Africa in the Colonial Horizon of Western Modernity (1652–2000)

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Should a writer just sit in a room churning out novels to be sold in the United States, or become a wandering minstrel? None of these cities are sacred to us, they cannot be—New York, Paris, London, Lisbon—they are other peoples' cities, so when we as African writers look at them they are all primarily colonial centers, and now they are also places for us to meet.

Ama Ata Aidoo (1993).

Se conoce para vivir y no por el mero hecho de conocer (Knowing is for living and not for the mere fact of knowing).

Gunther Rodolfo Kusch (2008, p. 89).

I would like to take this opportunity to honor the legacy of Valentin Y. Mudimbe's The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge (1988). There are a few reasons I am taking this route. One reason is the many conversations we have had since I joined Duke University in 1993 and what I have learned from his argument that Africa was and is an invention of the Western imaginary. The second is that I would like to position his thesis in productive dialogue with Edmundo O'Gorman's La invención de América: El universalismo de la cultura de Occidente (1958). For Mudimbe, Michel Foucault was a guiding source of his argument. For O'Gorman it was Martin Heidegger. Both are linked by the geo-political legacies of coloniality, confronting philosophy with gnosis (wisdom is more than knowledge) in the first case, and reducing Western universalism to its true size in the second. Both struggled with the totalitarian totality of knowledge and the colonial legacies of Western modernity and civilization. Both reveal that responding to the Eurocentrism of philosophy in the first case and to Western historical universalism in the second does not mean returning to a pristine past, but rather moving forward in the present to and through decolonial reconstitutions of the destituted. These are the only chances we have now. It means being grounded in the spiritual soils

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of local material histories, a soil that could also be the mobile and nomadic experiences of migrants and refugees. Though Mudimbe's work is rooted in the African experience and O'Gorman's in those of the Americas (not to be confused with the US), neither insight is closed within borders or bound in time: for them as well as us, the past is gone and the future doesn't exist"[1].

In Africa and the Americas, the processes of reconstitution follow different paths to confront a common intruder that arrived at different times in different places. First Nations and diasporic Africans were (next to diasporic Europeans) constitutive demographics of America from 1500 to 1800. Consequently, different trajectories engaging gnoseological (knowing) and aesthesic (sensing) reconstitution have emerged on account of the specificities of each local history invaded, intruded or interfered with through Western expansion and its machinery of destitution. The reconstitution of the destituted is underway today on the planet built on local histories, languages, memories and praxis of living, which includes the growing involvement of migrants and diasporic communities, particularly in former Western Europe and the US. The planetary diversity of these processes have one element in common: they respond to intervention and interferences of coloniality hidden under the banner of modernity. I see this journal, and the initiatives behind it, as one case in point. The era of the abstract universal is still there but crumbling; the era of pluriversality and multipolarity is rising.

Introduction

The image of Africa in the colonial horizon of modernity came to me, although not yet conceptualized as such, during the years investigating and writing The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality and Colonization (1995). It came to me effortlessly in two ways. First, it was connected to the last two chapters of the book devoted to exposing the inventing of the global distribution of land mass and water by naming the four continents (Africa, Asia, America and Europe). I stress invention to detach myself from the long-held belief that the map represents the territory and the idea that when planet earth first appeared in the West in the concept of the solar system and in the scene of the universe, it was already made with the four said continents and the major oceans (named Indian, Mediterranean, Atlantic and Pacific in Western cartography). The well-known world maps of Gerardus Mercator and Abraham Ortelius (orbis terrarium) stamped the image of these four continents and water masses into our collective imagination, consolidating the idea that the planet is what the maps say it is. The map makers, printers, distributors and users did not say, "This is what we think the planet looks like," but presumed what they believed it to be, it was just that. In an article I published in 1993, "Misunderstanding and Colonization," I wrote the following:

> The very idea that land and people unknown to a European observer constituted a "new" world only because the observer in question did not know about it brings to the foreground the larger issue of the arrogance and ethnocentrism of an observer for whom what is unknown doesn't exist.

Mudimbe's Invention struck a chord. I sensed that Mudimbe faced some concerns, which he did address by producing the African archive and covering the memories of French and British colonization. I felt in Mudimbe's argument as though I had a traveling companion: we did not know each other then, yet we walked in the same direction, following the paths of our own local histories, confronting global designs. Echoes of his book were also heard in the contemporaneously published Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Decolonising the Mind (1986), and even more so the argument of Mexican-Irish historian and philosopher Edmundo O'Gorman published three decades before. O'Gorman's 1958 landmark book La invención de América: El universalismo de la cultura occidental was then and remains today a pillar of my own conception of the world order since 1500. In retrospect, pluriversality was emerging.

1 My argument focuses on the continental sphere, Africa coming into being in the colonial horizon of modernity. It would take me too long to address the total invasion of the continent (except Ethiopia) by European states after the Berlin Conference, 1884-85. Hence, I will not touch on the significance of the European displacement of the Ottoman Sultanate by French and British imperialisms, in what is today North Africa or the Maghreb.

