



COLONIAL EDUCATION IN CHEIKH HAMIDOU KANE'S *AMBIGUOUS ADVENTURE* UNDER MALEK BENNABI'S EYES: TOWARDS AN ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHICAL CRITICISM

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Abstract : This article aims to view colonial education in Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure* from a local Islamic philosophical perspective, namely from the Algerian Malek Bennabi's theory of civilization. The main idea around which the article revolves is the religious idea which Malek Bennabi sees as the pivot for the appearance and development of civilisations. Many articles on Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure* were elaborated, but the role played by religion in creating harmony and then emptiness due to its absence was overlooked. It is this very importance that the French colonizing project aims at destroying via the erasure of Allah in the African soul of the best Diallobé child, Samba Diallo. The article concludes that following the colonizing project, the Bennabian civilisational religious idea is -and must be- substituted by the colonizing educational idea which, in fact, resembles the canon and exceeds its effect if one sees the influence of colonial education on Africans epitomized in madness and inertia.

Keywords: Cheikh Hamidou Kane, Malek Bennabi, *Ambiguous Adventure*, the religious idea

L'Éducation Coloniale dans l'Aventure Ambigue de Cheikh Hamidou Kane sous les yeux de Malek Bennabi: Vers une critique islamique philosophique

Résumé : Cet article vise à voir l'éducation coloniale d'un point de vue philosophique islamique dans le roman, *L'Aventure Ambigue* de Cheikh Hamidou Kane, notamment de la théorie de la civilisation de l'Algérien Malek Bennabi. L'idée principale autour de laquelle l'article tourne est l'idée religieuse que Malek Bennabi voit comme un pivot pour l'apparition et le développement des civilisations. Plusieurs articles sur *L'Aventure Ambigue* de Cheikh Hamidou Kane ont été élaborés, mais le rôle joué par la religion dans la création de l'harmonie et après le vide dû à son absence est négligé. C'est cette importance que le projet colonisateur français vise à détruire à travers l'effacement d'Allah dans l'âme africaine du meilleur enfant Diallobé, Samba Diallo. L'article conclut que suite au projet colonisateur, l'idée religieuse civilisationnelle bennabienne est -et doit être- remplacée par l'éducation colonisatrice qui, en réalité, ressemble au canon et dépasse son effet si on voit l'influence de l'éducation colonisatrice sur les africains incarnée dans la folie et l'inertie.

Mots-clés: Cheikh Hamidou Kane, Malek Bennabi, *L'Aventure Ambigue*, l'idée religieuse

Introduction

Ambiguous Adventure is Cheikh Hamidou Kane's first novel published in 1962 and translated into English in 1963 by Katherine Woods. It highlights the distressing effect of colonisation on Africans. As noticed by Abdul-Rauf Adebisi (1993), the specificities of *Ambiguous Adventure* lie in bringing the educational problem of the Muslim child to light and in Cheikh Hamidou Kane being the only Francophone West African Muslim writer to make this subject the theme of a novel.

Indeed, *Ambiguous Adventure* depicts a young boy's journey towards nothingness which only way to come to terms with is death. The other specificity is that apparently the protagonist, young Samba Diallo, shows *excellence* that would allow him to be the candidate to enter the French school, but implicitly he seems to be the prey for the French colonizer 'to chase and kill' and thus becomes the epitome of the fatal degradation of the Senegalese élite. This can explain Kane's choice of a *bildungsroman* form for his novel, i.e., to trace the protagonist's development from childhood to adulthood. *Bildungsroman* or novel of formation allows the author and his reader to uncover the colonising mechanism that works for disintegration of the African Muslim's mind and soul and consequently succeeds to reflect the *deformation* of the African and of Islam.

Many critical studies were published on C. H. Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure*. Vivian Steemers in his '(Post)Colonialism and Ideological Configurations: An Analysis of the Power Structures in Cheikh Hamidou Kane's "Ambiguous Adventure"' rereads Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure* through Mahmood Mamdani's cultural study *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (1996) finds out that French imperialism imposed a centralized despotism via the imperial foreign school and the controversy over it. Abdul-Rauf Adebisi's '*Muslim Child between Two Worlds: A Critique of Cheikh Hamidou Kane's "Ambiguous Adventure"*' sees C. H. Kane a devoted Muslim who cannot but be alarmed by the danger posed to the spiritual and intellectual development of Diallobe children by the Western educational system established in the wake of the colonial conquest of the Kingdom.

