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Cosmology, Power, Human Relationships and Human Qualities

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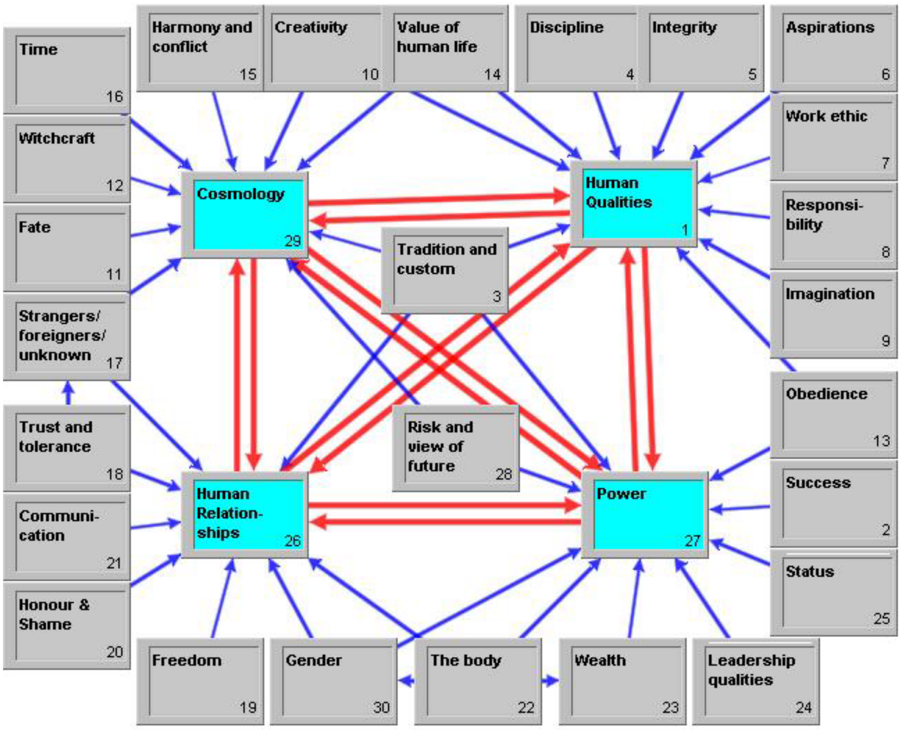
Introduction

We argue that any analysis of the role of values in development in Africa would have to incorporate investigation into four areas. These are cosmology, power, human relationships and human qualities. Under these categories, we consider many different aspects to be worthy of investigation. Many of these aspects are multi-faceted and relate to more than one of the areas. We relate and enumerate the aspects and the areas in Figure 4.1.

The first area is cosmology. We are interested in seeing how deep-seated cultural and social views on the composition of the world and how change in that world happens affect development. Cosmology is associated with religion and metaphysics, but one should not lose sight of the connection between cosmology and social patterns. In many ways, cosmology and general social patterns are two sides of the same coin (Asad 1983, in his critique of Geertz, is quite correct in relating power and meaning). However, we would argue that an analysis that focuses on cosmology would tend to open up other insights than the ordinary social analyses. As the explicit focus is on meaning and not function or behaviour, we may be able to grasp dimensions of African values and culture that would not be as visible in a different kind of analysis. For example, there is some literature pointing to the significance of a type of social capital that makes trust across boundaries important for development; while strangers and foreigners and, for that matter, the unknown, are often incorporated in a cosmological scheme as

Figure 4.1: Values in Development


Time 16
Harmony and conflict 15
Creativity 10
Value of human life 14
Discipline 4
Integrity 5
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Cosmology 29
Human Qualities 1
Fate 11
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non-human. Does such a scheme exist in African cosmologies and how important is it in the lives of African communities facing continuous change often driven from outside? We list conceptions of fate, witchcraft, time, harmony and conflict, the value of human life, creativity and views of the future as dimensions of cosmology that could be important and require some conceptual explanation first and then empirical investigation. The reasons for this selection of aspects are set out below.

The second area of aspects for investigation is that of power. In a sense, questions of power need to be discussed as a countervailing argument to the cosmology interest. Even though one could argue that power is just a sub-dimension of cosmology, posing power as an area of concentrated attention enables one to focus attention on activities and balance the world of ideas with the world of actions, relationships and structures. We consider power to be the ability to make a difference that may not necessarily be negative or positive, but will depend on what difference is made and how that difference is made. We also consider different "faces of power", including not only the ability to directly influence and coerce others, but also the so-called "structural bias" that determines the context within which decisions are taken and the power of ideology that determines the way in which reality is defined. The set of aspects that we would like to consider in this area include, leadership conceptions and qualities, gender, the body, success, wealth, tradition and custom, obedience, risk and view of the future.

The third area of aspects deals with human relationships. Again, one should say immediately that human relationships are encompassed by cosmology, or the other way round, and power is obviously always present in human relationships. However, we want to focus attention of human relationships specifically because the social nature of development has been the emphasis of the project and this publication from the beginning. Development is not adequately described in economic terms and any attempt at unravelling the social dimension of development has to include a full analysis of the nature of relationships as limiting and enabling factors in development processes of whatever kind. We have a limited number of aspects that we consider important to highlight. These include some that also occur in the list dealing with power – as can be expected. They are gender and the body. We also consider relationships with strangers and foreigners, and the unknown in general, as important human relationships and these were also noted in the cosmology area. The other aspects are trust and tolerance (closely related, but not the same as the interest in strangers), honour and shame and communication.

The last area which we are interested in is more of a collection of aspects than a clearly defined category; but it is a set of aspects that always seems to make its way to the table of analyses of the role of values in any social process and to the role of values in development in particular. Many of the items here have some relation to notions like moral economy and social capital. From a different perspective, the list includes some aspects that can properly be understood as terminal values in the psychological sense. Terminal values are values defined in terms of the Rokeach framework (1970, 1973) and are end states that are highly desirable for their own sake and not for some instrumental reason. Of course, the definition of anything as a terminal value instead of an instrumental value is wholly in the eye of the beholder – in this case, the beholder is African discourses on these values. These values can also be understood as moral virtues but then, obviously, in a double-edged way, as some of these virtues are sometimes considered to be the very social barrier that limits development. These include notions like obedience, discipline, integrity, work ethic, responsibility and imagination. The content and strength of individual and collective aspirations are also considered under this rubric and the perceived importance of tradition and custom is also relevant here, not just as a dimension of power, but also as a definition of a type of human quality.

The substantive claims made in this chapter are the result of our literature survey of cultural and social explanations of relative development patterns. However, there is an ambiguity in our approach here. On the one hand, we do believe that the general categorisation of the aspects discussed is appropriate. These categories do constitute a theoretical claim on our part. However, under the categories, there are aspects that have been collected from development literature, common perceptions and discourses about development and values and very particular and limited studies of specific cases of development that we do not know to be useful explanations or dimensions of the role of values in development. Therefore, the aspects presented under the categories incorporated are not all argued to be good explanations for relative development trends in Africa. These aspects are discussed and explained so as to develop exploratory hypotheses that can be tested if the data that we investigate in the next section allows that.

At the same time, the categorisation presented here will seem odd to some readers in that it does not deal directly with some aspects of what has become standard fare in many analyses of African culture – especially those that are inclined to describing Africa as the opposite of Europe or modern Western society. For example, we do not specifically lift out the individualism-collectivism scale that so many have deemed to be a fundamental way of explaining the difference between 'Africa' and 'the rest' (Hofstede 2001; Inglehart 1997; Triandis 1988; Schwartz 1994). Although there are many of the aspects that we discuss that are relevant to that theme (harmony and conflict, discipline, obedience, tradition and custom, wealth, etc.), we do not find the broad notion of individualism as the opposite of collectivism to be terribly interesting if divorced from these aspects that we do discuss.

The aim of this chapter is thus to develop an overarching framework for the claim that social and cultural values do, indeed, impact on development, and to set the scene for an engagement with African culture and values in development. In the process, we also explain aspects that others have claimed to be critical in the cultural explanation of development. The aim of being inclusive in this manner is to facilitate the dialogue rather than to impose a theoretical point of view.

There are serious methodological issues that emanate from the range of issues and material that we will be dealing with. The best we can do is to limit our claims to the extent that the issue here is conceptual development of issues that should be considered and that are not necessarily considered in current comparative values research. Our selection of material is necessarily eclectic and the theoretical discussions of the selected concepts are wide-ranging but not comprehensive or definitive. It is not the 'Malinowskian doctrine that the only true knowledge of a society is that of the ethnographer him or herself' (Kuper 1983:196)! In fact, we often find ourselves in a situation where we would prefer to speak in first person terms, but use objectifying language and references in order to anchor the argument in published academic literature. This only serves to underscore the need for more African research on these matters.

We are also not able to indicate how the concepts relate to current issues in any great detail. It is tempting to develop perspectives on the relationships between corruption, clientilism and matrilineal social solidarity or the relationships between power, harmony and actual peaceful resolution of conflicts; but such discussions will have to be informed by much more detailed analysis of data than what is available to us.

Methodologically, it is important to note that this chapter is based on a review of literature on issues and themes that we have framed and chosen. It means that we try to stay close to the specific points made by quoted authors, but weave this into a larger framework of our own.

The Complexity of Cultural and Social Aspects and Dimensions

As argued in the first chapter, culture is a notion of relatively recent origin. It relates directly to the development of the idea that society; and human differences are acquired and not predetermined in nature. It has also been tied to the idea of social engineering (or civilising gardening a la Baumann) for a considerable and, for Africa, an especially significant length of time. Even when the modern notion of culture can be stripped of the instrumentalist assumptions of gardening or engineering and presented as a way of life that encompasses symbols, rituals, practices and resultant social institutions and structures, one still has to have respect for the complexity that is at stake. All the so-called cultural notions that we listed under the areas of interest in Figure 4.1 above are related to broader structural tensions that are incredibly complex. This is not the place to develop a full argument about the various levels of complexity, but one should at least state the broad terms of the matter as we see it and take a position on the major issues.

The first level of complexity has to deal with the incorporation of an action-perspective and a structure perspective in a holistic and adequate social theoretical view of culture and society. Because we are interested in values and culture, the expectation may be that we would tend to prefer an analysis of development that privileges meaning in contrast to structure and function and that we would tend to focus on subjective experience rather than objective explanation. We do not take this dualism to be a useful categorisation of options for a values perspective on development, but would rather argue that we need to move beyond objectivism and subjectivism (Bernstein 1980). This implies an integration of action and structure perspectives where structure is seen as existing by virtue of the continuous flow of actions and action is constrained and framed by these very patterns that we call institutions and structures (Giddens 1986:5-40). One could also use the language of Habermas (1981) to make more or less the same point and argue for an integrated social theory that has an eye on systems, while at the same time understanding that all systems emanate from the lifeworld of shared meanings dealing with truth, rightness and beauty – to use Kantian categories.

One could argue that the basic thrust behind the moral economy approach is correct if this is understood to be 'a call for an economic science that takes as its center the location of the economy in the architecture of society – its institutions and values – and a new normative theory, one guided by the question of what end or good the economy ought to serve' (Booth 1993b:953). We know that the moral economy approach leads us to an often reified and essentialist set of traditional values that may "require" enforcement, and thus further division in society (Booth 1994:658)[1]

In contrast to the moral economy approach, one might consider the social capital approach. We do not consider this a viable approach primarily because the notion of social capital is silent on the notion of capital and because Fine's argument that "all capital is social" is taken as persuasive (Fine 2001). Whereas moral economy approaches want a return to traditional values, social capital theorists are in favour of the cultivation of the "right" values for development: if they are present in the traditional, traditional values must be rehabilitated; if not, community values need to be adapted so as to include values conducive to collective action and development. Social capital is not concerned with the traditional per se, but is rather concerned with values of collective action which are perceived as good for development and which are by chance often to be found in the context of the traditional.