As I already mentioned, Mudimbe reached the conclusion that Africa was not discovered but invented through the work of Michel Foucault on the Western belief in pegging words to things. O'Gorman, a few years before Foucault's publication of *Les mots et les choses* (1966), figured out that the canonical history that America was discovered on a happy October 12, 1492, did not hold water. He reached that conclusion while editing a classical Jesuit text of the sixteenth century, Jose de Acosta's Historia Natural y Moral de las Indias (1590), already familiar with the "worldliness of the world" explored by Martin Heidegger's Being and Time (1927). In spite of their distinctly different geopolitical embodiments in the Americas and Africa, O'Gorman and Mudimbe share one crucial element: both perceived and sensed coloniality behind the curtain: the darker side of western modernity.[2] As for myself, what I have in common with O'Gorman was made explicit in The Darker Side of the Renaissance (1995, 2003) and later on in The Idea of Latin America (2006): Humberto Maturana's argument that "reality" and "objectivity" served to invalidate argument cleared my path toward pluritopical hermeneutics and, later on, pluriversality (or the multiverse in Maturana's vocabulary [1988]). While in the second case, the concept of coloniality introduced by Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano in 1992 illuminated the darker side of Western modernity.

With Mudimbe the connection came through quite clearly in the paragraph below from his earlier work, *L'Odeur du père* (1982, p.42):

> Michel Foucault is a symbol: he is an excellent embodiment of the Western intellectual tradition that we would like to move away from. Placing him at the beginning of our endeavor is, in my opinion, a forceful way of addressing the most important problems that we are working on.

Although Mudimbe expressed his objective and interpretation of coloniality in his own vocabulary, my parallel understanding of coloniality, on the historical side, is rooted in the earliest Spanish and Portuguese settlements in the Americas, followed since the nineteenth century by the British and French management of South America without settler colonialism, and, on the personal side, the family stories of Italian immigrants. Quijano opened an extra dimension of decolonization: decoloniality, which to him means to extricate oneself (la déconnexion, delinking, Samir Amin) from the shackles of colonial modernity: the epistemic and aesthetic (both embedded in political theory and political economy), hegemonic regulations of knowing, knowledge, sensing, emotioning and, briefly, of the praxis of living subjected to the seduction by and/or violence of Western modernity (Mignolo, 2021).

An archeology of inventing (and the idea of Africa)

Anchoring the year 1652 to frame one chronological end of my argument doesn't mean that it was a specific moment in which Africa emerged from nothingness in the consciousness of the human species (or at least that of educated Western Christian-Europeans). It is the year in which the initial Dutch settlements opened up the roads to the increasing and continuous European settlements on the continent, which in the early sixteenth century was distinctively "identified" as one of the four continents on planet earth. But that's not all. In the second half of the eighteenth century, Adam Smith had this to say about the "discovery" of the Cape of Good Hope and of Africa in the colonial horizon of modernity:

> The discovery of America, and that of a passage to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope, are the two greatest and most important events recorded in the history of mankind. Their consequences have been very great; but in the short period of between two and three centuries which has elapsed since these discoveries were made, it is impossible that the whole extent of their consequences could have been seen. What benefits, or misfortunes to mankind may hereafter result from those great events, no human wisdom can foresee. (Smith, 1976 [1776], p. 141)

2 Coloniality doesn't equal colonialism. It is the underlying logic of all north Atlantic colonialism from 1500 to 2000, including coloniality without colonialism, as evinced by and after the Opium War in China and by the US, enacting coloniality by means of military bases, financial control and regulation, management of economic and political knowledge and by the global spread the "American way of Life" consolidated by Hollywood and the dawn of television. However, these spheres are being contested and disputed by de-Westernization. A case in point is China's investments in Africa disputing the long lasting "priorities" of Europe (EU now) and the US.

Beginnings, as we know, are turning points of already existing traces that acquire distinctive meanings after the turning point. Beginnings and turning points are always retrospective storytelling. In that regard, the turning point of inventing Africa and its place in the colonial horizon of modernity occurred in the sixteenth century (before the "discovery" of the Cape of Good Hope) when it became one of the four continents, a continent already despised in the Western Christian imagination and whose lower status would be re-affirmed in the later secular arguments of Immanuel Kant and G.W.F. Hegel (see below note 15). The "discovery" of the Cape of Good Hope was at once a destining of the "discovery" of America which was a destining of Noah's narrative.

Mudimbe followed up the invention of Africa with a meticulous archaeological investigation: The Idea of Africa (1994). This time Mudimbe's main purpose was to debunk the Eurocentered idea that Africa was discovered in the fifteenth century, the time of Portuguese (and in a lesser scale of Spanish) maritime explorations of the Mediterranean Sea and the Western coast of Africa. "When was Africa discovered?" asks Mudimbe caustically. And he goes on to say:

> Africa was discovered in the fifteenth century. That at least is what most history books say. Professors teach it, students accept it as truth. In any case, why doubt? The media propagate the veracity of the fact in the sagas of European explorers. That is the first meaning, this discovery (that is, this unveiling, this observation) meant and still means the primary violence signified by the word. The slave trade narrated itself accordingly, and the same movement of reduction progressively guaranteed the gradual invasion of the continent (Mudimbe, 1994, p. 17).

To do so, Mudimbe went back several centuries BC in search of extant narratives documenting the interactions, in Herodotus for example, between the people inhabiting Lybia, in the North of the continent, and the darker-skinned Ethiopians, on the East Coast. The entire dimension of the continent was obviously unknown. That is, the idea of Africa that we are familiar with after sixteenth-century European cartography was in nobody's mind. In Ptolemy's world map (circa AD 150), most of the northern part of Africa is shown as well as the West and East coasts (and that was all) of what would become known as Africa. The same visual image appears in the well-known world map (AD 1154) by Arab-Muslim geographer, Abu Abdullah Muhammad al-Idrisi.[3] For al-Idrissi who was born in Ceuta (at the time not yet Spain but under the Almoravid or Almohad Califate) and lived in Sicily, the South (and therefore Africa) was at the top of the flat map. As is often said (unconsciously, I imagine, but revealing the perverse cognitive deformation of coloniality): in al-Idrisi's map, the South is in the North.

