen criticism from many scholars for instance Terence Ranger in his *Invention of Tradition Revisited* trying to revisit his earlier argument in which he—just like Mamdani and many others—had argued that tradition was invented by the colonialists as a tool to govern, manage and administer the colony.

Ranger, in his revised thesis, argued that the colonial invention of tradition and customary law “was less than fully hegemonic”.⁴⁶ Ranger has suggested that the notion of the invention was misleading and

⁴³ Ballantyne, 2010, *The Changing Shape of the Modern British Empire*, p.451-2

⁴⁴ Ballantyne, 2010, p.452.

⁴⁵ Johnson Douglas (2009). Mamdani’s ‘Settlers,’ ‘Natives,’ and the War on Terror, *African Affairs* 108 (2009), p.655.

⁴⁶ Ranger Terence (1993). *The invention of Tradition Revisited: The Case of Africa*, in Terence Ranger and Olufemi Vaughan (eds.) *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

simplistic if related to the process that unfolded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century after receiving rounds of criticism by some of his reviewers in a decade period and getting inspiration from other schools of thought. Contrary to the invention of tradition, he argues that there were numerous imaginations of power and these were in contestation with each other. Drawing on the works of Benedict Anderson, Ranger shows that some traditions in colonial Africa were possibly invented by individuals and not the colonial state. But for customary law and ethnicity, there was just imagination and not invention.⁴⁷ For Ranger, there was a huge role in the imagination of ethnicity by young migrant workers and mission-educated catechists⁴⁸. “Chiefs and young literates in combination imagined ethnicity all over British Africa, as chiefs who could no longer carve out conquest polities for themselves over coerced strangers sought to legitimate their dominance of colonial local government by means of the invocation of the immemorial solidarities of the tribe, and the young literate sought to modernise rural politics as advisers and councillors to 'tribal' rulers”.⁴⁹ Customary law, evolved with the aid of the African agency. Far from being an invention, customary law and so tradition offered space for debate, and contestation regarding issues like social morality, advancement and citizenship. This argument is very interesting because it tries to show that the colonial project was not a unidirectional process with Africans just being forced into subjectification but rather a multidirectional one with them as contributors who took advantage to access resources, engage with and maintain power. The postcolonial state has been presented as if there is no agency of the Africans themselves, yet the colonial state which is said to have left a legacy had complex systems and complicated interactions in where the colonised participated. It wasn't so absolute a state with powers to oppress the natives while the latter just consented. It may not, therefore, be plausible to consider it to be despotic despotism as Mamdani consider it to be but had complexities with an extended room of native agency.⁵⁰ Therefore, to them, African elites and some leaders found colonialism politically desirable and/or useful.

Through examining the experience of Tanzania Schneider Leander (2006) tries to draw our attention away from assuming that the postcolonial works on the blueprint offered by the colonial. His thesis is in form of a critique directed to Mahmood Mamdani especially his arguments in citizen and subject on post-independence authoritarianism in Africa that attributes the African citizen crisis to the institutional legacy of colonialism. He argues that connections to colonial times did exist in the frame of legitimation which

⁴⁷ Terence 1993, *The invention of Tradition Revisited*, p.80.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.83

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.86

⁵⁰ For more about agency, see Benjamin N. Lawrance, Emily Lynn Osborn, and Richard L. Roberts (2006), eds., *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks: African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press; Jonathon Glassman (2011). *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press; Bruce S. Hall, (2012). *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600–1960*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012; Sarah Berry (1992), *Hegemony on a Shoe String: Indirect Rule and Access to Agricultural Land*, *Africa* 62 (3) 327-355 etc.