Our approach to the areas and the aspects that we regard significant enough to consider as part of the values dimension of development is not to only focus on meaning and the subjective experience of individuals and communities, but to position these meanings in their social context of structural constraints and institutional frameworks. We do not find it moral or feasible to attempt to manipulate society by cultivating the "right" values. We are much more interested establishing how values function and interpreting and making a dialogue possible that goes beyond the abstractions of both the moral economy and social capital theorists.

The second level of complexity deals with the choice of working at the elucidation of culture through the means of values analysis. We take this approach because, as is indicated in the introduction, values are not as fluctuating as beliefs and opinions and constitute the most general life-orientation that one can conceptualise. However, this means that the level of analysis is complex. Values do not present themselves in packaged format but are latent variables that are constructed in a process of interpretation. It may be that extensive data is available that is sufficiently coherent and systematic and that one is thus able to do the interpretation with the help of data reduction techniques like factor analysis. This is done in subsequent chapters where possible. However, we are quite clear about it that such an analysis is as much dependent on interpretation as is qualitative analyses of specific events or experiences. This matter has been discussed in the introduction, but it is relevant here as well, as this chapter is dependent on a lot of conceptual argumentation that is related to anthropological – and thus mostly qualitative work – while some quantitative work is also presented as supporting argumentation.

The third level of complexity has to deal with the historical situatedness of culture in our time. Culture has been manipulated and distorted, first by colonial administrative systems (Lord Lugard arrived in Africa in 1888) and more recently by modernist assumptions about civilisation and modernisation. Culture is now also more reflexive than ever in the sense that the awareness of culture, cultural difference and cultural choice is almost universal. Values are talked about, formulated and used to define difference and identity also by politicians and business people. In the popular parlance about values a number of confusing dimensions arise. Purported values may not be the same as the underlying constructs of a sophisticated factor analysis or conceptual interpretation of opinions, beliefs, ethical positions and religious ideas. This adds another aspect of interaction to the mix.

The fourth level of complexity is possibly most difficult to deal with and is really the heart of the matter. The object of the investigation into values and culture in African societies is the interaction between culture and social and economic development. Not only is development itself a cultural artefact, but the interaction between culture and development has numerous feedback loops that make any attempt at causal conclusions fraught with real and statistical complexities.

Cosmology

Cosmology is defined as the world of ideas holding the governing principles that form a meaningful horizon of the world as we experience it. Cosmology is often associated with religion and metaphysics. This is because cosmology deals with ideas about the origins of the world and the essential nature of the world. Of course, one does not have to take a position on particular religious or metaphysical perspectives or this class of truth claims in general to accept that metaphysical and religious views play a role in society. However, the tendency in social science has been to discount cosmology and metaphysics as these kinds of truth claims cannot be verified in a scientific manner and are, therefore, not open to interrogation in scientific procedures. It is not without significance that the notion of cosmology itself is not really found in political science or sociology. The association between superstition, religion and cosmology is strong. The opposition between cosmology and science is equally strong. However, cosmologies are often discussed and researched in anthropology and in some traditions in sociology. What needs to happen for this to take place is that the particular methodology has to have room for and an interest in the study of meaning and symbols for their own sake. Cosmologies work with symbolic narratives, places, events and rituals and quite often require a specific vocabulary to articulate what it is that they claim about the world and how it developed.

The Notion of "Traditional Society"

The first aspect that we discuss is that of tradition and custom and its role in a values perspective on development. This aspect is discussed first as it relates to all four areas and is quite central to the enterprise of proving arguments for a historically informed and socially aware perspective on the role of values in development in Southern Africa.

A typical description of traditional societies is Rostow's view on the cosmology of the traditional world. It is set in a larger and famous argument about the stages of development and includes reference to other factors in development. However, Meier argues that a 'traditional society is one whose structure is developed within limited production functions, based on pre-Newtonian science and technology, and on pre-Newtonian attitudes towards the physical world. Newton is here used as a symbol for that watershed in history when men came widely to believe that the external world was subject to a few knowable laws, and was systematically capable of productive manipulation' (Meier 1964:13).

According to Meier, Cairncross argues tangentially and says that '[n]o one doubts – least of all Rostow – that innovation is a social process and that its acceleration in the eighteenth century was associated with what he calls for short 'Newtonian science': a new way of looking at the world and a new ambition to change it. The self-sustaining character of development derives from this outlook and ambition, which issue in a continuous effort of technological improvement' (1964:34).

Meier proceeds to offer a summary of the classical economic view of traditional societies and because we take this summary as paradigmatic for the classical view, we quote at length. This particularly negative view of the general impact of the traditional on economic growth is a view that should be contextualised and, therefore, can be debated:

> [T]he social structure and value patterns in many poor countries are still inimical to development. The structure of social relations tends to be hierarchical, social cleavages remain pronounced, and mobility among group is limited. Instead of allowing an individual to achieve status by his own efforts and performance, his status may be simply ascribed to him, according to his position in a system of social classification by age, lineage clan, or caste (Meier 1964:44).

Note that the notion of traditional societies seems to be dependent on a structural definition of society and that the role of individual or collective sense-making is discounted.

> A value system that remains 'tradition-oriented' also tends to minimize the importance of economic incentives, material rewards, independence, and rational calculation. When the emphasis is on an established pattern of economic life, family obligations and traditional religious beliefs, the individual may simply adopt the attitude of accepting what happens to exist rather than attempting to alter it – an attitude of resignation rather than innovation. Within an extended family system or a village community, the individual may resign himself to accepting group loyalties and personal relationships which remain in a stable and tradition dominated pattern, assigning little importance to material accomplishments and change (Meier 1964:44).

Here, it becomes clear that the classical view also holds that the structures of traditional societies are internalised to such an extent that they structure attitudes and values.

> Even though they may have latent abilities, individuals may lack the motivations and stimulations to introduce change; there may not be sufficiently large groups in the society who are 'achievement-oriented', concerned with the future, and believers in the rational mastery of nature (Meier 1964:44-45).

It now becomes clear that the definition of the traditional is quite dependent on a definition of the modern and that the definition of the one is a mirror image of the other.[2]

This is as good a summary of the list of typical issues that crop up in descriptions of cultural reasons for lack of development as any. However, this description is so clearly predisposed to an ideal-type of Western modernity that it may be a fruitful exercise to take into account Horton's comments on likeminded analyses of rationality in so-called "traditional societies".

> When someone in a pre-literate society answers questions about the cause of an event by making a statement concerning the activities of invisible personal beings, the neo-Tylorian takes the statement concerning the activities of invisible beings at its face value. He accepts it is an attempt at explanation, and goes on to ask why members of the culture in question should try to explain things in this unfamiliar way (Horton 1993:53).

Note that the Meier argument takes a particular view of rationality (one which is no longer as easily defended fifty year later) as part of a package of social structures and value patterns. If we take Horton's critique of the assumptions of the outside analyst of rationality in such poor countries to be correct, the question is how much of the rest of the analysis is correct or at all relevant. We will have to reserve judgement on the matters relating to human relationships and power until later in this chapter, but at least, it is clear that the kind of rationality that is at stake in an analysis of the role of cosmology in development is needed. In that regard, Horton's caution is a first step:

> In the sort of pre-literate cultures that social anthropologists study, there has been little development of that ideal of objective understanding of the world which is so central to the modern Western ethos. Hence, intellectualist interpretations of the ideas of such cultures is out of order (Horton 1993:54).

The next level of the problem is that we are not primarily interested in pre-literate societies, but in societies that seem to have significant imprint of what is called traditional society, but is in interaction with the rest of the globe. As Giddens points out more than once (1991:174-176, 1994), it makes very little sense to think that any society in contemporary times would not have been deeply affected by modernity through the process of globalisation. This is echoed by people who have studied traditional societies over many years starting with luminaries like Worsley (1957), Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) and Anderson (1983) and more recently the Comaroffs (1997), Appadurai (1996) and Hannerz (1996) van Binsbergen et al., make the point rather succinctly.

> [M]uch of what is presented as being traditional in character could be shown upon closer inspection, to be shot through with aspects of the modern world – indeed the globalizing world – to such an extent that it would be better to refer to these allegedly traditional identities as pseudo-traditional identities (van Binsbergen et al. 2004:7).

Although the above authors have mostly not been interested in the traditionality of such societies from the same point of view as was Rostow and Meier, their conclusions are salient in that the notion of traditionality is fundamentally questionable. It does make some difference to the question of development that only the notion of a traditional identity is no longer sustainable and that that does not mean that some aspects of traditional social structures and value patterns (to use Meier's terms) no longer exist. However, the idea that these structures and patterns can exist in any "pure" form must be rejected.

What this means for empirical research on large data-sets like the World Values Survey or thick descriptions of the detail of developmental dynamics in a particular community of group of people is that one should not longer be thinking in opposites, but in continuums and grades; and one might do well to look for very modern phenomena and dynamics exactly there where the traditional is invoked or ordinarily expected. Even the idea of a continuum as the proper way of capturing a more nuanced perspective in the place of African societies on these dimensions assumes that there is an existing polarity. This dualistic frame may be a misconception (Wiredu 1997).

It is exactly in the notions of secrecy and witchcraft that we can see this dynamic at play. If there were any set of aspects of African tradition and culture that one would expect to be closest to tradition it would be these notions. Work has been industrialised since the imposition of Western slavery and subsequent proletarisation of African communities under colonial and post-colonial economic relations. Politics has been imprinted with the logic of the nation-state even if this has found its own, sometimes perverted, forms in Africa. But one would expect that the secret societies and witchcraft notions would be least touched by globalisation and all its associated notions.

Secrecy and Rites

In general one can say that '[s]ecrecy serves to establish boundaries' (De Jong 2004:258). Furthermore, '[d]eeper truths are understood to constitute the core of culture. Indeed, when ethnographers talk about male initiation, secrecy and secret societies, they assume they are dealing with the hard core of culture'. In fact, secrets 'constitute an essential part of their identity, even a sacred force inherited from the past' (De Jong 2004:263).

If the core of culture is secrets, change cannot be an intervention of that culture, but must rather come from outside, from "our" world. Cultures depend on this core of secrecy to withstand turmoil and change. Therefore, it is possible to posit that culture will not fare well if change is pursued from outside – change will be regarded with suspicion and prohibited from penetrating this "core of culture" (De Jong 2004). However, what is most interesting about De Jong's experiences of secrecy and his role as an anthropologist in "keeping the secrets" and letting the cat out of the bag at the same time, is the reception of his position in the particular community. There is significant reflexivity about his position as an outsider and therefore a limited threat to the significance of the secrets of initiation. It means that certain core aspects of the secrets of initiation could even be commoditised and sold due an implicit understanding that there are different positions possible in how the core of the secret initiation is understood and taken up by insiders and outsiders.

If we continue the discussion from the same edited book and look at Rasing's analysis of female initiation rites in Zambia we see that these are portrayed as 'an intrinsic part of traditional culture and society' (2004:278).

Initiation rites remain important for women today despite the many social, religious, political and economic changes that have significantly altered Zambian society. Initially, the slave trade, pre-colonial state formation, the introduction of Christianity and colonization brought about changes in society, predominantly in the sense of a shift in power – from locals to westerners – and between men and women, centralizing men and marginalizing women. More recently, urbanization and economic problems such as massive unemployment, reduced household incomes, a lack of medical care, and the rapid spread of diseases such as HIV/AIDS have brought about changes predominantly in the economic and health spheres (Rasing 2004:278).

However, it is exactly here that initiation rites become interesting to us as it becomes a basis for power and plays a role in human relationships while still based on a cosmology that gives it meaning in contemporary society. 'The rites remain important for women as a means of constructing their identity and celebrating their culture' (2004:305). This can be viewed as a representation of continuity with the cosmologies of the past but it has a role in the present.

The performance of initiation rites in today's urban Zambia should not be seen as a longing for the past that is forcibly being maintained in a globalized world, but as a local institution that is part of a religion… In this religion, woman's power is shown in the sense of continuing life, giving birth, having contact with spirits that have power over fertility and life and death (2004:305).'... Initiation rites emphasise traditional knowledge, mainly about procreation, human relationships and relationships with spirits, topics remain important in a globalized formal economy (2004:305). ...Women's power and autonomy are also related to procreation. Fertility is a person's most important gift – particularly for women – according to matrilineal cosmological ideas (2004:306). ...Women show reflexivity and resilience in their performance of the rites in adapting them to modern urban life (2004:306).