My own investigations are concurrent to and parallel with Mudimbe's general thrust. They took me to—instead of Herodotus—the Christian Trinitarian design of planet earth inventing three continents (Asia, Africa and Europe) and associating them with Noah's three sons: Shem was associated with Asia; Ham with Africa and Japheth with Europe. In The City of God, Saint Augustine asks whether the Holy City could be traced in "a continuous line from the flood or was so interrupted by intervening periods of irreligion that there are some times when not one man emerges as worshiper of the one true God (XVI-I, p. 649). Let's listen to Saint Augustine's story:

> In fact, from the time of Noah, whom with his wife and his three sons and their wives was found worthy to be rescued from the devastation of the Flood by means of the ark, we do not find, until the time of Abraham, anyone whose devotion is proclaimed by any statement in the Scriptures—except for the fact that Noah commends his sons Shem and Japheth in his prophetic benediction, hence he knew by prophetic insights what was to happen in the far distant future (Saint Augustine, [AD 426] 1972, Book XVI, I, p. 649).

Noah commends two of his sons, Shem and Japheth, but not Ham. As it is well known in the biblical narrative, Noah cursed Canaan, Ham's son, for a sin that Hanan supposedly committed. What is not well known and open to speculation was what sin was committed and whether it was Ham or Canaan who committed it. Be that as it may, the imperative "A

3 For quick access several images can be seen on Google search. The original one has the Mediterranean on the right hand side from the viewer perspective. Which means that the South is at the top of the map.

curse on Canaan! He shall be a slave, the servants of his brothers." The Canaanite became ever since the stigma of the cursed and undesirable. But that is not all. What could "the prophetic benediction" and Noah's "prophetic insights" mean? Saint Augustine continues his speculations on the "prophetic insights" at the time of Noah which was the present time of Saint Augustine. He continues:

> This is also why Noah went on to add a blessing of his two sons, the oldest and the youngest, saying "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem and Canaan shall be his slave, may God enlarge Japheth and may he dwell in the house of Shem." In the same way the vineyard planted by Noah, the drunkenness resulting from its fruit, the nakedness of the sleeping Noah and all the other events recorded in this story were laden with prophetic meaning and covered with prophetic veils (Saint Augustine, [AD 426] 1972, Book XVI, I, p. 649).

Saint Augustine (AD 354–AD 430), we shall remember, was born and lived in Hippo (today Annaba) in the northeast tip of today's Algeria. But in the consciousness of the time and of Saint Augustine, he lived neither in Algeria (that did not yet exist) nor in Africa (which did not count). He lived in the Roman Empire that happened to occupy what is today North Africa. I underscore this simple fact to delink from the idea of the "ontic nature" of what there is, and to remember that what there is, is ontological, not ontic; which means that we do not see what there is but we see what we see, what we have been schooled to see and has been imprinted in the consciousness of the people by means of narratives and images. Several centuries after Saint Augustine, Isidore of Seville (b. unknown date—AD 636), Spain, wrote the celebrated Etymologiae that circulated in manuscript after his death. In it he described the Orbis Terrarum in the form of a circle with a T inside it. The diagram was included in later copies of the original manuscript and printed in 1472. In the upper half of the circle (the horizontal stroke of the T) was written "Asia," and in the two quarters of the lower half (divided by the vertical stroke of the T) "Europe" to the left and "Africa" to the right. In Latin alphabetical writing culture, the upper left side is always more important than the upper right side, because of the left to right movement of writing. [4]

And there is even more. At some point in the process of reproducing the T-O map, "Shem" was added under Asia, "Japheth" under Europe and "Ham" under Africa. I have no evidence to argue that this prophetic meaning, covered with prophetic veils, could have been the merging of the tricontinental division corresponding with the biblical narrative of Noah and his sons. But what is relevant for my argument is that the cursed one, Ham, was assigned to Africa. From then on, particularly after the printing that multiplied its copies and enlarged its dissemination, alea iacta est (the die had been cast): Africa was cursed in the increasing reach of Christian narratives at the junction of the printing press and the increasing circulation of the narratives since and after the inclusion (and I underscore the word) of America as the fourth continent. America did not exist (ontically), and therefore couldn't be discovered (and that was O'Gorman's groundbreaking argument); it was invented (ontologically) and grounded in the epistemic-theological narratives of Western Christianity.

Africa in the colonial horizon of western Modernity (1652–2000)

Why do I frame Africa in the colonial horizon of modernity between 1652 and 2000? The advent of the idea of Africa in the consciousness of Western Christians (and, I shall underscore, of Western Christians alone) before 1652 was not yet Africa in the colonial horizon of modernity. It was only Africa in the consciousness of Western Christianity that would become its destiny (per prophecy) with the serendipitous "discovery of America". Neither the Africa of the period in which Western Christians were forging the symbolic "map" of three continents assigned to each of Noah's sons with corresponding benedictions and a curse, nor anyone inhabiting "Africa" (quotation marks indicating that Africa was naught but an entity in the Christian imagination), knew that they were living in an Africa

4 For an image of the T-O map, also several in Google search, https://www.historyofinformation.com/image.php?id=385.

without quotation marks. It was only from 1652 on when Europeans began to settle in the southern tip of the continent. I have argued, in the same vein, that people inhabiting "Asia" did not know that they were living in Asia, until 1582, or around that decade, when the Jesuit Matteo Ricci introduced to the wise men of the Ming Dynasty the world maps as assigned by Gerardus Mercator and Abraham Ortelius, both from the sixteenth century. What is crucial in the distribution of the land mass of these "Mappae Mundi," still in use today, is the central placement of the Atlantic Ocean in a flat display of the world. If we know, we can "see" the T-O without which the basic four continents (Asia, Africa, America and Europe) could not be understood. If we do not know, we just don't see it and believe that the flat world map represents that which is ontically like that. To live on the assumption (which goes unquestioned) that when the universe was "created" (if at some time it was), planet earth was made out of four continents from the start, means to live trapped in the universal fictions of Western cartography. But of course, the geographical distribution of the four continents is not the end of the story. Fundamental to their placement and purpose was their ranking.