worked to underpin the frequent authoritarian actions of post-independence Tanzanian state.⁵¹ He divides the connection in two ways i.e., the continued existence of paternalism vis-à-vis their subjects “that characterized the political imagination of state elites”, and that the colonial experience just offered a “blue print for creation of a deeply Manichean discourse and practice of politics after independence”.⁵² Embracing an institutionalist perspective and approach is good but insufficient if one is to understand the postcolonial dilemma. This is because, such an approach is narrow in focus and concentrates on “nominal, legal and administrative structures” which may obscure the understanding of the “nature of power”.⁵³ For him, overreliance on colonial blueprints’ legal-institutional structures to explain the nature of power is not only problematic but also misleading. This is because, “it focuses too heavily on official blueprints to the neglect of actually emerging formal institutional structures (nominalism), and it leans too heavily on institutions, narrowly conceived, in a context in which these frequently cannot explain political practice (misplaced institutionalism)”.⁵⁴ The Tanzanian case offers a divergent explanation because the structure of indirect rule was not very successful since the established customary authorities “seemed ineffective agents of ‘progressive’ policies”.⁵⁵ By the year 1963, it is claimed that the local chiefs had retired and native authority abolished, later to be replaced by elected councillors.⁵⁶ Two important episodes explain this rupture i.e., villagisation and development. Villagisation which impacted negatively on the people through the destruction of property, imprisonment, threats etc. wasn’t a colonial construct and cannot be attributed to the colonial legacy. This is due to the fact that wasn’t supported by any law nor was it shaped by the legal institutional and legislative structures of the state.⁵⁷ Same happened with development which the author argues became key in treating Tanzanian populations as subjects. Much as the notion of development connected the colonial and postcolonial states since they shared the same ideology to entrench their rule, the postcolonial development was an imagination of the elites than the state. All these are considered to have been political imaginations of the state elites than colonial continuities.⁵⁸ He argues that the postcolonial policies in Tanzania of ujaama and development were

⁵¹ Schneider Leander (2006), Colonial Legacies and Postcolonial Authoritarianism in Tanzania: Connects and Disconnects. *African Studies Review*, Vol. 49, No. 1, p.94

⁵² Schneider Leander (2006), Colonial Legacies and Postcolonial Authoritarianism in Tanzania: Connects and Disconnects. *African Studies Review*, Vol. 49, No. 1, p.94

⁵³ Schneider, 2006, Colonial Legacies and Postcolonial Authoritarianism in Tanzania, p.95

⁵⁴ Schneider, 2006, p.95

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.100

⁵⁶ Schneider, 2006, p.102.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.106

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.106-7

“deeply paternalistic imagination that constructed the state, with its philosopher president at the helm, as the only authority competent to make judgments about the lives of a "backward" population”.⁵⁹

In responding to the dependency and the postcolonial schools, Jean Francois Bayart and Ellis make an argument that Africa has a culture of extraversion and this is what is causing problems for the postcolonial state, unlike the legacy of the colonial state and its bureaucracy. Understanding this extraversion calls for deeper historical engagement. Their use of extraversion [External] to me seems to show that focus should be put on analysing how Africans participated in the shaping of their foreign relations and the way they deal with the external forces. Therefore, to them, African elites and some leaders found dependency politically desirable and/or useful. Their concern with the African elites is that these have in different periods adopted numerous strategies in the way they engaged with the external forces who did not have means to compel them to for instance sell slaves. They state that “whatever the particular case, the operation of a colonial regime was accompanied by a significant mobilization of the societies which it held in subjection, whether because government policy coincided with the strategies of various indigenous actors and was effectively co-opted by the latter or whether it went against the interests of such local actors and gave rise to more or less resistance”.⁶⁰ In other words, they are arguing that there is no legacy and no colonial influence on the postcolonial state. The African postcolonial state to Bayart and Ellis has not been liberated—this liberation is not liberation from the colonial legacy but liberation from the African precolonial past and culture.⁶¹ The African postcolonial condition therefore can only be blamed on the Africans themselves other than on colonial continuities due to the continuities of their precolonial cultures. The basis for making such an argument is that the colonial state was such a weak state to change the influence culture had on the operations of the state.⁶² It wasn't only weak politically but also economically and culturally. We cannot therefore talk of colonial legacies as a sole source of postcolonial problems as if there were no internal contradictions in the colonial state. In other words, the colonial regime was less powerful and had less influence therefore complex. It therefore needed the collaboration of the African natives in order for it to accomplish its tasks.

In line with Bayart and Ellis, Jonathan Glassman offers a similar nuanced argument that tries to reduce the responsibility attributed to the colonialists in shaping the postcolonial bureaucracy and activities. His argument is reproduced in the quote below:

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.107

⁶⁰ Jean-François Bayart and Stephen Ellis (2000), Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion. *African Affairs*, Vol. 99, No. 395, p.221-2

⁶¹ Bayart and Ellis, 2000, Africa in the World.

⁶² Ibid.