Together, these perspectives on tradition, secrecy and initiation can be understood as reflections on cosmology. Initiation represents a form of religious teaching, imparting cosmological knowledge on initiates. Secrecy, on the other hand, represents a source of empowerment, protection, stability, harmony, community and solidarity but this is based in cosmology. Initiation, and the secrecy that accompanies this, serves to define interpersonal relations.

In the face of globalisation, societies need to adopt strategies to deal with new reality. This leads to questions on 'modes of selection, appropriation [and the] creation and transgression of boundaries' (van Binsbergen et al. 2004:18).

Witchcraft

The theme of witchcraft has been used to contain and frame African societies in colonial and neo-colonial terms whereby Africa is seen as the ultimate other and where barbarism is to be researched in order to counter and contain it (Pels 1998). This is not the point of our interest in witchcraft. We would rather point out that witchcraft is a very current and modern theme in African societies and the obsession with witchcraft in many parts of present-day Africa is not to be viewed as some sort of traditional residue. On the contrary, it is particularly present in the more modern spheres of society. In the comparative, global perspective, this linking of modernity and witchcraft is not peculiar to Africa and Geschiere notes that in other parts of the world modern developments coincide with a proliferation of what have aptly been designated as "economies of the occult" (van Binsbergen et al. 2004:32).

The question is why so many of the aspects of modernity have been interpreted by Africans as emanating from witchcraft (Geschiere 1998:811). The Comaroff answer is that witchcraft has become a finely calibrated gauge of the impact of global culture and economic forces on local relations, on perceptions of money and markets, on the abstraction and alienation of "indigenous" values and meanings. Witches are modernity's prototypical malcontents. They provide – like grotesques of a previous age – disconcertingly full-bodied images of a world in which humans seem in constant danger of turning into commodities, of losing their life blood to the market and to the destructive desires it evokes… They embody all the contradictions of the experience of modernity itself, of its inescapable enticements, its self-consuming passions, its discriminatory tactics, its devastating social costs (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993:xxix).

But why is there this link between witchcraft and modernity? Africa is also not unique the construction of this link. As in other times of tumultuous change, a fascination with witches and liminality are a product of social instability for a variety of possible reasons.[3] An argument in modern terms is made by a number of anthropologists.

The power of contemporary African discourses on occult forces, according to Geschiere, is that they relate people's fascination with the open-endedness of global flows to the search for fixed orientation points and identities. Both witchcraft and spirit cults exhibit a surprising capacity for combining the local and the global. Both also have specific implications for the ways in which people try to deal with modernity's challenges (van Binsbergen et al. 2004:34).

To gain insight in the complexities at play, it makes sense to consider the detail of a particular situation. New types of witchcraft seem to develop and the connection to new forms of wealth is striking (Geschiere 1998:820-821). In western and southern Cameroon. one name for this new type of witchcraft is *ekong*.

[E]kong is explicitly contrasted with older forms of witchcraft that make people eat their victims. Instead, ekong witches turn their victims into some sort of zombies which are put to work on "invisible plantations". Ekong witches are to be recognized by their possession of the much coveted new items of wealth: sumptuous houses with tin roofs, refrigerators and other electronic equipment, cars. Indeed, it is ekong which makes these witches so rich through the illicit exploitation of the labour of their zombie-victims (1998:822).

According to Geschiere, one has to take note of the fact that 'the spread of the same set of ideas on new forms of witchcraft and wealth has had very different effects in the Grasslands in the West and Northwest Provinces of Cameroon'. His explanation is that it is from these areas that 'a new bourgeoisie of successful entrepreneurs emerged who are now supposed to play a dominant role in the national economy of Cameroon… The new forms of wealth are, apparently, as suspect in the Grassfields as in the forest areas… The difference is that in the Grassfields, this novel witchcraft threat seems to be under control, at least to a certain degree' (1998:828). In conclusion, he argues that '[t]he general use of [Western] notions like "witchcraft" now reduces older cosmologies in which all men's surroundings are animated to an ugly core: the horrible image of the witches feasting on each other's relatives. In this sense, the resilience of "witchcraft" in postcolonial Africa, despite all "modern" changes, can be seen as the very effect of globalization and the impact of modernity' (Geschiere 1998:831-832).

These conclusions regarding the social role of witchcraft are remarkably similar to those of the Comaroffs in South Africa when they try to explain the sudden upsurge of witch-hunting in the post-apartheid era with terminology and concepts that are not at all indigenous to the particular community – zombies seem to have come to the North-West Province via Hollywood rather than from local cosmologies. The upsurge in witch-hunting and even killings seems to have been a response to the vagaries and distant dynamics of global business and national policy rather than some local dynamic or tradition, even though they would not discount the facilitating role of local cosmological schemes of explanation (Comaroff & Comaroff 2002). Similar patterns feature in Niehaus' discussion and analysis of a different province in South Africa (Niehaus et al. 2001). Although the material discussed does not prove that all witchcraft-accusations in all African societies follow exactly the same pattern it does give us enough insight into mechanisms that seem to be at work in different African societies. Witchcraft-accusations or even individuals identifying themselves as being witches are as present in modern African contexts as in a traditional setting; but although they rely on elements of traditional cosmologies, the dynamics are geared to deal with modern problems and often do so with a mixture of contemporary and traditional means. Witchcraft-accusations are not employed as items of nostalgia or as an attempt to sustain traditional society but as mechanisms of protection, explanation, manipulation and meaning in contemporary society. They also signal a distinct lack of feeling of control in the normal operations of political and economic processes 'at a distance' (Giddens 1991).

In Western thought, the opposite of witchcraft, magic and secret rituals has to be rational processes of explanation. In the standard version of empirically informed rational explanation, these processes are supposed to be open, deliberate and dependent on observation and ordinary logic. We now discuss rational explanation as an element of African cosmologies that attempt to deal with the human need to make sense of events and sequences, causes and effects.

Religion, Reason and Explanation

One of the classic (rooted in the rationality debate started by Evans-Pritchard 1937) if controversial arguments about African cosmologies is that 'religious ritual and religious mythology do sometimes get used as symbols of social relationships and social alignments' (Horton 1993:21). For instance, initiation rites define the roles of men versus women as well as power arrangements and the 'included' versus the 'excluded'. Horton argues that generally, the type of cosmological scheme depends on the social aims of the communities involved. 'If what the participants want to do involves disintegrative competition, then the world of their gods is likely to include some who are defined as helping their human partners in such competition; or if what they want to do involves little competition, their world of gods is likely to be more concerned with the collective welfare and harmony of all' (1993:37). Therefore, he argues that in West and North Africa, 'religious relationships between a god and an individual are considered to essential instruments of [their] competitive and even anti-social aspirations' (1993:41).

The problem with this picture is obviously the inherent functionalism and therefore reductionism that underlies the argument.[4] Moreover, Horton's functionalism not only reduces beliefs to objectified needs, but also takes away the historical context within which these beliefs are articulated and re-interpreted. It is this point that Levinson makes quite convincingly when he discusses Horton's ideas and says that, 'traditional religious thought, on the one hand, and scientifically oriented thought, on the other, loom so large as single frames that the very fact they are abstracted from historiographic material is obscured' (Levinson 1981:54). This has been borne out by many subsequent critiques of Horton's depiction of the openness of Western science (Barnes 1968; Skorupski 1976) and the closed character of African traditional thought (Bauer and Hinnant 1987).[5]

However, Levinson and others take Horton's point that important similarities do exist between Western science and African religion. The confusion that he wanted to address was that of thinking about African cosmology and religion as the African version of Western theologies and religion. If one takes Luhmann's point that modern Western religion is primarily about the ultimate epistemological problem of the foundation of any knowledge at all (Luhmann 1982, 1985), it means that modern religion is relevant to ontology, but not terribly practical. In contrast '[m]embers of pre-literate cultures tend to be of a practical rather than a theoretical bent. Hence, analyses that treat the religious ideas of such cultures as explanatory theories are beside the point' (Horton 1993:55). 'Religious ideas do not 'really' attempt to explain the events in the space-time world. They are concerned with other things' (Horton 1993:57). These "other things" do deal with explanation, but only the type of explanation that leads to prediction and control (Kopytoff 1987:207 agrees that this seems valid in terms of empirical evidence), i.e. one that has the same instrumental interest in knowledge than that of modern science. Of course, the issues that need to be controlled are social and not so much chemical, biological or physical – as can be seen from the above.

Horton was interested in a somewhat different issue than that which interests us. He wanted to describe and understand traditional African thought. We do not consider such a quest useful as the very notion of 'traditional African thought" is problematic – as has been indicated earlier. Not only is the notion of a singular pattern of thought problematic, but the idea that tradition continues unchanged anywhere cannot be sustained – at least not in the continent that has been in intense and extended conflict, exchange and accommodation with modern Western society for three centuries and with the forces of globalisation and internationalisation for the past four or five decades.[6] We, therefore, need to draw out the lines of argumentation to the present situation. There are still a few things one could learn from Horton.

African cosmologies may conceivably be employed in the same pattern as before, i.e. in order to explain with the aim of prediction and control of social and associated processes. At the same time, African cosmologies may continue to sustain the idea that more than one explanation can be found for events[7] and circumstances, and that events that go unexplained are potentially dangerous (Horton 1993:244-248, 332).

If we take a look at the religious form that signals the interaction with the West most clearly, namely, new religious movements, we see some of these patterns repeating. '[I]t is often pointed out that Africans have developed strands of reasoning that seek to explain and provide solutions to the confrontation with global systems and the feelings of exclusion that commonly result from such an experience' (van Binsbergen et al. 2004:32). In the endeavour to explain and solve, 'Africans hit on explanations that seek to deal with the world, and which to observers may appear to be absurd, fantastic and beyond the bounds of the rational' (2004:32). Our interpretation is that it is not a case of not understanding or grasping the kinds of explanation that would be used in the West, i.e. political and economic and social explanations.

The point is not that Africans do not always find Western explanations useful. Pretorius has found that more than 60 per cent of trained African nursing staff in hospitals in Bloemfontein hospitals in South Africa use both clinical Western medicine and solutions to illness and traditional African medicine and solutions (Pretorius 1989, 1994) and do not in practical use find it contradictory to do so (this finding can be supported with a very refined explanation of the changing structure of an African cosmology itself and in its relationship with the West: Comaroff 1980). The point could be that Africans are able to argue in the terms that Horton and most Western science find unscientific.

Here Horton's perspective is again instructive. The West tends to use impersonal models to explain the cosmos (Horton 1993:62) while African explanations may wish to include (at least) personal explanations. The religious cosmologies of most African communities are intensely personal, as they deal with divine personalities and/or family connections of the remembered past. Traditional medicine and divination, traditional cosmologies, etc. are all dependent on the personal relationships of the living and the world beyond that of the living.

When reading the Pretorius findings with the Horton arguments, it seems to imply that we can make sense of the actual use of cosmologies that seem to be traditional and cosmologies that seem to be modern or scientific by means of a practical approach to problems of understanding and explanation where more than one type of explanation is not considered to be cognitively dissonant. In fact, more than one possible explanation may even be preferred if it would allow the accommodation of both a personal and an impersonal mode of explanation. Therefore, we are implying that the possibility of more than one, but practically (if not theoretically) complementary cosmologies, is to be considered. This argument becomes stronger when we consider the material conditions of most African people.

Many African people have two continental points of reference for forming an identity. Of course, all of humanity has more than one point of reference for the continuous formation of an identity as we are all differentiated in terms of gender, age, social status, personal history, language, culture, etc. However, the impact of the forces of colonialism and globalisation has been tremendous in Africa. That has meant that many Africans, even in the most rural of places have made something of the Western and Arab-Muslim socio-cultural and ideological influences. Of course, this is a most dynamic and changing picture. However, the main current challenge in Africa south of the Sahara stays the relationship between African images and Western images.