You may have noticed that when Saint Augustine reports Noah's benedictions to his two favored sons and a curse on the abhorred one, he added that Ham shall be a slave to his brothers. Remember that Asia occupies half of the circle of the T-O map and it was assigned to Shem. And only one of the two quarters below was assigned to Europe and Japheth. Consequently Japheth shall dwell in the house of Shem. How come Europe/Japheth shall dwell in Asia/Shem? Today, that statement sounds like a contradiction, mostly if we consider the current conflicts between the US (the extension of Europe) and the EU to contain China and to prevent China's investment in Africa, not to mention Western ambitions to dominate and manage the "Middle East" which, indeed, is West Asia. Saint Augustine certainly knew this since he experienced the disintegration of the Western Roman Empire in his lifetime, prompting him to write The City of God, as well as the rise of the Byzantine Empire (395 to 1453) in Asia. Hence, Japheth (who in Noah's hope and prophecy would be enlarged by God), dwells in the land of decay and for that reason shall dwell in the house of Shem/Asia, which is the powerful Eastern Roman Empire centered not in Rome but in Constantinople. In the process, cursed in the curse of Ham was falling out of Christian imagination of the universal history that Hegel would later consecrate in his landmark modern/colonial Western secular narrative.

Let's remember: at the time of Saint Augustine and of Isidore of Seville a few centuries later, Africa was not yet in the colonial horizon of Western modernity. But it was full-fledged and unconsciously framing Hegel's narrative. He took for granted the mapping of the earth that I am calling into question here. What, then, I do mean by "colonial horizon of modernity?" In ancient Rome, "colony" meant settlements, as it was derived from the Latin colonia ("settled land"). Colonies were constitutive of the Roman Empire. However, coloniality could not be applicable to the Roman Empire. Why not? Because coloniality, as introduced by Anibal Quijano in 1992, though it takes its name from colonialism, doesn't equal colonialism. Coloniality refers to the underlying logic of all Western and Atlantic colonialism since 1500. One of the distinctive features (among the larger configuration of economic, political, religious, and ethical turning points) was the control and management of global narratives (the enunciation) of the globe (the enunciated).

The invention of international law at the School of Salamanca in the mid-sixteenth century (de Vitoria), and its repercussions in Portugal (Suarez), Holland (Grotius), and England (Locke), coupled with cartography, not only appropriated the distribution of land and water masses by labeling them with names that were neither embedded in the land and water themselves nor in the language of the original inhabitants, but inscribed them with implicit and explicit hierarchies. Although the continental hierarchies were already inscribed in the Bible in such a way that the increasing identification of "slaves" (in reality enslaved captives) with Africa was already mapped so to speak by Western Christians, the advent of international law gave legal merit to the theological narrative. And so the water masses, too, had implicit hierarchies —the Atlantic displaced the role of the Mediterranean and the Pacific remained the backyard of the Atlantic. Until the twenty-first century when and because of that long-lasting displacement of Asia/Shem by Europe/Japheth since 1500 (which was the prophetic "enlargement of Japheth"), the Pacific remained the backyard of

Western civilization. No longer. The rise of China is remapping, so to speak, the distribution of the water masses. I suspect that Hegel, unconsciously, was re-activating the destiny of Japheth when saw the US as the future and Africa as something out of history. Perhaps the covered prophetic meaning kept on unveiling its secrets, secretly!

The inaugural moment of Africa in the colonial horizon of modernity came about during the long period of massive trade of enslaved captives. It was by extraction rather than by settlements and dispossession. Settlements and dispossession started in 1652. As for the inaugural moment, and beyond the geographical convenience of capturing and enslaving human beings from the West Coast of Africa, Noah's story and the theological narrative were looming large: Africans are the descent of Ham. Curses be upon them!! By the eighteenth century, the secular vocabulary had already changed, and Kant, following up on David Hume, said (and I assume he believed it):

> The Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling. Mr. Hume challenges everyone to cite a single example in which a Negro has shown talent, and has shown that among the hundreds of thousands of blacks who are transported elsewhere from their countries [...] still not a single one was ever found who presented any thing great in art or science or any praise-worthy quality." [5] (Kant [1764] 1960, section four, pp. 110–111).

A few decades later Hegel would cast Africa out of history, and in 1884–85 at the Berlin Conference, the entire continent (with the exception of Ethiopia then governed by Haile Selassie) would fall prey in its totality to European imperial paws. That was the moment that Africa was placed in the colonial horizon of modernity. Noah's narrative and the T-O map remained in the background. A double destitution took place: those of the continent and of the humanness of its inhabitants, in body and mind. Or if you wish, Western cartographic and ethnographic philosophy assumed that Africans are ontologically inferior (a statement in Western narratives) and, therefore, epistemologically and aesthetically deficient. The long night—out of which the dawn of the forthcoming era erupted during the Cold War and is still consolidating in the twenty-first century—is upon us.[6] It may be the end of a history (of Western affirmation and dominance), but not the one envisioned and desired by Francis Fukuyama.[7] Recursively, the beginnings of the change of era now flourish within the debris. Multipolarity and pluriversality are emerging out of the fragments of unipolarity and universality.