Moreover, their propagation and politicization in twentieth-century Rwanda had relatively little to do with colonial law. Rather, those processes were the product of Tutsi intellectuals - undertaken while in communication with European educators, to be sure, but as part of their own political projects and never consisting of simple reflections of colonial categories...In the case of Zanzibar, one obstacle to recognizing the role of inherited discourses of nativism and exogenous power has been a tendency to approach the Swahili coast as an example of a 'cosmopolitan' or 'creolized' culture, and to romanticize such cultures as being inherently at odds with nativist essentialism.⁶³

From the foregoing, we cannot focus on tracing legacies of the colonial state as if it was such a strong, oppressive state which influenced all colonial operations but we should look for collaborations, contestations, agency and connectivity. In the words of David Scott, we need to rethink colonial legacy by thinking about colonialism as not simply negative and not unproductive but the other way around. This is because colonialism creates conditions for the creation of a different kind of agency⁶⁴. But the above line of thinking may be a little bit problematic because it doesn't analyse what shaped the agency of the natives to participate and collaborate in the colonial project. It takes also the interests of the intellectuals for granted as if all natives participated because they had similar interests. This also applies to the postcolonial elites who became leaders, their interests were not universal. Was it not the structure which shaped their agency?

It is in this line that Sandbrook⁶⁵ in his book *the Politics of Africa's Economic Stagnation* says that the states in Africa are “overwhelmed by their own incoherence, indiscipline and shrinking fiscal base”.⁶⁶ And we cannot blame this on just the colonial but on the lack of strong classes within which could help discipline the state and make it responsive. He writes that:

...in the succeeding two chapters we will show how political weaknesses are rooted in particular historical and social conditions. In Africa, the relationship between state and society differs markedly from that in the early stages of capitalist development in the West or Japan⁶⁷

He blames all the weaknesses of the African state on the system of personal rule other than the legacy of colonial bureaucracy:

⁶³ Glassman Jonathan (2014), Creole Nationalist and the Search for Nativist Authenticity in Twentieth Century Zanzibar: The Limits of Cosmopolitanism”, *Journal of African History*, 55, p.230.

⁶⁴ David Scott (2004) *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, p.92-95

⁶⁵ Sandbrook, Richard (1985), *The Politics of Africa's Economic Stagnation*. New York: Cambridge University Press

⁶⁶ Sandbrook, 1985, *The Politics of Africa's Economic Stagnation*, p.38.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Decay of political and administrative institutions in a system of personal rule is not, however, inevitable. A leader with exceptional political skills and a long-sighted strategy can contain the destructive aspects of neopatrimonialism. The Ivory Coast is a case in point.⁶⁸

The personal relations that the people have with the leaders determine the allocations and distributions of resources and privileges. He envisions a continuation of this system of neo-patrimonial rule in Africa⁶⁹ despite the continent showing some potential of having nationalist leaders citing the example of Kenyatta of Kenya. So, all in all, Sandbrook explains the African crisis as one caused by this system of rule based on personal and tribal relations with these relations being the major source of corruption by state officials and politicians. But were these tendencies not breeding in the colonial given the system and structure of rule which shaped the postcolonial leaders? Take the example of Uganda where chiefs were given rewards to work for the colonial state, isn't this the source of corruption tendencies?

The postcolonial state reimagined: Some Reflections

The legacy and continuity should not blind us to other realities and possibilities that underpin the postcolonial state more particularly the logic of the state. There should be a broader analysis beyond ruptures and continuities to focus on the state, the dynamics that shape it, and the multiplicity of temporalities beyond the colonial and present. Fredrick Cooper has argued that over-emphasis on the colonial past and looking for explanations from the colonial legacy poses a threat of both misunderstanding the past and limiting the possibilities and alternatives for the future.⁷⁰ Bezabeh contends that “if we look not at the state form, but at the common dominator that creates similarity between African and European states, namely the presence of a sovereign power that ultimately takes decisions, the problem of citizenship in Africa becomes not something that can be attributed simply to the state form; one must also consider the logic of sovereignty that exists in each state, irrespective of its institutional form and development”.⁷¹ He invites us to think less about the structure of the state and focus on the logic in order to understand the state more broadly. This would imply that people look at the state differently, i.e., some can look at the structure, some the form while others the logic and practice. He directs his argument to the work of Partha Chatterjee who evoked that the postcolonial state operates “on a process normalization while the colonial state uses the logic of difference in its rule”.⁷² But his empirical evidence from Djibouti suggests a different conclusion where the popular sovereignty and the

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.119

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.155

⁷⁰ Cooper Frederick (2008). Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective, *The Journal of African History* 49 (2008): p.167–196.