We can see this in something as mundane as approaches to consumption. Consumption deals with the value of and relationship with food, clothes, household items and other items that are consumed in some way. Friedman sums up the different approaches to consumption as argued by Appadurai, Kopytoff and Bloch and Parry by saying that they are alike in one key dimension. 'They all represent substantial critiques of the opposition between traditional and modern exchange, arguing for a more nuanced view in which features of gift and commodity are combined in various ways in all transactional schemes' (Friedman 1994a:15). Gift is a code word for a communally oriented (personal) transaction scheme and commodity is per definition an impersonal feature of modern capitalist exchange.

At the same time, Friedman shows with his analysis of what he calls the 'political economy of elegance' of Congolese youth that try to remake their identities in Parisian terms (or what they consider to be Parisian). Poverty, marginalisation and exclusion call forth a process of identity construction that is oriented at finding new bases of power – at a cost. '[T]hese symbols, *la haute couture*, were not expressions but definitions of power, of the life force whose form is wealth, health, whiteness and status, all encompassed in an image of beauty… The state-class became great men of elegance by means of political violence and maintain that elegance by means of the theft of the state treasury, and even this can only ultimately be understood in terms of witchcraft and the magic of evil' (Friedman 1994b:185). In the process of taking up Western symbols, they sometimes take on a logic that belongs in a personalised relational definition of society and individuality, i.e. some aspects of a traditional cosmology are married to a modern cosmology in such a way that the modern is given meaning and creates power from an African cosmological scheme.

Fate and Coincidence

We have indicated above Horton argument that African cosmologies do not allow for chance events. This was also alluded to in the arguments of Leatt his study of migrant mine-workers in South African mines. Mining is the sphere of the South African economy in which black South Africans (and non-South Africans) have had the longest and most sustained exposure to the influences on consciousness and social relations of the modern capitalist system and its imperatives. Leatt argues that religion functions as a mediating force in the miners' attempts to come to grips with the 'clash of cultures' encountered when entering the modern industrial environment, but it also functions as a medium of resistance to what Leatt calls 'total assimilation into the culture of the mine' (Leatt 1982:82). The miners seem to be quite pragmatic with regard to accepting the basic rules providing for continued access to the economic benefits provided by employment and advancement in the industrial sector (Leatt 1982:81), but they find religion (specifically churches in this section of the survey) to be valuable with regard to social needs not provided for by the mines (Leatt 1982:87). Contact with the ancestors seems to be of significant importance to many miners as well and although many may deny contact with the ancestors (not willing to speak of such matters to any outsiders) about 70 per cent say that the ancestors are powerful (Leatt 1982:75-77).

The study shows that religion (defined in the way Leatt does) does not explain everything to the African miners, nor does it govern their cosmology in any total sense. Between 72 per cent and 77 per cent of miners surveyed explain accidents in the mines by reference to concepts like carelessness and chance in preference to religious explanations (Leatt 1982:79). Particularly the reference to chance (37%)

is significant because this type of explanation is unthinkable in 'classic traditional societies' as defined by Horton. In addition, the acceptance of rules governing access and advancement in the industrial arena is a clear indication of the ability of the Africa miners surveyed to appropriate aspects of a non-traditional cosmology (with regard to time, social status, the future, etc.).

The survey done by Leatt is, of course, dated, but the assumptions are typical of the problematic view of African cosmology that we would like to counter. The assumption that African cosmologies are not affected and have not come to a new understanding of aspects of capitalist production processes and conditions is just wrong. Africans have lived in interaction with the West for years and the mines have specifically been a place of industrial production regimes for more than 150 years (Sharp and West 1982).

The critique of dualism of the Sharp and West poses an important question as to the appropriateness of what has been gospel in so much of Western economic perceptions of African culture. The notion of fatalism that is understood to be pervasive in traditional communities may be quite wrong. Long-run fatalism is 'the assumption that the range of possibilities open to one's grandchildren would be just about what it had been for one's grandparents' (Rostow in Meier 1964:14). For economists of Rostow's generation to even consider cultural explanations in an evaluation of the potential for development in African and other non-Western countries is strange. Classical economics does not do so. It seems clear that even those who did consider culture and cosmology as a factor within the framework of classical economics operate with unsophisticated or possibly even ideological frames for their understanding of African cosmologies.

The question that is interesting to us now is what we can expect to discover in a more nuanced and open exploration of African societies when it comes to notions like creativity and invention, risk, time, and the future and harmony and conflict. If tradition, secrecy, "witchcraft", rational explanation and fate are not what they seemed to be to traditional descriptions of African culture, and if the notions of difference, hybridity and fluidity are more important in understanding African culture than dualism and stability, we would suspect that the same would be true for the other notions that we are interested in and which we would like to explore under the heading of cosmological aspects.

Creativity and Invention

The issue of African creativity is no longer a matter that is discussed with the assumption that it has to be proven. The mere fact that Africans have survived colonialism and imperialism and continue to survive currently is a testimony to inventiveness. The ways in which combinations, re-combinations and adaptations have been made on a cosmological level has been demonstrated above. However, the question that may still be posed is whether Africans cannot do better than survive and whether particular values are a resource or a hindrance to development that will provide a decent human life for Africans. As indicated in previous sections, the question is also not simply whether African creativity and innovation can deliver better growth figures.

Gyekye is correct in saying that the question is not whether Africans can adapt to modernity, but how we are doing it. Borrowing is a fact of cultural existence but 'practical wisdom dictates that what is borrowed or taken or received from alien cultures be such that it will enrich the lives of the recipients, rather than confuse and deracinate them culturally… African modernity must be a self-created modernity if it is to be realistic and meaningful, sensitive, enduring, self-sustaining' (Gyekye 1997:296). In his mind it is not a question of whether Africa is inventive and creative but how. We know from the brief reference to consumption that some African inventions are not to the benefit of African people. However, as long as normative arguments are not purely romantic wishes, and as long as there is a realistic possibility or actual realisation, of these possibilities African agency is not denied. A discussion of creativity in Africa cannot simply be a statement and proofs of creativity. What is required is a more comprehensive theoretical position that makes room for a systematic and fundamental understanding of the creation of new ideas in terms African world-views.

Guyer discusses the need for a theory of knowledge production, i.e. the development of new knowledge, in her attempts to deal with what she even calls "traditions of invention".

> I simply began to find the central issues of my own work in social and economic anthropology impossible to address adequately without a social theory (or theories) of knowledge production and mobilization. The production and management of money, the volatile valuation of people and things against currencies, the creation of skills in the informal sector, the adoption patterns for new cultigen; all risked being consigned either to the operation of a kind of "response to" rationality (coping, etc.) or to the radical contingencies of a basic theoretical indeterminacy (Guyer 1996:2).
>
> As long as the discussion of difference in African philosophy remains oriented to race and what are assumed to be the major differences of being "alien", it eclipses the profound question of how difference has worked within African communities, networks, diasporas and other organizational contexts… Diagne ridicules the political result of an ethnophilosophical standpoint – a "Cultural Charter" – and argues that cultural history "is not a unilineal chronicle of foreign values getting precipitated, layer after layer, onto a single cultural matrix… (but) several processes of evaluation… working constantly to re-establish cultural balances evolving in the face of repeated challenges" (Quoting Diagne 1993:271, Guyer 1996:18).

African creativity, is therefore, not an issue in itself. The question is the mechanism and context within which Africans create meaning. We have shown that the notion of a fixed tradition and complementary notion of a cosmology that cannot accommodate change or newness cannot be sustained.

Ritual, Risk and Danger

The next aspect that we have to consider is the notion of risk behaviour and the effect of African cosmological schemes in the estimation of risk. The "resignation" to the vagaries of life that Meier mentions when listing the issues that are seen to hold traditional societies back, cited above, means that risks are not seen as risks but as dangers. This distinction between risk and danger is critical as risk is a quantified guess that allows the risk-taker to estimate probabilities and consequences of failure in new undertakings while danger is to be avoided and fenced off with reference to known categories of acceptable and foreign, good and evil (Bernstein 1998; Luhmann 1993). The question is now how we evaluate and understand the place of ritual and taboo in the context of African cosmologies. Are rituals, taboos and purification rites about protection against dangers that lurk and that cannot be estimated or are they in some cases also about estimating risk and therefore attempting to wrest control of the future from the gods – to use the imagery of Bernstein (1998)?

In Douglas' famous book, *Purity and Danger: an Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1966), Mary Douglas focuses on the notion of impurity (pollution) and its relation to rules of protection against that which is considered to be impure. Dirt represents disorder. Rituals of pollution create a unity of experience – it makes the world conform to an idea, rather than avoiding real dangers of dirt (e.g., disease). Such rituals also create boundaries, hence reordering society politically, economically and socially; ritual 'creates harmonious worlds with ranked and ordered population playing their appointed part' (Douglas 1966:72). 'For I believe that ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience. It is only by exaggerating the difference between within and without, above and below, male and female, with and against, that a semblance of order is created' (Douglas 1966:74).

The main point to us is that Douglas argues for the universality of such ritual pollution: 'The difference between pollution behaviour in one part of the world and another is only a matter of detail' (1966:35). Pollution control serves to create boundaries between good and evil in order to protect the physical and social body from contamination, while also ensuring the maintenance of order and thus managing risks. In short, our pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications (1966:36). ...If uncleanness is matter out of place, we must approach it through order. Uncleanness or dirt is that which must not be included if a pattern is to be maintained. To recognise this is the first step towards insight into pollution. It involves us in no clear-cut distinction between sacred and secular. The same principle applies throughout. Furthermore, it involves no special distinction between primitives and moderns: we are all subject to the same rules' (1966:40).... Disorder leads to risk, where risk is both dangerous and powerful: 'though we seek to create order, we do not simply condemn disorder. We recognize that it is destructive to existing patterns; also that it has potentiality. It symbolises both danger and power (1966:94).

Gausset argues that Douglas is not correct when saying that dirt and untidiness constitutes the universal problem. He argues for the more fundamental and important category of *transition* being the universal problem – at least in his area of study, namely Sub-Saharan Africa (Gausset 2002:628-30). '[W]herever something is seen as operating a transition or being in a transitional state, and is characterised by some uncertainty or risk of failure/misfortune, it is likely to be seen as threatened by the conjunction with other things sharing the same transitional characteristic' (Gausset 2002:646). Without going into the detail of the arguments, Douglas and Gausset provide interesting arguments about the notion of risk and how it is viewed in conjunction with ritual and taboos.

A central theme of the work of Mary Douglas is the perception and interpretation of risk, which in her view should be based in cultural theory. In her book, *Risk and Blame: Essays in Cultural Theory,*[8] she conceptualises risk as 'not only the probability of an event but also the probable magnitude of its outcome, and everything depends on the value that is set on this outcome. The evaluation is a political, aesthetic, and moral matter' (Douglas 1992:31). Risk is essentially about uncertainty and the perception thereof. She then argues that 'cultural theory starts by assuming that a culture is a system of persons holding one another mutually accountable… From this angle, culture is fraught with the political implications of mutual accountability' (1992:31). '[E]very choice we make is beset with uncertainty. That is the basic condition of human knowledge. A great deal of risk analysis is concerned with trying to turn uncertainties into probabilities' (Douglas 1985:42). 'One of the functions of the cultural process is to provide ready-made categories for storing and retrieving information; social pressures ensure that the various separate responsibilities will be remembered… A shared culture tells them where they stand in the table of life's chances, without elaborate calculations' (1985:80-81).