Africa in the advent of the Third Nomos of the Earth

The eruption of African (and also Asian) thinkers, scholars and public figures during the Cold War was in retrospect the beginning of an end, the end of the cycle of Africa in the colonial horizon of modernity. The Bandung Conference of 1955, organized by twenty-nine leaders from Africa and Asia, was perhaps the first signpost to ending the Western Christian imaginary that, during the secular eighteenth century, mutated into a classification of the four continents by skin color: the names of Noah's three sons vanished from their continental associations and were replaced by the skin color of their inhabitants. Black-skinned people dwelt in Africa, Yellow in Asia, White in Europe and Red Skinned Indians dwelt in the New World, America. That was Kant's ideological version of Carl Linnaeus's scientific rendering (Eze, 1997). Witnessing the long night of the continent, I cannot avoid remembering Saint Augustine's version of Noah's "prophetic insights of what was to happen in the far distant future". The Bandung Conference was indeed, as it becomes more evident each day, a watershed closing off not only the long night of Africa, but also of Asia and of South/Central America and the Caribbean. But let's leave South/Central America and the Caribbean, the majority of which had their own discussions of decolonization

5 On this topic, see Eze (1997), Hegel, G.W.F., 1837, *Lectures in the Philosophy of History*.

6 See Mbembe (2021), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018), Oyěwùmí (2010), Sarr (2016), Jessica Horn, https://www.blackwomenradicals.com/blogfeed/the-power-of-pan-african-feminism-a-conversation-with-jessica-horn

7 See Louis Menand, "Francis Fukuyama Postpones the End of History", *The New Yorker*, August 27, 2018, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/09/03/francis-fukuyama-postpones-the-end-of-history. Interesting to see three decades later of Fukuyama's original ideas, at the dawn of the end of the Cold War, how wishful thinking can be taken and celebrated as objective analysis and as a picture of reality. See Maturana (1988). The "post-true" lingo of our time still refuses to accept that *true is...where you can find it.*

during the nineteenth century. In the conference's inaugural speech, Sukarno announced (perhaps without being fully aware of the reach of his statements), that:

a. Bandung was the first intercontinental conference of "colored people" (in the oral version, he repeated it, "so-called colored people") in the history of mankind! The accent on the last phrase was not mere rhetoric. It had not only the weight of the history of the human species but also in the short-term history of humanity since 1500.

b. The conference served as an opening to delink from the colonial matrix of power and from its Christian theological and European secular foundations. Sukarno was aware that in the short-term history of the past 450 years, and more specifically, the period of Dutch, British and French imperial expansion, "it is a new departure in the history of the world that leaders of Asian and African peoples can meet together in their own countries to discuss and deliberate upon matters of common concern" instead of meeting in Brussels in 1925, to form the "League Against Imperialism and Colonialism".

c. The continental divide established in the sixteenth century was taken for granted, but the global lines were called into question:

> I recall that, several years ago, I had occasion to make a public analysis of colonialism, and that I then drew attention to what I called the "Life-Line of Imperialism". This line runs from the Straits of Gibraltar, through the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, the South China Sea and the Sea of Japan. For most of that enormous distance, the territories on both sides of this lifeline were colonies, the peoples were unfree, their futures mortgaged to an alien system. Along that lifeline, that main artery of imperialism, there was pumped the life-blood of colonialism.

d. In 1955 the concept of coloniality was not yet in place. However, it was sensed and understood by everyone enduring its consequences. Coloniality was hardly seen and felt in Europe; only modernity. And modernity was the totality, an incomplete project whose march over the planet was assumed (and for which believers still remain) with its completion just a matter of time. Neo-liberalism was the next chapter after development and modernization that the twenty-nine Asian and African leaders congregated in Bandung knew and experienced. Sukarno's diagnosis was precise when he said:

> We are often told "Colonialism is dead". Let us not be deceived or even soothed by that. I say to you, colonialism is not yet dead. How can we say it is dead, so long as vast areas of Asia and Africa are unfree? And, I beg of you do not think of colonialism only in the classic form which we of Indonesia, and our brothers in different parts of Asia and Africa, knew. Colonialism has also its modern dress, in the form of economic control, intellectual control, [and] actual physical control by a small but alien community within a nation. It is a skillful and determined enemy, and it appears in many guises. It does not give up its loot easily. Wherever, whenever and however it appears, colonialism is an evil thing, and one which must be eradicated from the earth.[8]

e. Last but not least, Sukarno's vision, beyond divisions, are still the horizon of decolonization as decoloniality—the specific routes in the processes of decolonization interconnected (not subsumed) by the similar grammar of decoloniality enacted and taken up in the variety of planetary local histories invaded, disrupted and impoverished by coloniality. Sukarno said:

> We are of many different nations; we are of many different social backgrounds and cultural patterns. Our ways of life are different. Our national characters or colors or motifs—call it what you will—are different. Our racial stock is different, and even the color of our skin is different. But what does that matter? Mankind is united or divided by considerations other than these. Conflict comes not from variety of skins, nor from variety of religion, but from a variety of desires. All of us, I am certain, are united by more important things than those which superficially divide us. We are united, for instance, by a common detestation of colonialism in whatever form it appears. We are united by a common detestation of racialism.