⁷¹ Bezabeh Samson (2011). Citizenship and the Logic of Sovereignty n Djibouti. *African Affairs*, 110/441, p.591

⁷² Bezabeh, 2011, Citizenship and the logic of sovereignty, p.589

political legal facts that are used to express this sovereignty have not produced a citizenry of equals”.⁷³ For him when we think of the nation and the process of citizenship, we can see that it has been just like the ‘heterogeneous construct of the social’.⁷⁴ His analysis attributes the citizenship question to the logic of sovereignty and the state and not the peculiarity of the African state. Therefore, for him, linking the problems of the postcolonial African state to the legacy of colonial rule would risk presenting Africa as “an ever-present colonial appendage”.⁷⁵ We should move beyond looking at the postcolonial from the vantage point of the colonial bureaucratic past to widely looking at the structure of the world including the “modern nation-state”.⁷⁶ This does not mean we abandon the legacy but broaden our thinking beyond just colonialism.

Another important argument worth reflecting on is that the postcolonial state is what I call the unthinkable in the present period. Such an argument can be found in the scholarship of Crawford Young, David Scott and Sandbrook. The argument is that there is no postcolonial state and so no need to talk about colonial legacies. Crawford Young argued that when African countries acquired independence, the African political scientists realised the concept of a postcolonial state handy. The postcolonial state was used to mean a state which had similar attributes to the colonial state but for him, we cannot think of the postcolonial state as it were at the time and so we need to have a different reading of it given the change in the features as time went by.

Young argues that the postcolonial state ended in the 1990s and this was due to the crisis that saw the African states and the power of most African governments weakened. Documenting the different trends that happened in the postcolonial right from the period that spanned the colonial, he invites us to rethink the term post-colonial terminology because it is 4 decades ever since countries acquired independence and he asks whether “the designation postcolonial remains serviceable”.⁷⁷ The notion of post-colonial has continued to be used to refer to the African political world despite the fact that there is little if any hegemonic apparatus which is left in the majority of the African post-independence countries that African rulers inherited from the colonial administration. Crawford Young’s portrayal of the colonial state as *bula matari*, the ‘breaker of rocks’, a term that Congolese peoples used to describe the brute force of the Congo Free State and its successor regimes. While few historians would query the brutality and venality of the Congo Free State, they are inclined to see the exertion of colonial power generally as somewhat more erratic and uneven. He argues that the legacy of the colonial state in Africa he argues defined the

⁷³ Bezabeh, 2011, p.590

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Bezabeh, 2011, p.606

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Crawford Young, p.24

postcolonial state in a number of ways. According to Young African colonial states were characterized by unique features i.e., since the Berlin Conference in 1884-1885, metropolitan parliament pushed for fiscal self-sufficiency of the colonies which led to the imposition of head taxes and fiscal extractions in kind that forced people to switch for subsistence agriculture to cash agriculture in order to have the means to pay them.⁷⁸ By the end of the 1970s it became clear that the post-colonial state was facing a systematic crisis. Crawford Young shows that numerous factors including the structural adjustment programmes brought about this crisis. The post-colonial state found itself in a situation where it couldn't control the market due to hostile international development economics and international financial institutions fostering it.⁷⁹ This was coupled with the ever-growing parastatals owned by the state and high levels of corruption which came as a result of the state itself.⁸⁰ So, the political and economic encounters in the African postcolonial state became not feasible given the changing global environment. By the end of the 1990s, most African countries were pushed into rapid democratisation and marketization.⁸¹ Given the level of openness that came up due to neoliberal policies which came as a result of the international demand for political reform as a condition for aid, the democratization saw the African postcolonial state face numerous criticisms from the public with new demands from the population despite not being able to meet them. Through describing the state action beginning from the colonial period to the neoliberal period of the 1990s, Young is trying to point to the fact that we cannot think of just the colonial and early post-independence periods in understanding the postcolonial state. In other words, he is offering us a reading that invites us to think of history as being constitutive of multiple temporalities. He points to the conflicts and overthrows that happened in Africa internally i.e., 8 times the government overthrows in the 1990s and such saw the end of the period of postcolonial ushering in a new one.