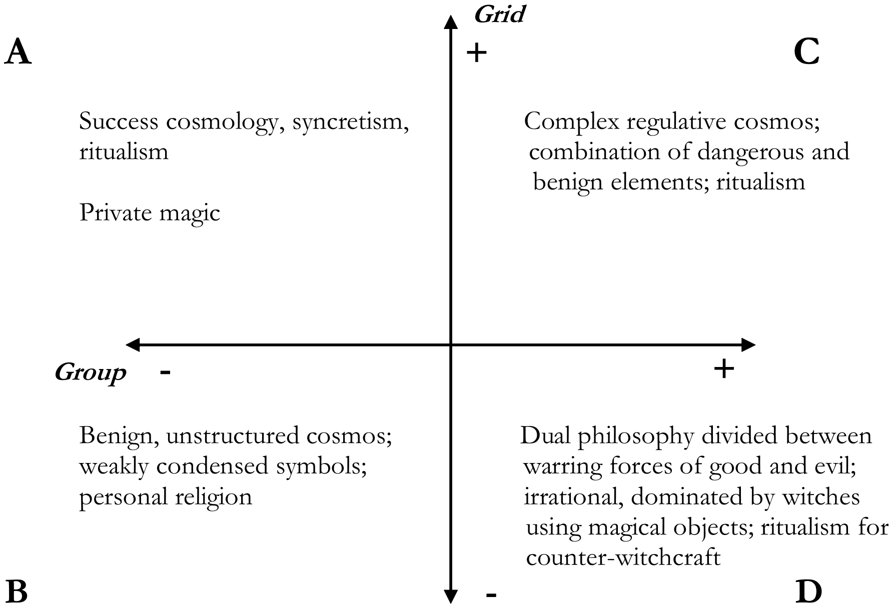
The definition of risk in terms of probability and outcome estimation is in line with standard definitions. The cultural slant is new and important. What we see here is a confusing picture. On the one hand, Douglas argues that ritual pollution and purification is a universal pattern of human existence. It serves to create moral order and contain the power that is located in the evil. She also gives a standard definition of risk as the turning of uncertainty into probabilities. On the other hand, risk is understood to mean the threat of disorder and pollution – which is to be countered by keeping to the known classifications and reinforcing the boundaries of good and evil. Is risk and danger, therefore, the same in her view? Is risk quantified and engaged with in order to deal with it in an assertive manner and take control or is risk more or less the same as danger and therefore to be avoided through reference to known categories of order and exclusion?

The answer to this question can only come from a less abstract and more contextualised reading of her work. She provides that in the grid-group analysis – still quite abstract, but with an intention of being able to deal with historical difference.

The grid-group analysis is meant to 'express the [cultural] character of social relations' (Douglas 1970:59). Douglas hypothesises that 'when social relations are not finely ascribed, when they are easily broken off and carry little in the way of obligation or privilege, the formal aspect of wrong-doing is disregarded. The more fluid and formless are social relations the more internalised the idea of wrong-doing' (1970:102). She argues that 'the relation of self to society varies with the constraints of grid and group: the stronger these are, the more developed the idea of formal transgression and its dangerous consequences, and the less regard is felt for the right of the inner self to be freely expressed. The more that social relations are differentiated by grid and group, the more the private individual is exhorted to power his passions into prescribed channels or to control them altogether' (1970:102). Group refers to the extent of boundaries between insiders and outsiders, whereas grid refers to the rules that determine the nature of individual relations.

Douglas' grid-group typology is presented in Figure 2 below. At the one extreme, societies in quadrant B are characterised by low grid and group. Their citizens are free of social constraints, and social relations are interpersonal and optional (1970:59). In this case, the individual takes precedence over the group. Therefore, social structures and relations are fluid and there is a high incidence of social mobility. At the other extreme, societies in quadrant C are characterised by strong grid and group and are thus 'dominated by ancestral figures, but also energised by other powers, by witchcraft and evil eye, and the automatic dangers of pollution. It is a complex world, dangerous for the rebel, good for the conformist' (1970:105). In this case, the maintenance of order and boundaries (pollution control) is crucial. The group is thus most important in social relations – the individual is regulated for the sake of the good of the group. Ritual is important and all individuals have specialised roles to fulfil for the good of the whole society. Role definition is highest and most complex in quadrant C and weakest in quadrant B. We do not go into the rest of the detail here.

Figure 4.2 (Douglas 1970:105)


Grid
+
A
C
Success cosmology, syncretism, ritualism
Private magic
Complex regulative cosmos; combination of dangerous and benign elements; ritualism
Group
-
+
Benign, unstructured cosmos; weakly condensed symbols; personal religion
Dual philosophy divided between warring forces of good and evil; irrational, dominated by witches using magical objects; ritualism for counter-witchcraft
B
-
D

The conclusion that we can reach here is that new uncertainty is converted to probabilities best in a weak group and weak grid society. When societies face known uncertainties and deal with social problems that seem universal and timeless, they can get away with ritualism and a regulative cosmos. In the light of the critique of conservatism (Beidelman 1993), and misconstrued empirical data (Gausset 2002), we need to be cautious about taking Douglas' views on face value. What does seem to be useful is the idea of thinking about risk when estimating the effect of culture and values in development in Southern Africa. In such a process, one would have to take into account various possible ways in which individuals and communities interpret change, newness, disorder, transition and combinations of transition. This cannot be done on the level of simple behavioural analysis, but has to be related to cultural constructs and cosmological schemes. We would propose that the result of such analyses would produce a complex picture in which 'grid and group' would play a role and in which ritual and taboo would count; but in which, if our previous discussions are anything to go by, these terms would be hybridised and mixed with patterns that would not fit into the conceptions of ethnography.

Harmony and Conflict

We argue that one cannot understand the variety of reactions to conflict situations without reference to African cosmologies and to the specific frames provided by notions of personhood in these cosmologies. In spite of romantic depictions, Africa is full of conflict. In spite of extreme social stress, African communities sometimes find it possible to develop harmonious solutions to serious problems. What is the relationship between cosmology and harmony and conflict? We argue that the question raises serious problems for much of what is said about African communal orientations. Individualism and communalism are often set up as the opposites in a dimension that forms a fundamental social tension between Western world-views and African worldviews.

Respect for the interest of cultural groups involves a fundamentally different orientation of humans to life itself from that which seeks to protect individual self-determination. This tension is irreconcilable, because it involves contradictory views of the human situation, human life, and the purposes for which humans have been created. What is truly at stake in the process of globalization is the basic question about the purpose of humanity itself (Sijuwade 2006:136).

Sijuwade does not provide any empirical support for his analysis whatsoever. It is, however, the overdrawn and abstract picture that one often gets in African reflections on the difference between Africa and the West (Lassiter 1999b) and a mirror image of what one also sees in Western depictions of an African communal orientation. Sijuwade is correct to cite the ancestors as being of fundamental importance in the self-construction of most Africans in Southern Africa. It has long been recognised that the ancestors are a fundamental part of construction and identity of most African communities (Fortes and Dieterlen 1965). Sijuwade is also correct to identify a difference between Western individualism and African identity construction but the reality is much more complex than it seems from the outside. Competitiveness would seem to be out of the question in his abstract version of African communal harmony cosmologies. Social solidarity in Western societies would be a derivative or residual category in the same dualistic framework. Clearly both these notions are too unsophisticated to deal with real situations. We are not interested so much in the Western self, but the African self and idea of personhood is fundamental to a good understanding of African cosmology.

Gyekye argues, contrary to many, that the African self is defined in both communal and individual terms and that 'it manifests features of both communality and individuality… African social thought seeks to avoid the excesses of the two exaggerated systems, while allowing for a meaningful, albeit uneasy, interaction between the individual and the society' (Gyekye 1988:31-32).

Given some of the arguments that we have put forward above on the hybridity of African cosmological schemes, it seems obvious that contemporary African selves would exhibit aspects and integration of both individualist and communal orientations. That is too easy though. We argue that the Gyekye argument is correct in more fundamental terms. It is not a recent development that leads to the combination of individualist and communal orientations. It is part and parcel of traditional African society to work with a much more complex idea of personhood. In order to gather the appropriate categories for such an argument, we need to go back in history somewhat and gain an empirically informed understanding of why competitive relationships are not foreign to the "African psyche".

The Comaroff studies of the Barolong boo Ratshidi lead them to claim that the reality of social identity is considerably more complex than the reductionist notion of collective identity as the only form of identity that is of significance in African societies. Not only is there a complex interplay between different aspects of identity but this interplay is dynamic and constructed.

The Tswana world of the time was at once highly communal and highly individuated. From within, it was perceived as a rule-governed, hierarchical, and ordered universe, and yet as an enigmatical, shifting, contentious one: a universe in which people, especially men, had to "build themselves up" – to constitute their person, position, rank – by acquiring "wealth in people", orchestrating ties of alliance and opposition… "the person" was a constant work-in-progress; indeed, a highly complex fabrication, whose complexity was further enhanced by gender, generation, class, race ethnicity, and religious ideology' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001:268-269).

> ...Given the workings of the Southern Tswana social universe, initiative lay with individuals for "building themselves up". The emphasis on self-construction was embodied…. in the idea of tiro, labour. Go Dirain the vernacular, meant "to make", "to do", or "to cause to happen"… It yielded value in the form of persons, things, and relations, although it might be undone by sorcery and other malign forces (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001:273, Also referring to wider studies of the Tswana people: Alverson, 1978).

This means that African conceptions of personhood or identity are not all that different from other socio-cultural constructs that may be considered and that the supposed opposites are not quite what they seem.

> ...The Southern Tswana conception of personhood, in sum, was part and parcel of a distinct, historically-wrought universe of meaning and action; an Afro-modernist universe in which labour, the self, and the social were mutually constituting… the antinomy between Euro-individualism and African communitarianism, past and present, is profoundly misleading. For one thing, as anthropologists never tire of pointing out, personhood, however it may be culturally formulated, is always a social creation – just as it is always fashioned by the exigencies of history. This is true in Europe and the USA as it is in Africa or Asia; as it is true of the eighteenth century as it is of the twenty-first century (2001:276).

The conclusion is simple and very clear: 'African societies did, in times past, have a place for individuality, personal agency, property, privacy, biography, signature, and authored action upon the world. What differed was their particular substance, the manner of their ontological embeddedness in the social, their ideological formulation' (2001:278). The only empirical part of this argument that has been shown here is the manner in work was defined. We should also, however, refer to the way in which the family relations play a role in both competition and solidarity as this is the base of so many popular arguments for a unique African orientation to the ancestors and, therefore, to communalism and to the exclusion of competitive and individual notions of self.

The different roles and effects of matrilineal and agnatic relationships play a constitutive role. Competitive relations for status and influence were a public phenomenon based on agnatic relations, while relations of solidarity were located and based in the private relations of the household (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:103). The result of the different types of relations between the Tshidi, depending on the contrasting agnatic and matrilineal discourses embedded in different practices, was a series of 'contradictory tendencies towards aggregation and hierarchy on one hand, and individuation and equality on the other… As a result the concrete shape of Tshidi society varied widely over space and time' (1992:106). The important point is that the type of variation resulted in a very varied role for agnatic and public discourses and matrilineal and private discourses. In situations where the political and public face of Tswana societies is threatened, there is another social network of relations (dispersed households not competing for influence and public space) which will be strengthened and which will take on a more important role in Tshidi life. If opportunities for political and public discourse and practice arise again and stronger leaders are able to counter centripetal forces by connecting households in one hierarchical discourse, a reverse situation could again develop. If we take the quickest possible look at the changing face of African communities in early and pre-colonial Central and Southern Africa, we can see that the variety of types of political and economic structures makes an argument for a continuously changing profile of communal and competitive definitions of personhood viable (Mafeje 1978:26-27).

Time

Contrary to the supposition that Horton portrays, it is not only traditional Africa that has many different time-scales. Giddens elicits interesting information in this regard when he considers the development of the nation-state in Europe, finding for instance that time-convergence in Britain is a strictly new development in nineteenth century industrialisation there (1981:175). Be that as it may, African time is an interesting issue in that Horton claims that, at least in traditional African societies 'the passage of time is seen as something deleterious or at best neutral' and on the major time scale of traditional culture 'things are thought of as having been better in the golden age of the founding heroes than they are today', while on a 'minor time-scale, the annual one, the end of the year is a time when everything in the cosmos is run-down and sluggish, overcome by an accumulation of defilement and pollution' (Horton 1993:247).