8 Sukarno, "Opening address given by Sukarno (Bandung 18, April 1955)". *cvce.eur University of Luxemburgo, https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/opening_address_given_by_sukarno_bandung_18_april_1955-en-88d3f71c-c9f9-415a-b397-b27b8581a4f5.html*

> And we are united by a common determination to preserve and stabilize peace in the world. Are not these aims mentioned in the letter of invitation to which you responded?[9]

I stay for a while with Sukarno at the Bandung Conference. The conference, with Sukarno's opening address, was a compensation and counter to the indiscernible presence of the Christian T/O map in the Western invention of the Three Worlds (First, Second and Third). Sukarno was speaking in the Third World not about it. Is this a coincidence or is it just the Western imagination taking things for granted again? Racism as we know it today has its historical foundation in the late fifteenth century in the Iberian Peninsula and was expanded and consolidated with such a construct, emboldened by conquest, land dispossession, exploitation of labor and the slave trade. Its seeds sprouted from the Christian imagination, flourishing in the narratives legitimizing the expulsion of Moors and Jews from the Iberian Peninsula (the vanguard at the time of Western Christianity), and continuing to flourish through the years until it was consolidated during the European enlightenment. Scientific narratives contributed to reassure us that race is ontic and not ontological: that they exist in reality, not that scientific narratives made us "see reality". But racial classifications in conjunction with continental divides and hierarchies remain opaque until this day. It seems to be taken for granted that underdeveloped countries and emerging economies were just a fact of "nature" or of "history" as if nature itself was a discriminatory force and history the ontic unfolding of universal time. At the time of Saint Augustine, the universal clock ran from the creation of the world to the final judgment. At the time of Hegel, its secular stopwatch measured the human race from the start of the Spirit (the seed of the modern bourgeois nation-state in maturation) to a history—which Hegel couldn't have anticipated—ending at the dusk of neo-liberalism. In this sense, "the end of history" as a well-known dictum after the fall of the Soviet Union, was the unexpected prophecy, although not in the neo-liberal interpretation announcing an infinite future, but the "end of a history" in the decolonial sense I mentioned above: the end of the modernity-coloniality cycle, 1500–2000, the rise and fall of the colonial matrix of power founded, transformed and managed by North Atlantic imperial states and narrated by their organic intellectuals.

There is still another lesson and legacy from the Bandung Conference: the close of binary opposition and the the excluded middle from Greek philosophy to Carl Schmitt's political theory of friends and enemies. Bandung evinced that it was neither capitalism nor communism that decolonization was looking for but something else. The point for breaking with the hierarchical distribution of the Three Worlds came from an analectical rejection of the First and the Second to secure the affirmation of the Third. The Western hierarchy of the Three Worlds disintegrated when it was disregarded by the political and epistemic disobedience of the Third World. This is in a nutshell Bandung's turning point which planted the seed of multipolarity (de-westernization as a state project) and pluriversality (decoloniality as multifarious projects of emerging political organizations in the public sphere). The lesson of Bandung shall not be forgotten. Rather it shall be revisited to understand that if today we, in the planet, are living through a change of era and no longer an era of changes (1500–2000) that was built on binary thinking in all spheres of life (politics, economy and culture, right on up to binary digitalizaton) when and where progress consisted in advancing one of two opposing poles by containing or elimination of the opposite, Bandung showed us a way from the chains of the third excluded world. The Bandung Conference planted the seeds that grew, as has always been in human history, in an unexpected direction. Nonetheless, the signs of the change of era now visible were already there, in the event, the goals, and Sukarno's words. Asia and Africa were, in the work of its leaders and followers, the force and energy of their thinkers, moving away from the Western binary choices, "you are with me or with my enemy".[10] Bandung offered an opening to the "either/or" by installing the double negation "neither/nor" (delinking) and the double opening away from Westernization: de-Westernization (in the inter-state relations) and decoloniality (in the public sphere) (relinking and reconstitutions). The change of era, which can hardly be ignored today, has its contemporary historical foundation in the Bandung Conference.

9 Sukarno, *op. cit.*

10 A paraphrase of George W. Bush´s "You are either with us or with the terrorists." https://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/11/06/gen.attack.on.terror/.

The fact that Asia and Africa have followed divergent paths since then is understandable if we look at the history of the colonial matrix of power and analyze how both continents were located in the colonial horizon of modernity. The mutation of the triad T-O map into the tetragon in the sixteenth-century orbis terrarium was explicit in the four keys, occupying the four corners of a flat map description of continents and seas, which generally appeared in seventeenth-century cartography. I summarize here some of the findings and interpretations already advanced in the Darker Side of the Renaissance.[11] The story goes like this. In the upper left corner, the viewer sees a well-dressed lady sitting in a locus amoenus. In the upper right corner, a similarly well-dressed lady appears, though alas, seated on an elephant. In spite of the high standing of the elephant in classical natural histories (e.g. Pliny the Elder), for the European consciousness of the seventeenth century, its own familiar locus amoenus could not be measured with an elephant, which perhaps because of its praised intelligence was an animal associated with the circus. The two lower corner keys to the right and the left were interchangeable. In some maps Africa is on the left and America on the right, and vice versa on others.