Samba Gadjigo in '*Literature and History: The Case of Cheikh Hamidou Kane's "Ambiguous Adventure"*' underlines that Kane's choice to reconstruct the history of the Diallobé by focusing upon the issue of education suggests a necessary discernment that people's patriotic or revolutionary aspirations cannot ever be achieved on the basis of a colonial education. Another related impossibility is highlighted by Ella Brown's '*Reactions to Western Values as Reflected in African Novels*' who views that C. H. Kane leans toward Samba Diallo's impossible achievement to absorb Western culture without losing his mystical sense of the presence of Allah. In the same line and aesthetically, Iheanacho A. Akakru in

'*Islam as Infrastructure: A Reading of Cheikh Hamidou Kane's Ambiguous Adventure*' contends that *Ambiguous adventure* is, in a clear way, a sublimation of a fundamental Islamic Sufi principle which positions God as the Diallobé's transcendental force and as the centre of Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *écriture*. The loss of the Sufi centre is for Rebecca Masterton's '*Islamic Mystical Readings of Cheikh Hamidou Kane's "Ambiguous Adventure"*' the ultimate cause behind not only the impossible social, cultural and philosophical adjustments that colonized African Muslim society was forced to make but also the tragic loss of the Sufi precious knowledge, which occurred with the imposition of the French educational system.

These critical papers converge on the incrimination of the colonial education in sublimating the Diallobé's Islamic ethos and in reinforcing a colonial and imperial process. It is worth mentioning that in more than one critical source, Kane's novel is described as philosophical. However, they do not elicit its being philosophical and do not explain how colonial education functions and the reason (s) and factors of its success in erasing the divine figure in the Diallobé child's soul. Therefore, this paper tries to explain why *Ambiguous Adventure* can be analysed philosophically in order to encompass the functioning of the French education in a country that at the time when it crystallizes its civilizing evolution, it undergoes a colonizing attack. The problem question that this paper tries to address is: how does colonial education *practically* achieve to settle in an Islamic environment and lead to an existential inertia of the Senegalese élite represented by Samba Diallo?. This question will be answered on the basis of a philosophical frame.

The latter owes a great deal to the philosophy of Malek Bennabi. Some of his writings engulf the processes of the construction of civilizations, the importance of religion and ideas and the problem of culture. Noticeable is the fact that Malek Bennabi and C. H. Kane come from the same background; Islamic upbringing and education. The paper does not aim to show that Kane is intellectually influenced by Bennabi or vice versa. Instead, it contends that between the two exist similarities of positions and ideas channeled in different ways: Kane's channel is (auto)fiction (some critics position the novel in autobiographical writing because of parallels between Kane's biographical data and Samba Diallo's trajectory and development), Bennabi's is philosophical writing. The other aim that the paper targets is to localize/africanize the criticism of Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure*. Instead of relying on Western philosophical ideas which undeniably can be fruitful and enriching, this paper leans towards benefitting from local/african philosophical ideas which can appear more effective as they emerge from the geographical (African), historical(colonization) and intellectual environment that nourishes the novel. In

other words, C. H. Kane the author and M. Bennabi the philosopher are Africans who witnessed and lived the colonization of their homelands by the French and whose education was African (islamic) and European.

1. M.Bennabi's and C.H. Kane's biographies: Some notes

Malek Bennabi's *Mémoires d'un Témoin du Siècle* published in 1966 is the most authentic source as he narrated himself his intellectual journey as indicated from the title *memoirs*. Born in Constantine, East Algeria, on 1st November 1905, he grew up in a family which prioritized Arab Algerian heritage tradition and the teachings of Islam. Indeed, since childhood, Malek Bennabi had started studying religious subjects in particular the study of the Quran. In addition, he studied at a French school. In 1921, Malek Bennabi changed school to *Al-Madrasah al-Konstantiniyyah*.

In 1930, Malek Bennabi decided to go to France to continue his studies there. He enrolled into the *L'Ecole des Langues Orientales*. He later enrolled into the Institute of Engineering, and this education centre influenced him eminently. In 1935, Malek Bennabi graduated in the field of electrical engineering. This scientific background led him to dissect the ideas and history in scientific and philosophical ways and enabled him to diagonalize the various problems in underdeveloped countries. The titles of his books such as *Problems of Civilization*, *The Conditions of the Renaissance*, *The Problem of Ideas in the Muslim World* and *The Problem of Culture* attest to this specificity.