> This has an important impact on other matters that we are interested in, namely future orientation and risk estimation. '[T]he new and the strange, in so far as they fail to fit into the established system of classification and theory, are intimations of chaos to be avoided as far as possible. Advancing time, with its inevitable element of non-repetitive change, is the vehicle par excellence of the new and the strange. Hence its affects must be annulled at all costs…the passage of the year is essentially an accumulation of pollutions, which it is the function of renewal rites to remove' (Horton 1993:248).
>
> This kind of conclusion is behind the position of Kuznets who is famous for his analyses of the ebb and flow of development in economic systems. 'This African aversion to the passage of time, and thus to change, can have significant implications for the process of development: 'stocks of knowledge and social inventions themselves change over time; and that the modern economic growth of different countries is a process of combining the different complexities of historical heritage with the common requirement of the modern "industrial system"' (Kuznets in: Meier 1964:31).

If development does bring about affluence for some but it is not diffused through society until much later (the Kuznets curve), it would of course seem quite correct for some time that the past was indeed better for most. The assumptions of this kind of economics cannot be taken on board without any consideration of the context and the mechanisms with which the "development" takes place but it is clear that time cosmologies do ask important questions to the theme of development as such. We have come to suspect from the other analyses that the Horton depiction of African time may be outdated or skewed in some way, but the point that time cosmologies should be investigated closer in African context has been made.

Power

Power is a fundamental category of any social analysis. However, it is not a simple notion. Not only do we have a whole literature that attempts to define different faces of power; we also have different schools that are implied in those notions (Bachrach and Baratz 1962; Lukes 1974; Martin 1977; Isaac 1987; Bourdieu 1992). The issues have already been raised in chapter 1. We agree that the notion of three faces of power is useful. But that it is to be read from the perspective of Isaac

(1987) who calls for a perspective on power that understands that it is 'socially structured and enduring capacities for action'. This is close to Giddens' view that power implies 'transformative capacity' (Giddens 1986:7, More systematic and theoretically developed in: Giddens 1981) based on the employment of 'allocative' (control over material goods) and 'authoritative' (control over activities of human beings) resources. This view is an explicit attempt to incorporate Foucault's argument that power only exists as 'exercised by some on others' (1994:340) and that power can only be exercised over 'free subjects' (1994:342) who have choices of some kind or another whether the exercise of power functions directly or indirectly through social institutions and structures. Power is also not seen as simply negative and repressive but as creative and productive (Foucault 1990:94, 136).

Therefore, power is present in all relationships and interactions and social structures. 'A society without power can only be an abstraction. Which… makes all the more politically necessary the analysis of power relations in a giver society, their historical formation, the sources of their strength or fragility, the conditions that are necessary to transform some or abolish others' (1994:343).

It is clear that the general terms for the concept of power can be set in such a way that it incorporates the cosmologies and meanings that the preceding discussion refers to. The question is how it relates to more particular aspects of power in African societies. Women are generally in a weaker position than men in all societies. What difference do African values in different African communities make to the picture? The body is clearly a very important component of any ritual and taboo. How are African ideas of the body an inscription of power relationships? How is wealth related to power and to status and success? Some indications are that a personalised and symbolic power may be dependent on ostensive and bodily power. Is this a very particular instance or something that requires more serious investigation? How is obedience understood in African communities? Does it relate to a personalised notion of power and is it dependent on personal relationships? How does it relate to age and gender and familial status? These are almost random questions that we find in the literature and that were interesting to us as alternative questions to the standard dimensions of other value-enquiries. We would like to explore some of these issues in more details to develop some perspective on how these aspects might relate to each other, and how significant they may be to the issue that structures our interest in values, namely import of cultural and social values in development in Southern Africa.

Gender

We need to go beyond the brutal facts of Africa's poor position on the Gender Empowerment Measure of the UNDP (2002:36) and attempt to see how social and cultural values play a role in these figures and in the betterment of the situation. Of course, gender is part of every aspect of social development. For that reason, as well as the fact that gender is an often hidden dimension of power relationships, we found it necessary to focus on the matter. However, because gender is such an important part of just about every aspect of development that one can think of, it very soon becomes a difficult choice of what aspect of gender one has to focus on. To us it seems important to take good notice of general international trends described and tabulated by Castells as comprising a 'crisis of the patriarchal family' (1997:134). At the same time, it seems to be obvious that there are very particular and local dynamics that are relevant to our aims and that may remain hidden in a general discussion.

Manji's analysis of the Policy Research Report on Land Institutions and Land Policy of the World Bank is telling in just how much about power relationships we can hide in seemingly ordinary economic analysis and policy processes regarding development and on what level of significance this can happen:

> The assumption [in the report] that non-contractible effort is indeed more efficient needs to be challenged. The important question is not in fact whether such labour is more efficient than hired labour, but whether in fact this is based on the unequal position of non-contractible labour within the wider family and society. The idea that family labour is more "motivated" than wage labour is a central assumption of the Report. In its Orwellian usage of the word, the Report conjures up images of happy women deriving immense personal satisfaction from working in the fields. What the idea of motivation elides is the coercive element in the use of family labour. There is a presumption of the coercive power of the male head of the household, which is hidden by the term "motivation"…[T]he very terms employed in the Report mask the fact that the Report is at the very least taking for granted, and at the most advocating, feudal family relations. The patriarchal power of kinship structures appear to be a prerequisite for the World Bank's plans for increased agricultural productivity in the developing world' (Manji 2003:104).

When institutions do not structure policies in this way or when women take a hand in the definition of their economic efforts, the reality can be quite different from the feudal concerns that Manji raises though. In their analysis of some self-reliance initiatives in South Africa, Binns and Nel demonstrate that women can play a powerful and critical role in development in rural areas – note that in one case women insisted that no men be involved in the running of the project (Binns and Nel 1999). In the interplay between the World Bank report and a local case, one becomes wiser as to the complexity of the dynamics that may be at play here.

On a political level, the role of gender may be overplayed. On the most basic level of support for democracy, Bratton and Mattes pick up an instrumental approach to democracy in new democracies in Africa in their study of new generation democracies in the world. At the same time, it seems that 'African societies do not contain entrenched pockets of generational or gender-based resistance to democratization [and] the prospects for the consolidation of democratic regimes would seem to be slightly brighter than is sometimes thought' (Bratton and Mattes 2001:469). We do not have much information on the assumptions that Bratton and Mattes refer to, but one might hazard a guess that many commentators and researchers would point to a patriarchal power structure that may make it seem in the interest of some men to object to democratisation of society. The surprise is that, at least in their analysis, it cannot be identified – and their analysis is one of the most representative in African comparative research. These findings are interesting but run contrary to gender bias evident in all sorts of other political domains – from citizenship newly increasingly based in patrilineality (Cheater and Gaidzanwa 1996) to post-conflict recognition and participation in developmental projects (Jacobson 1999).

It may be that gender equality increases in general terms under conditions of incorporation in Western and industrial society and with exposure to international dynamics, but at least in some cases the very opposite is true – as Becker proves just about conclusively in her analysis of the development of gender relations in three San communities that have been incorporated in some or other way in broader and more modern society in South Africa and Namibia (Becker 2003).

Gender relations are very often played out on the bodies of women. A range of bodily taboos and rituals clearly support a patriarchal relationship between men and women in African societies. This continues even when a particular community or society becomes fairly developed economically. At the same time, these taboos and rituals and their associated social patterns are not all that simple to assess. Menstrual taboos are not necessarily an indication of female subordination (Kaspin 1996:574), but is quite often a double-edged phenomenon that connotes power and life rather than subjugation (Ben-Amos 1994; d'Azevedo 1994; Kaspin 1996). At the same time, the body is the centre of another power struggle if one considers the association between perceived female infertility and personhood. In this power struggle it seems that, in some communities at least, females that are perceived as being infertile are taken as being a non-person that is not recognised in society. This is the case even in Botswana where marriage and child-bearing has become separated due to changing social, economic and educational patterns. However, not being able to have children still means that a women often becomes invisible (Upton 2001). It is clear that body and gender issues are intricately related in terms of the power relationships that are rooted in these social constructs.

However, '[d]espite the explosion of research on women in the last three decades due to the political impetus of the global, and African, women's movements and the emergence of the women-in-development and gender-and-development paradigms and projects, restrictions on women's and gender research remain widespread because of the historical, cultural, social, and institutional marginalisation of women in many African societies and academies' (Zeleza 2002:15). Therefore, much more needs to be done to examine these specific and local dynamics and we anticipate significant new insight to emanate from such research.

The Body

We find the body to be an important category of power that should feature strongly in African comparative studies that deal with development. The personalised cosmology that we discussed in the section dealing with cosmology already provides a clue as to the importance of bodily notions of power. At the level of general interaction, all societies have certain taboos and patterns of behaviour and meanings attached to bodily functions and relationships. These are varied and specific, but still quite important in many relationships. We would argue that in a context where relationships are defined in terms of personalised cosmological schemes this dimension of power is even more important to study.

We need not agree that the body is used as a 'metaphor for society'. We need not agree that it is universally true that pollution rituals 'enact the form of social relations and in giving these relations expression they enable people to know their own society' (Douglas 1966:128). However, we do need to understand that the body is a medium, a testing ground and a basis for social power. This is clearly the case in gender relationships, but it is also the case in all sorts of other relationships of domination and persuasion.

The rainmaker acquires his power as a magician through acts of mimicry, influencing the cycles of nature through his own physicality. This type of sympathetic magic is possible only because the body is as much a map of the territory as the territory is a map of the body: the land is the feminine source of life, the rain its male inseminator, and the land draws the rain to it as a woman draws a man (Kaspin 1996:568).

It makes sense that in such a bodily definition of power, power does not reside in positional status but in imbibing or 'eating' whatever it is that is being dominated (Fabian 1994). This has obvious implications for definitions of leadership (political, religious, etc.) in African societies as is pointed out by Fabian in his analysis of the dispersed leadership of the Jamaa religious community.

This line of enquiry very quickly leads to the political level and a discussion of neo-patrimonialism where 'real power is primarily exercised via personal networks and patron-client relations, which may be hidden from sight and which are thus tantamount to invisible forces preying on the common man' (Møller 2006:16). These ideas of the bodily inherence of power may be quite valuable to explore further in detailed comparative research.

Wealth

As we are interested in development and the material and other benefits that are to be built up by African communities, we are also interested in the way wealth and its origin and purpose is understood. Again, the Comaroff studies are an excellent background for a larger discussion.

For Tswana in Botswana during the 1970's… itirela [(to make, work, do) for oneself)] still referred to the accretion of riches in family and social relations, in cattle and clients, in position and possessions; all of which was also held, hegemonically, to contribute to the common good. The creation of these forms of value was dubbed 'great work' – the effect of which was to extend the self through ties of interdependence, often by means of objects. Thus, the significance of objects, most notably beasts, was that it both indexed and capitalized leverage over people. By extension, power was taken here to be a measure of command within a complex, labile field of material and signal exchanges. Far from being understood in terms of individual autonomy or self-sufficiency, its signature was control over the social production of reality itself (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001:274).

Not only is wealth a social construction, but it is also consistent with the general definition of power that we employ, an instance of power in social relationships. Self-construction is taking place in the process of building up powerful relationships and the accumulation of signs of wealth.

However, even though it seems to be implied that these processes take place with some ostensive demonstration of wealth, the Comaroffs find that such demonstrations are done with a consciousness that takes into account two fundamental perspectives on the dangers of ostensive wealth:

First, because that self was not confined to the corporal body… anything that acted on its traces might affect it for good or ill; which is why human beings could be attacked through their footprints, immobilized by curses, enabled by ancestral invocation, undermined or strengthened by magical operations on their, houses, their clothes, or their animals. Second, to the degree that anyone was "known" to others she or he became vulnerable to their machinations, to being consumed by them. Conversely, empowerment, protective or predatory, lay in the capacity to conceal: to conceal purposes, possessions, propensities, practices – and, even subtly to conceal concealment, to hide the fact that anything at all was being hidden (Comaroff & Comaroff 2001:275).