According to Young, no single designation can be found to describe the period that follows the post-colonial era, as it is characterized by crosscurrents and contradictions. He argues that just like the colonial state was a moment in the history of Africa, three post-colonial states should be seen in the same way. The post-colonial description has eroded given the “tides of globalization wash over the continent, depositing sedimentary layers of social exposure and economic impact” and the “rise of significant diaspora populations from many countries produces novel forms of international linkage” making them reform into institutional forms, political patterns and social memory⁸². This makes him reach the conclusion that the postcolonial moment has ended meaning we are no longer leaving in a postcolonial moment and we should think of something else. By claiming the postcolonial state came to an end, it

⁷⁸ Crawford Young, p.26

⁷⁹ Crawford Young, p.38

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.39

⁸¹ Ibid., p.41

⁸² Ibid., p.49

means that it was like just a moment or an event that would come and go and something new would come in to replace it but the next if the postcolonial designation is dropped is not offered in the reading. By saying that, he equally shows that we can move away from writings which treat the colonial as ever-existing and never will it come to an end. But his saying that the postcolonial state came to an end means that we can now be beginning theorising about the future beyond the postcolonial and beyond the parameters set by colonialism. Young tries to detach the colonial legacy from the postcolonial present and its influence on the future by saying that it ended in the 1990s with a crisis of the time. Much as he shows us that we can have multiple temporalities and we should theorise them including the future, it doesn't mean that we should ignore the previous temporalities when theorising the present and future because they can still have an influence. We cannot say the postcolonial ended when we still have institutions of the colonial rule so the legacy exists despite.

This very argument like Young is raised by David Scott in his book *Conscripts of Modernity* when he says that the postcolonial should be viewed as a nightmare. His problem is much more with the relation between the conceptualisation of the postcolonial present and the way the past was constructed and the future imagined.⁸³ His central thesis is summarised as:

my principal concern is with our own postcolonial present, our present after the collapse of the social and political hopes that went into the anticolonial imagining and postcolonial making of national sovereignties. This is our present, as I have put it elsewhere, after Bandung. My concern is with the relation between this (as it seems to me) dead-end present and, on the one hand, the old utopian futures that inspired and for a long time sustained it and, on the other, an imagined idiom of future futures that might reanimate this present and even engender in it new and unexpected horizons of transformative possibility.⁸⁴

The present for him is a dead end, what seemed to be the hopes of the postcolonial ended up into a nightmare. By considering the postcolonial present as a dead end, he shows that there is temporal perplexity in which the anticolonial pasts which were used to imagine the future cannot offer solutions to the new demands of the postcolonial present.

Scott offers a critique to postcolonial scholars who considered anticolonial scholars to be essentialists along with their debates. He says that they take the human experiences to be understood as constructive and structural but not primordial. For him, these postcolonial thinkers are not any different from the

⁸³ David Scott (2004) *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, p.1

⁸⁴ Scott, 2004, *Conscripts of Modernity*, p.1

anticolonial scholars because they only criticise the answers offered by the anticolonial writers but maintain the questions they were grappling with and so the vision. In other words, the postcolonial needs to be rethought and the future reimagined based on new demands, not the old ones.

The lesson we learn from this kind of theorization is that colonialism is all-encompassing. If modernity and colonialism are two sides of the same coin, then there is not much sense in beginning to question the importance of colonialism shaping present realities. Therefore, we not only have continuities of the colonial administration (bureaucracy) in the postcolonial state but we are living in the current world earmarked by recolonizations of post-colonial leaders of not only power but also knowledge, culture, economic exploitation, sexual and spiritual among others. Rethinking colonial relations means rethinking the postcolonial conceptualisation so well. This means the postcolonial moment calls for a different envisioning, maybe call it something else and not postcolonial, maybe consider it a condition of “colonialism beyond colonialism!

Conclusion

In this paper, I have engaged the debate on the nature and form of the postcolonial state. Its focus was on understanding the link the postcolonial has with the colonial period, practice, system and institutions in the aftermath of the empire. Through engaging the different debates [including postcolonial school, neo-patrimonial school, dependency school etc., the paper has shown that as society advances, there are always continuities and ruptures since we cannot assume a solid break from the past in a monolith direction. The paper argues that we should put into consideration the different temporalities, different moments, and different practices which shape the way the postcolonial state operates and the way it is imagined and reimagined both in time and space. This is because focusing on a single or few temporalities while ignoring others can result in bracketing other temporalities and other possibilities. The paper suggests that we should go beyond looking at the postcolonial state in form of colonial legacy and postcolonial present to looking at more dynamic aspects like the precolonial, the future and how it shapes the present, culture, context and international interactions. This is when we can actually understand the postcolonial. I suggest this because even the postcolonial is not universal across the formerly colonised world as there are some particularities.

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