However, for Dutch cartographers and European consciousness of the time, Africa and America mattered little. But that is not all. The images of Africa and America were conveyed by means of two semi-naked ladies, one seated on an alligator and the other on an armadillo. Needless to say, nakedness doesn't bode well with the Christian imagination, and not even with secular humanist consciousness. And as alligators and armadillos cannot not be measured in the same standing as the elephant in the historian animalium, Noah's prophecy indeed began to be revealed in the seventeenth century when Africa and America were located at the bottom of the map. It shall not then surprise us that in the second decade of the nineteenth century Hegel was clearly and explicitly placing Africa out of history, and America (for him the "US") in the future of Europe and South America as the hopeless land of barbarian caudillos.

The divergent patterns of Asia and Africa in the colonial horizon of modernity just sketched, however, has a common point of departure: to regain the lost and denied political, economic and cultural sovereignty of their institutions and the human dignity denied to the people. Institutionally, East, South and South-East Asia appropriated the capitalist economy to pursue their goals of finding their paths after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the self-encouragement of Western leaders to achieve global control and management. While China has unapologetically decided to go its own way to heal the wounds and humiliations inflicted by the Opium War, Japan remains within the sphere of the US and the West, a path already decided during the Meiji Restoration in the second half of the nineteenth century, and consolidated due to the growing economy and influence of the Republic of China. However, it wouldn't be accurate to say today that we are in a new Cold War, now between neo-liberalism and Chinese communism, since China is not a communist country as the Soviet Union was. China adopted the capitalist economy guided by a strong state, which is not pleasing to neoliberal designs. While the Soviet Union followed the path of European enlightenment socialism, the brother of enlightenment liberalism, China detached itself from both by reconstituting its own long and solid heritage, languages, and praxis of living. In a sense, China actualized the Bandung dictum, "neither capitalism, nor communism" in the sense of neither liberal or neoliberal capitalism nor Western-style communism. China, in other words, couldn't be what it is without the Bandung Conference and the earlier experiment in Singapore led by Lee Kwan Yew, whom Deng Xiaoping consulted when he got to power after Mao's death (Kuan Yew, 2012).

And what about Africa in this narrative as anchored in the Bandung Conference? I trust that among the goals of this journal, *Global Africa*, are the redefinition of the destituted narratives during the long night of Africa in the colonial horizon of modernity since 1652, and also since the Christian thinking that enfranchised the Atlantic slave trade and the increase of European settlements from 1652 to the Berlin Conference of 1884–85, until the wave of decolonization during the Cold War began to break the spell. Contrary to long-lasting histories and memories like those of China, India, Japan and the many diverse states—national or monarchic—in which Muslims maintained their own languages, memories,

11 See for example Nova totius terrarum orbis geographica ac hydrographica tabula. Autore N. I. Piscator, one of the many world maps made by Claes Janszoon Visscher (1587–1652, latin. Nicolaus Ioannes Piscator) In: Nicolaes Visscher (Hg.), Atlas minor sive totius orbis terrarum, Amsterdam, 1690.

scriptures and praxis of living, Africa went through significant dismantling of the existing so-called kingdoms, sometimes empires, similar in some ways and different in others to South/Central American and Caribbean trajectories. The splendors of decolonization during the Cold War were the formations of nation-states. The miseries were the native elites, in the North and Sub-Sahara, taking hold of the state for their own benefit in connivance with Europe and/or the US. The situation of Africa in the colonial horizon of modernity was re-oriented by two concurrent events, the second as a consequence of the first. The first was the end of apartheid in South Africa, the second was Hu Jintao's invitation (in 2010) to South Africa to become part of the BRICS (founded in 2009). The formation of the BRICS and the rise of China are two crucial signposts of de-Westernization, which means appropriation of the capitalist economy but rejection of the neo-liberal Western will (the US seconded by the EU) to control and manage the global order.[12]

Africa (again in a similar way to South/Central America and the Caribbean) is facing the inter-state global order in the conflict between the Western will to maintain the privileges accumulated during 500 years, and the will not to obey the Western global design which today has planted in China, Russia and Iran three pillars which, in addition, are guarding Central Asia from Western ambitions. China's investments in Africa are well known, with many of them on public display. The economic and urban growth of many African states is plain to see, literally, in a way that has not yet reached Hispanic America, although Brazil and Mexico are two strong economies. China's investments in Africa cannot be compared with its investment in the US. If the Bandung Conference gathered the leaders of twenty-nine African and Asian nations, those paths have been re-enacted by China in the past decade.[13] Chinese investment in Africa provoked the moves of the US to counter its influence there to the benefit of leaders who could use this situation to their own advantage, not having to take sides for either de-Westernization of re-Westernization (the efforts of the US to re-enact and renew the last 500 successful years of Westernization [Latouche, 1989]). In other words, at the level of inter-state relations and the global order, African nation-states formed during decolonization in the Cold War are now positioned to secure their economic growth, hedging their bets not always to the benefit of all Africans.

Which brings me to the last point of this essay, the revival of independent thought and the political society parallel to (but not necessarily concurrent with) the revival of states' political economies either struggling for state sovereignty or surrendering in collaboration with one or the other pole—or, more generally, aligning with the EU and/or the US. [14] (Old habits die hard). If, then, in the institutional sphere of the state and other official institutions African revival and presence in the global order are unimaginable without Bandung precedent, the current revival of creative thinking (not only critical), the search for the reconstitution of the communal, the affirmation and reconstitution/restitution of the looted, [15] are unimaginable without the groundwork and the prophetic meaning (this time not of Noah's narrative) of decolonial thinkers and activists during the Cold War (e.g. Amilcar Cabral, Patrice Lumumba, Kwame Nkrumah, Steve Biko, scholars like Cheikh Anta Diop, writers such as Chinua Achebe and, from the Caribbean, Aimé Cesaire and Franz Fanon, scholars like Paulin J. Hountondji, Kwasi Wiredu, etc.). I see that legacy, directly and indirectly, informing the wide spectrum of the energetic revival of African thoughts today and its growing impact on the global stage.[16] If then de-Westernization after the Cold War in the public sphere closed the era of the Western unipolar global order and opened up the explosion toward the multipolar global order already at work, decoloniality after

12 For my view on the BRICS in the global order see Mignolo (2014, Question 3).

13 For the liberal fears of the role of China in Africa and Latin America, see *The evolving role of Africa and Latin America. A report by The Economist Intelligence Unit*. n/d, https://www.lampadia.com/assets/uploads_documentos/7ffa7-the-evolving-role-of-china-in-africaand-latin-america.pdf. Accessed July 23, 2021.