The subject of money itself is also interesting as this shows something of the ambivalence and pain of the incorporation of African and capitalist worlds. Money is termed *madi,* but this is also close to "blood" and, therefore, to Jean Comaroff signals that money is associated with the 'circulation of essential vitality in the social world' (Comaroff 1985:175). In another publication, the Comaroffs elaborate by explaining that:

> Money… is 'hot'. Like a corrosive acid, it 'burns' the pockets of those who try to hold on to it; like the unpredictable, dangerous fire of female fertility, it is explicitly opposed to the cool stability associated with cattle and male political control… The point, rather, is that virtually all, Tshidi, now at the mercy of the capricious coin, exist in the state of subordination formerly associated with femaleness (Comaroff & Comaroff 1990:209).

This is in opposition to cattle which remains 'a symbol of economic and cultural self-sufficiency' and 'represents the freedom from the labor market of which many Tswana dream' (Comaroff & Comaroff 1990:209).

The question to a comparative study of the importance of wealth in power relationship in Southern Africa is obvious. How much of the dynamics explained by the Comaroffs is found in other communities and how does this dynamic change in circumstances of further and more assertive integration of African communities in the first world economy? Are we to expect a situation where one part of a population will start to supplant cattle with Western consumer products and find identity and power in that while another (larger) part of the population will continue to find that money "burns" them and that wealth in any sense of the term will continue to evade them? These are both questions of socio-economic change in the future and the cultural reaction to such change and it is precisely why we are interested in how wealth is seen in Southern African and how perceptions of wealth change. The consequences of change and the reaction to these consequences are expected to be more complex than simple greed is pure nostalgia. Something of the most recent dynamics can be estimated from discourses in the Pentecostal churches.

There has been a surge in membership of this kind of religion worldwide. Latin America, Africa and East Asia have all seen significant increases in numbers of these churches (2006). These churches also seem to be creating wealth for their members and this has raised the interest in economic analyses as to what the mechanisms are that lead to this. However, Meyer shows that the striving for prosperity is not simply blind greed, nor is it a simple savings orientation.

Despite PCCs' strive for prosperity, the achievement of wealth is moralized by distinguishing between divine and occult sources of wealth, often by referring to traditional ideas concerning the nexus of wealth and morality… Because the modern world is represented as thriving on temptation … PCCs appear to alert believers of being wary not to lose themselves in crude consumptive behavior and to use wisely the money they earn. People should avoid drinking alcohol, leading a loose moral life, and, in the case of men, squandering money with "cheap girls."… The ideal is a moral self, not misled by the glitzy world of consumer capitalism nor misguided by the outmoded world of tradition, but instead filled with the Holy Spirit. Although there is likely much overlap between the Protestant modes of conduct that Max Weber found to be typical of early Protestantism, the strong emphasis on becoming prosperous and showing off wealth distinguishes PCC's from early modern Protestantism (Meyer 2004a:460).

Gifford (1998) shows that some of these churches are purely about consumption and blind prosperity theologies.

Leadership, Obedience and Status

The African Leadership Forum established by Nigerian President Obasanjo is as good a place as any to gather a few ideas about the common perceptions about the importance of leadership in development in Africa: 'The general feeling was that Africa needs strong leaders if it is to acquire an enduring philosophy of government and shake off its vulnerability to external pressures, leaders with "a revolution of perceptions and of approach"' (Aka 1997:213). Such platitudes are common and most probably not incorrect at all. Of course, leadership at the level of national and regional positions is different in important respects to leadership in a community. However, this question is whether communities do not also want "strong" leadership with new ideas and what this means in the social and cultural and political context of African communities.

Western leadership theory is said to be ethnocentric and cannot, therefore, be applied to leadership in African organisations and communities as

In Africa, individual achievements frequently are much less valued than are interpersonal relations. The value of economic transactions lies as much, if not more, in the ritual surrounding them and their capacity to reinforce group ties as it does in their worth to the parties involved. Wealth is, first, extended family or clan wealth, and second ethnic or tribal wealth; often it can be acquired legitimately at the expense of the organization (Blunt and Jones 1997:15).

We know that this picture is an over-simplified depiction of the situation. At the same time, one has to give credit for the sensitivity to know that European assumptions may not work. However, such sensitivity may lead to the posing of opposites in analysis. This is a problem that people like Hofstede (2001) and Schwartz (1994) attempt to deal with in their analyses. Of course, we understand that analyses of data can be facilitated with the creation of dimensions and testing for intensity of responses on those dimensions. The question always has to be what one does when many respondents in a particular population find themselves in the middle range of the dimension. It may be that the theory sets up false dichotomies. That is exactly what we have come to suspect when reviewing the standard positions on many of the other aspects that have already been discussed.

African leadership has to be contextualised in the very varied structures of social organisation in different African communities. Not only is there the difference between matrilineal and patrilineal (and combinations thereof) communities, but also new dialectics that impact on older notions of dependence and status that refer to lineage and kinship. Here, one has to take into consideration the immense impact of what Goheen calls 'national politics and accumulative economics' (Goheen 1992:391) even though this has to be balanced with due consideration of the need for accommodation of local and traditional leadership forms (1992:401). One has to take into account the impact of regime type, with neo-patrimonial regimes not being the only possibility even if Bratton and van der Walle argue that it is the dominant and core type in Africa (1994:459). One has to expect surprises in these analyses if the result of a study hypothesising that ethnicity would play a major role in determining succession and thus leadership power construction is anything to go by (Londregan et al. 1995). Londregan et al. found that the only positive prediction that could be made on the basis of ethnicity was that rulers are most likely to be replaced by members of their own ethnic group, but that leaders from large ethnic groups do not tend to be able to get power or stay in power longer than others (Londregan et al. 1995:23).

The question as to: what the relationship between "real" leadership and political power on whatever level? is has not been settled with these few comments. It is not possible to settle the matter in theoretical terms, as the notion of leadership has to be a contested notion if it is to mean anything. However, it would be good to know whether African people and communities also think that it is no more than natural (as Bratton and van der Walle seem to suggest) for African leaders to exercise leadership only and preferable in the "big man" format of personalised leadership relationships that are network dependent.

Another dimension of leadership is the connection between leadership and intellectuals. Pityana laments that intellectuals in South Africa have become middle class and that this leads to all sorts of social problems (Pityana 2006). Intellectuals have been a central part of the process of liberation in many African countries and the regime type post-liberation has a significant impact on their subsequent place in society. What does it mean to be a critical intellectual in a globalised African society where many states are neo-patrimonial at root? How does this impact on the visionary ability of leadership?

Human Relationships

Human relationships are central to African communities and to their development paths. One does not need to subscribe to social capital views to see this point. The mechanisms that structure these relationships may be much more complex than we assume and there are important theoretical choices to be exercised when thinking about human or social relationships. The choices that are relevant, first and foremost, have to deal with the type of philosophical anthropology one wants to espouse. Individualism has a significant series of choices associated with it. Equally so, communitarianism can be articulated in different ways. The question, however, is how African people articulate their own positions on these abstract frameworks. In a sense, there is an inevitable circularity in this way of framing the matter as one has to take some set of options in mind to be able to define significant dimensions, choices and issues about which African people are asked about. All observation is theory-laden (Popper 1963)!

To state something of a framework for the enquiry into aspects of human relationships we refer to Gyekye's limited communitarianism as this is at least an attempt to provide a critical but African philosophical anthropology that will help us to define some of the important issues. Gyekye does not agree to a full-blown communitarianism, as this would imply that actors do not really have choices in their social relationships because their humanity is fundamentally determined by their communal structure (Gyekye 1997:52). There are various ways of limiting the communitarian argument. Gyekye does so by arguing for relatively independent rational and moral judgement while holding on to the central point (for him) that communities are formed around shared values (Gyekye 1997:52-58). These values are not what Castells has termed primary values of language, religion or ethnicity but substantive values that specify general definitions of humanity and community as being guiding principles. In such a framework, generosity, compassion, reciprocities and mutual sympathies are asserted within a recognition of individual human rights as well as human dignity (Gyekye 1997:62-65). Gyekye's arguments are relevant to us not only because he philosophises about the nature of human relationships, but also because he does so from a critical but African perspective. We will use that to profile the issues that we are interested in.

As indicated in the introduction to the chapter, we identified the aspects of freedom, honour and shame, communication and trust and tolerance as critical aspects that either come to the fore from existing material that deal with key values for development or that we find in empirical of theoretical material to be important aspects of African value conflicts that could impact on development.

Honour and Shame

It is often said that Mediterranean culture is dominated by the paired notions of honour and shame (Peristiany 1974), even though one might have questions about how this actually operates as a frame for understanding the societies (Abu-Lughod 1989). This is tied to the patriarchal definition of maleness. A patriarchal definition of maleness is fairly common on many societies, historically and currently. However, we were interested in seeing whether the notions associated with honour and shame (or honour and modesty – if we follow Abu-Lughod) have any resonance in African communities. The results have been mixed in a literature review. The interesting insight that comes from the literature is the connection between honour and respect. This may be a more immediate connection to the concerns that lead us to think about honour and shame. The issue is whether we can get to a different frame for the moral dimensions of human relationships that will resonate better with ordinary discourse on relationships than notions like sin and individual moral responsibility that are typically associated with western individualism. The connection between honour and shame/modesty and respect seems to exist in some discourses about respect.

According to van der Geest's analysis of Akan society in Ghana (also more generally Green 1983), respect is seen as 'the basic moral value which regulates social behaviour. In its first, superficial, meaning it refers to a type of behaviour that is shown, similar to etiquette or politeness. But "respect" may also refer to an inner quality. The concept then includes admiration, affection and love. Such respect is the basis of the care which elderly people enjoy from their children or other relatives' (van der Geest 1997:535-536). We would consider it a worthwhile enterprise to investigate this notion as a key aspect of human relationships in African communities. The connection with age is important as this poses a challenge for development when seniority is an absolute. The inherent social conservatism that goes with such an emphasis on seniority and the consequent problems of gerontocracy (especially when as male as it often is) poses interesting questions to development. At the same time, the human cost of not caring and of youth that find it important to pose themselves as the opposite of their seniors is a different dimension of the matter.

Morrell cites a number of indications that respect for age and seniority in the Southern African colonial context was already under threat around the end of the nineteenth century and the customary respect practices like *hlonipha* (Nguni) were considered to be under threat (Morrell 1998:621). This problem is complicated by the gender relationships that we also see developing in African communities (in line with the general trends described by Castells 1997).

The following description from Tanzania is telling as it points to a changing gender relationship also among the poor and marginalised communities of Africa. It also specifically uses the term honour:

> The fact that women are becoming increasingly economically independent and leave husbands is a serious threat to the male ego and honor. Many men expressed outright jealousy and fear that when wives have their own business projects outside the home, they may feel attracted to other men… A man's honor, reputation, ego and masculinity are severely affected if he cannot control his wife. The code of honor is associated with an agency for self-defense against encroachment from the outside, and men are projected into an active role, the role of controller and aggressor (Silberschmidt 2001:665).

The description here does make it seem as if men are victims; but this is only true to the extent that migration to the cities and involvement in marginal industrial society has brought about changes which are a threat to their interests.

Honour and shame or modesty functions as a very powerful framework for interaction in the Mediterranean world and also further afield towards the Indian sub-continent. The power of this framework is such that social cohesion and solidarity is fostered, but it seems to be the fount of blood feuds and honour killings as well. The African notion of respect may be associated with the same dynamic but, due to the premium placed on harmony and human dignity, seems not to lead to the same kinds of enforcement in case of a lapse or general disregard of customs showing respect. This axis seems to be worth investigating as a value axis that could be an important facet of African development dynamics.

Communication

Communication in societies that are not dominated by formats that assume literacy, but have a long history and deep practical knowledge of oral communication, coupled with a strongly developing visual dimension dependent on video and television will be complex. Are all the cues that an Africanist oral communication specialist will pick up cues?

