

POST COLONIAL AFRICA: PAST AND FUTURE

1. The central reality of Post Colonial Africa is that the traditional institutions and development needs of 80-90 per cent of the population have been ignored by, not only the African state, but also by the international community for more than fifty years.
2. This eighty to ninety percent are people living in rural areas and urban slums. They are key producers in spite of the attendant poverty.
3. Why is this so? The explanation is simply that the African inheritors of the colonial state were a few educated elites whose experiential knowledge was colonial. They had seen the colonial rulers using the state to assure themselves power and wealth. This they copied. They illegitimately (i.e. without the consent of the majority) took over the state bureaucracy and, after a while, the private sector and used them for their own corrupt ends.
4. The ignored historic institutions of the African peoples were more consultative /egalitarian thereby limiting the power of the rulers than the colonial society.
5. What is the evidence? I have assigned a book to all of you. Although it is not elegantly written, it documents the evidence across the continent in great detail.

Concentrating on Kenya:

- a. Within the first five years of independence, a top bureaucrat was stating: "The African needs a guiding

- hand". It was to be provided by the Provincial Administration.
- b. Within ten years, it was stated in a major policy paper "We have built the civil service. It is now time to branch out to build the private sector." The regulators became also owners of the regulated!
 - c. Within fifteen years, Kenyan and external academics, at the University of Nairobi, were pushing for decentralized development planning for the districts. The then Minister of Finance and Planning retorted that the Kenya Government would continue central planning and implementation of development since rural illiterates could not plan!
 - d. Within the same fifteen years, University of Nairobi academics were calling for the splitting of estates which were owned and left by colonial White farmers. It was ignored by Government until the World Bank reified the argument and designed a project. This was over and above the Million Acre scheme financed by the exiting colonial government. In another project, pastoralists were denied individual title to their land though all credit in Kenya was based on individual title. The bureaucrats and politicians got more than their fair share from the division of land and collective titles.
 - e. Within the same fifteen years, University of Nairobi academics argued that the major state investments should go to roads, water and agriculture especially outside the high potential areas where government had invested in export cash crops- coffee and tea. The World Bank and government argued comparative advantage in

export cash crops! Note that it is the marginal areas which produce the meat and significant amounts of food crops.

- f. Within the same fifteen years, individuals and communities in rural and urban slums were beginning to organize their development. My favorite example is Utooni. What is called Harambee had become politicized and taken over by corrupt administrators and politicians who used it to milk the poor.
- g. Within twenty years, the Washington Consensus kicked in globally and the major impact locally was bureaucrats and politicians privatizing to themselves businesses started by the state with external funding. This was large scale stealing from the public.
- h. Within thirty years, the cold war was ending and development funding fashion was governance. This led to elections where tribal brokers, fattened by corruption (looting the state as the Tammany Machine in the US did in times past) delivered results reifying autocrats.
- i. Within forty years, a peculiar alliance between lawyers, dissident politicians, academics, church leaders, and a variety of community based organizations, some out of the 80-90 percent, began to agitate for constitutionalism. The major desired outputs were: 1. The right to organize politically 2. Individual and collective rights 3. Decentralization of state power 4. State accountability (anti-corruption) and 5. A fair share of the development cake for the 80-90 percent of the population. We are still therein this sixth decade of independence.

6. What of the future?

I am optimistic since: "A LARGE STONE IS NOT CARRIED BY THE RIVER WATER". In our case there are five stones as shown above. I know of individuals, communities, and internal and external organizations whose objectives are to train the river of oppression thereby ensuring that the five stones are permanently protected. This is the future. It does not say that there are no Sudans, Somalias, Zimbabwes or even Central Africa Republics not to speak of the Saharawis. The fight goes on for NEITHER nations NOR a continent are created and integrated in one generation.

G-C. M. Mutiso02/05/2014