14 I addressed some of these issues in previous publications, see Mignolo (2009, 2017).

15 The "restitution of the African patrimony", for example, is not returning "objects." It implies the gnoseological and aesthesic reconstitutions of the meanings of such "objects." For Europeans, the looting or buying of African objectsis not just simply changing the location of the object. Looting or buying an object implies also the search and appropriation of the narratives that brought that object into being and that was meaningful for the community that made/created the object. See Felwine Sarr and Benedicte Savoy (2018).

16 Apart from this journal, *Global Africa*, I should add the previous and current work in Senegal lead by Achille Mbembe and Felwine Sarr, *L'Atelier de la pensée*, is a noteworthy. In anglophone Africa, the work of Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni should be mentioned. The resurgence of Afro-feminism and decolonization is explicit in the work of scholars, activists, artists, and bloggers such as Sylvia Tamale, Leymah Gbowee, Amina Doherty, and Abena Busia; in literature, the writing and essays of Chimamanda Ngonzi Adichie, Njabelo Ndebele, Angie Krog, and in music Neo Muyanda.

the Cold War's decolonization is closing the era of Western universalism and opening up the era of pluriversality. I see the journal *Global Africa* walking with and contributing to the change of era and to the advent of the Third Nomos of the Earth. Other ideas long silenced are heard anew, reconstituted over the debris of Western modernity and the damages of coloniality. Both in the sphere of the state and in the public sphere, Africa as well as Asia, are closing their dependencies to the colonial horizon of modernity (while South America still hangs in the balance as a question mark, and there are good reasons for that). The stakes are high. If Noah's narrative and the T-O map set the groundwork for the advent of Western modernity/coloniality, the fortuitous encounter with the unknown and the invention of America (1500) left its actors of the monarchy, church, prospectors, soldiers, cartographers, and storytellers with no other option than their own limitations, limitations that they transformed into open possibility. Today we, on the planet, are witnessing a similar situation: the planned or non-planned COVID-19 legitimized and justified the arguments for the "Great Reset" (World Economic Forum) and the "Great Transformation" (IMF). Only that the situation has changed and the planet is no longer terra nullus but a terra firma sustaining and nourishing the energies and creativities of recovering the looted and the revival of the humanity denied. Africa is no longer limited to what Noah, Saint Augustine, Kant and Hegel imagined and managed to make others believe as "reality".

Closing and opening

The main thrust of my story underscores the place assigned to Africa (next to Asia and the Americas) in early Western Christian narrative, recast in the colonial horizon of modernity since the Renaissance and as a consequence of the Atlantic commerce and massive trade in captive Africans. The place and role of Africa in the narrative of Western Christianity provided the hegemonic foundation of the colonial horizon of modernity when, serendipitously, Western Christians found themselves in a position to spread their narratives around the planet, taking advantage of the printing press, the circumnavigations of planet earth, the spectacular labor of Dutch cartographers and the creation of international law to legitimize the possession and dispossession of a planet that was already symbolically and hierarchically mapped in the juxtaposition of three continental land masses with the three sons of Noah, to which America was added. But the addition of America did not invalidate the pre-established triad of a world-view that became one of the pillars of Western civilization (Western Christianity). The other pillar was, and still is, secular Greek in all its widest reach. Africa first entered the colonial horizon of modernity by extraction, uprooting human beings from their abodes and transported by force to the Americas. And secondly, it entered again when European settlers began their long journey of settlements, consolidated at the Berlin Conference in 1884–1885. But it was, paradoxically, another conference, this time outside of Europe, in Indonesia, that announced the beginning of the end. The end of Noah's curse on Africa, but also of the secondary role assigned to Asia by way of seventeenth century cartography, a turning point to the place of Africa in the T-O map when Europe/Japheth was the promise of expansion. If Japheth then would inhabit the house of Shem and Ham was destined (again the prophecy to be the slave of his brothers) to be slave of both, then the universal truth of such a narrative was compounded by the unilateral continental organization and ranking of the world order implanted in the minds of all and future generations. Not anymore. The advent of the Third Nomos of the Earth, and the consequential change of era, has emerged out of the explosion and debris of the Second Nomos (1500–2000). The present march towards a multipolar world order in inter-state relations and pluriversality is taking place in the disobedient and rebellious public sphere (Mignolo, 2018). Bifurcations and fragmentations sprouting forth are flourishing out of the explosion and the debris of universality and monopolarity at the closing era of abstract universals and the end of the historical cycle that managed to implant the consequent totalitarian totality of a single story. Multipolarity in inter-state relations and pluriversality in the public sphere are two already established overall trajectories: the storm is no longer blowing from paradise but from the Global South and the Global East, and already intruding and penetrating the Global North and the Global West.

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