We cannot be satisfied with the superficial notion that 'communication is the mechanism through which the flow of acculturation between the modern and the traditional cultures is facilitated and made less discordant' (Nwanko and Nzelibe 1990:263). They argue that with the advent of the mass media, instant communication has become possible not only within communities but also throughout most African nations… mass communication can play a profound role both in the management of conflict between communities and in the creation and maintenance of common ideals, aspirations, and patterns of behaviour that preserve and strengthen both the national and the local communities. Communication promises to be the most effective means of establishing a framework in which effective conflict management can be undertaken. Moreover, communication generally, and mass communication in particular, can help establish the goals and objectives of community development… Communication plays a significant role in limiting the level of diversity and developing broader areas of consensus on which individuals and groups can function properly and productively. Another effective role of communication in the management of conflict in African communities is the provision of awareness of opportunities for enduring compromises which can create suitable environments for effective development planning and implementation (Nwanko & Nzelibe 1990:263-264).

Such a view of the role of communication assumes a number of objectives that require serious consideration and possibly rejection (communication cannot in itself establish goals for development, the level of diversity should not by any means be something that should be limited, control of mass media and the various interests at play are fundamental issues that cannot be glossed over). The main question, however, is how any of these or more limited and less naïve goals are to be reached. How does communication do all of these things when people who communicate do so with different types of signals and different frames of reception? We have seen mention of gender, age, cultural and many more divides and differences. These aspects impact on communication. How will mass communication deal with these differences? Of course, communication is important, but we would like to know more about the values that are associated with good, respectful, efficient and sensitive communication in different groups. This requires detail analyses.

Trust and Tolerance

The trust term has become a huge field of study in anything from economics and management to anthropology. We are interested in trust as a key area of basic human relationships, as we believe that something in the social capital literature is correct. Trust across boundaries as well as within groups does make a difference. The question is how trust is constituted and upheld and denied and lost in different communities and also what that trust allows and enables. The next question about social capital has already been stated and asks whether the social capital construct is not in service of a social engineering ideology.

Whitely defines social capital as 'the extent to which citizens are willing to cooperate with each other on the basis of interpersonal trust' (2000:443). He is concerned with the extent to which interpersonal trust reduces transaction costs, encourages investment, encourages reciprocity and cooperation and minimizes the burden of policing. Trust, therefore, 'plays an important role in explaining both the efficiency of political institutions, and the economic performance of contemporary societies' (2000:443). Trust is conceptualised here as originating within the family and influenced by societal norms and values rather than originating 'in secondary groups such as voluntary organizations' (2000:460). This is the typical definition and framework for trust research in the social capital paradigm (Knack 1997).

From that base, Whitely examines the relationship between trust and growth in a sample of 34 countries. Three variables from the WVS (1990-1993) are used that are consistent with the manner in which Whitely defines social capital, namely, 'questions about trusting members of one's own family, trusting fellow nationals and, finally, trusting people in general' (2000:453). These variables are then included in the neo-classical growth model, and Whitely the finds that 'it is a highly significant predictor of growth in a diverse set of countries, and in the presence of various control variables. Moreover these results are not dependent on the fact that a country has a democratic government or a market-based economy, since a number of authoritarian and communist countries are included in the sample' (2000:460).

The important question posed at the beginning of this section about the elements that make up trust seems to be settled in such international comparisons. However, the picture changes when more specific focus is on African countries themselves. Widner and Mundt (wholly within the standard form of social capital research and after a serious comparative attempt) find that 'norms and behaviour typically included in the concept of social capital do not cohere in the two African contexts studied the way they do elsewhere in the world' (Widner & Mundt 1998:21)

The study by Narayan and Pritchet (1997) examines social capital in the context of generalised trust and voluntary organisations in rural Tanzania. Their data consists of household income and the results of the Tanzanian Social Capital and Poverty Surveys (SCPS) conducted in April and May 1995. The 'econometric estimates show a large (and arguably causative) effect of a village's level of social capital on the incomes of all households in that village' (1997:27). One standard deviation increase in social capital increases each member of a household's expenditure by at least 20 per cent (1997:20). The study further demonstrates that this effect is social and operative at the village level (1997:34). They claim that their results 'suggest that social capital is *capital* and not merely a consumption good' (1997:35). These results cannot, however, be generalised and applied to contexts outside of rural Tanzania.

Carter and Maluccio (2003) examine the potential role of social capital in helping households face risk in Kwazulu-Natal. Given incomplete financial markets in developing countries, especially in rural areas, households may be unable to insure against shocks. The results of the study do seem to suggest 'that households that suffered a loss were better able to absorb it if they were in communities with a larger number of groups in 1993… [and] this capacity is weakened in those communities where the neighbour losses were very large; there is little evidence, then, of the bridging sort of social capital that would allow shocks to be absorbed across communities' (2003:1160).

Maluccio, Haddad and May (2000) attempt to gauge the causal relationship between formal and informal group membership and household welfare, as measured by per capita expenditure, in South Africa. They are particularly interested in the direction of causality. The results suggest that social capital did not provide significant welfare returns for households in 1993, but did 'yield substantial returns in 1998' (2000:77).

When one considers these results, it may be surmised that the notion of social capital sometimes seems to explain something of the dynamic of human relationships and sometimes not. The issue, first of all, is how it is operationalised in research and whether the aspects included in the analysis are relevant and predictive. It seems that this does not always work out if taken in a conventional way as shown by Widner and Mundt. What we can establish, though, is that trust plays a role in economic development. The mechanisms and the elements of that process are not clear yet.

Human Qualities

As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, the aspects discussed here are a collection of items that have come up in discussion, in the literature and in values analyses that have been done by others. Obviously, we have made a selection and we cannot discuss the literature or existing analyses fully. The idea is only to provide a framework and an approach to these items.

If one looks at development projects all over the world, and in Africa as well, one of the main findings has almost consistently been that projects fail. Within a number of years from start-up, most development projects are empty shells. Of course, development cannot be limited or even primarily described and analysed in terms of projects. If we take a step up and have a look at large policy-driven initiatives that were to have driven development on a comprehensive scale in national and regional contexts, it is equally clear that such initiatives have failed grandly. Structural Adjustment Programmes supported or enforced by the World Bank and the IMF make up quite proportion of such failed initiatives. It seems as if something is missing. Obviously, our entire argument is that we should not only be considering whether the SAPs and projects were conceived correctly, but we should also consider more specifically whether the social element has been part and parcel of the conception and subsequent plans.

One of the problems with a first attempt at explaining failure with reference to human and social factors (as opposed to technical or structural factors) is that this is often done so poorly and so superficially. At the same time, some of these issues are relevant if they are considered within a larger cultural and social context and they do not shift blame but attempt to understand. That is our approach to the material as well.

Imagination and Other Qualities

The first point to make about imagination is the one that Sen makes when he argues that culture matters in particular ways in development. One of those ways is the ability to imagine something different as expressed in arts and crafts (Sen 2004a:36-39). Not only does this create work and income, but it also creates a different framework for understanding ourselves and for being understood from outside. There is, therefore, a normative reason for promoting imagination in communities and for promoting all types of activities that will enhance imaginative outputs for the betterment of all.

However, the question is whether there is an interest in newness and whether imagination is prized in African communities. If the traditionalist interpretation of African culture is taken up, it may mean that imagination is suppressed or just not supported. The best place to locate this question is with the youth of a community.

[T]he movement of western discourses on youth through various institutions and personnel, to which youth are framed both as prototypical consumers and as prototypical social problem, condenses many of the critical issues of globalization and historical conjuncture. Moving through these conjunctures, reconfiguring webs of power, reinventing personhood and agency, youth stand at the center of the dynamic imagination of the African social landscape (Durham 2000:114).

In this quote, the problems of imagination become clear. The imaginings that may happen are not pure or without context. So much effort is invested in capturing markets by cultural and media entrepreneurs, and so much happens that could transform imaginative youths to consumers that one wonders whether any imagination is left that is not framed in pre-existing consumer-defined packages. Durham clearly thinks that the youth has much more to offer than a regurgitation of consumer packages.

We would like to investigate this on a comparative scale and also take a look at the very expectations and frames that exist in society at large about the imagination of the youth. In such an investigation, the generational (Comaroff & Comaroff 1999:284) axis of difference in African societies is very pertinent, as it may well be that the youth have much more to offer than the rest believe.

The World Values Survey and the European Values Study have been asking about the values that parents would want to encourage in their children or more precisely 'important qualities to teach a child'. Some of the qualities listed are thrift, working hard, being responsible, aspects of respect, tolerance and imagination. In some of the more recent analyses, Inglehart frames the results of the data analysis on a two-dimensional scale and in terms of basic orientation of a society towards survival or well-being and traditional authority or secular-rational authority (Inglehart 1997:82). These results are the product of a data reduction process on aggregate level and must, therefore, be a reduction of some kind. The question to us is how much of the end result is determined by the selection of items. One can immediately say that other items may have produced a different result. The end result of the analysis seems so perfectly synchronised with the self-image and contrast that the West has been positing as the difference between the West and the rest that one has to be wary of the effect of theory-laden observations. Our interest in the terms that we noted would be to investigate contradictions and mixed forms in order to see whether we can come up with a different framework than the one that Inglehart seems to "find" every time.

Aspirations

The aspirations of African people are different types of aspects than the qualities noted above. Freedom has clearly been an important aspiration in all African countries in the colonial and even in the post-colonial era. However, material aspirations have been important as well and as can be seen from the discussion of consumption and the relationship of, for example, Pentecostal believers with wealth and success, the situation is complex. Bayart poses an interesting and important question with his notion of extraversion (Bayart 2000). According to him, African dependence on the West is an activity. It takes on various forms and the political and economic is no less important than the cultural and the ideological. Bayart is brutally deliberate in his attempt to make clear that Africa is not marginalised in the sense that it is not part of the rest of the world. It is, through emptying itself out to the West, part of the world. However, this is conceived and described mostly on the level of the nation-state and international and corporate economic relations. Although he does make mention of the cultural and social dimensions, the questions of how beneficial and how dependent relationships are on this level is much less sorted out than on the economic and political levels.

Meyer discusses the matter in terms of exchange in religious context and analyses the Pentecostal influence in social and cultural context in Africa. She finds much that is transported from the West and that is even good or acceptable. However, she cautions that [t]here is a danger, though, of overemphasizing the creative and positive aspects of extraversion, which would bring the notion disturbingly close to earlier approaches toward Africanization in the sense of tradition-oriented wholeness and harmony. In many respects, the study of PCCs has little eye for the possibly disorienting, unsettling, and destructive implications of born-again Christianity, the contradictions on which it thrives and the disappointments it generates (Meyer 2004a:463).

The aspirations of Africans are complex and Africans are making and remaking their aspirations every day.

Conclusion

We have trawled through a large territory and found a series of conflicting and confusing perspectives on what may be important values in development. Most of our energy has gone into establishing the nature of the confusion. The point is to define issues that should lead to or connect with an existing dialogue within African communities. Africans make their own future and, in a sense, it is appropriate to close with Bayart's perspectives on the interwoven relationship that Africa has with the rest of the world. Much of that relationship is a continuation of dependency through very dubious means and with dire consequences. At the same time, nostalgia for values that used to regulate and guide life in African communities is not only unproductive but also inconceivable. Africa is not disconnected and has not been on its own for quite some time. The values that will guide African people and communities will be values of the present. We need to know much more about the nature of these values and the confusion that they carry with them.

Notes

1. It is most edifying that a number of African intellectuals are taking a critical position regarding "traditional values" (Hountondji 1996; Wiredu 2001; Appiah 1992; Gyekye 1997.
2. One is reminded of Orientalism as defined by Said (1979).
3. The debate among historians about the causal reasons for an increased interest in witchcraft and especially a sharper interest in witch-hunts still continues. The reasons range from weather changes to structural socio-political reasons (Behringer 2004; Robin, Larsen & Levin 2007), but they all culminate in some from of social instability.
4. Of course, Horton's intellectualism that disregards the other dimensions of religion and its value to believers, is an other reductionism at play here (Meyer 2004b:458).
5. Both types of criticisms have been accepted to some extent by Horton (1993:308).
6. We are closer to Mudimbe in that we argue for a composite and changing characterisation of "Africa" (Masolo 1991:1004).
7. It is interesting that the term equifinality is a key notion in the theory of open system as used in biology and physics and comes close to the African pattern of thought (von Bertalanffy 1968).