With regard to Cheikh Hamidou Kane, he was born on April 3rd, 1928 in Matam, Senegal, C. H. Kane frequented a Koranic school then moved to the French school at the age of. He attended the *Ecole supérieure Blanchot* in Saint-Louis then in Dakar where he got his *baccalauréat*. Kane then went to Paris to study at the Sorbonne university where he graduated from the department of philosophy. He returned to Senegal and in 1960 became the governor of the Thiès region. In 1961 he became the head of cabinet for the government minister of Planning and Development which he abandoned later. He was also a UNICEF representative in many African countries(wikipedia.org)

From these two summative biographies, one can deduce many similarities. Both M. Bennabi and C. H. Kane absorbed in their childhood phases Koranic education. During adolescence, the two frequented the French schools. They subsequently went to France in order to get graduated, one in Electrical engineering, the other in philosophy. Their homecoming after the independence of their home countries witnessed their participation in the building of the country by holding high positions (both were ministers). Yet, the only difference lies in the fact that M. Bennabi retired soon to commit himself to writing whereas

C. H. Kane moved from one position to another and could write only two novels, *Ambiguous adventure* and thirty-four (34) years after *Les Gardiens du Temple*.

2. Malek Bennabi's centrality of the 'religious idea'

Malek Bennabi (1905-1973) is a famous Muslim philosopher, seen as the theorist of civilisation. Algerian intellectual, writer and theorist, he was unfortunately neglected though his works were published in Arabic and French till the 1980s when his analyses of the issues faced by the Islamic world started to gain recognition. The latter was possible mainly due to his thoughtful study of the decadence of the Islamic civilization and the solutions he provided.

The most famous Bennabian civilization theory is the one that relates man, soil and time as necessary ingredients for the birth and development of any civilization. In the form of a mathematical formula, M. Bennabi presents three ingredients as bases for the building of a civilization and their absence or ineffectiveness as causes of degradation; thus indirectly diagnosing the crisis of any civilisation according to these ingredients. He writes:

Civilization=Man+soil+time indicates that the problem of civilization can be analysed into three primary problems: the problem of man, the problem of soil and the problem of time. Thus, resolving the problem or the question of civilization could not be done by gathering and stocking its products but by fundamentally resolving its three problems. (*Conditions of Renaissance*, p.13)

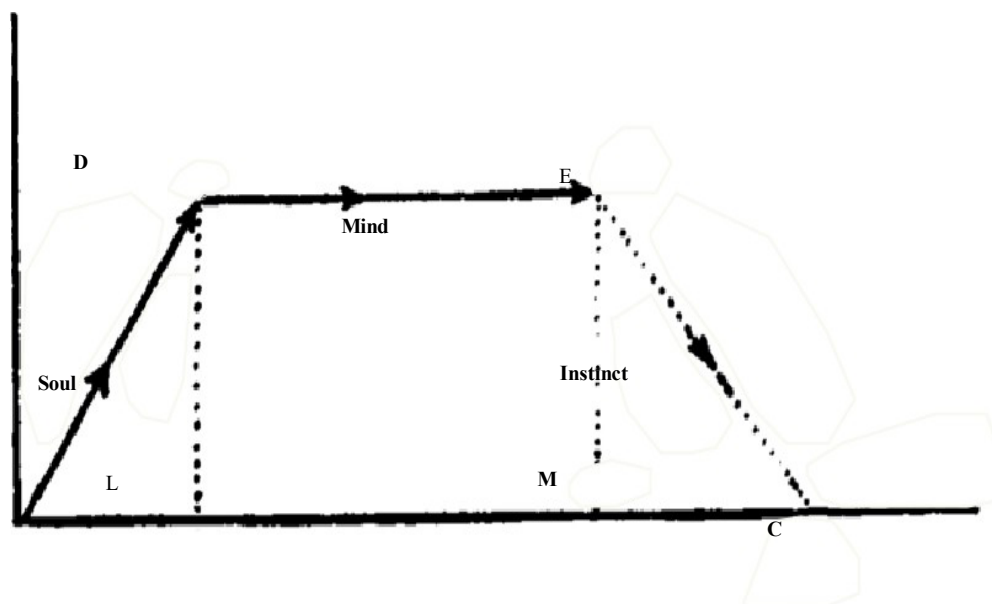
In other words, Civilization needs man as the transformer of the raw material found on soil as its source during a period of time as a marker of achievement. Somehow, all the three elements are the origins of a civilizing process. If a problem appears at the level of Man, Soil or Time, then the civilizing process is at stake.

After much reading of the history of world civilisations and the Muslim one in particular, M. Bennabi realized that the religious idea, whatever that may be, is the necessary pivot that sustains any civilisation birth and flourishing. 'All civilizations have their roots in religious sentiments...the Buddhist civilization has its roots in Buddhism, the Muslim civilization in Islam and the Western civilization in Christianity (Bennabi, p.49). The real function of religion for M. Bennabi is that of :

a catalyser, favouring the transformation of values ... from a natural to a psycho-temporal state...[of] the biological man into a sociological entity; [of] time [from]simple chronological durationinto sociological time, evaluated in hours of labour; and soil [from] unilaterally and unconditionally the nourishment for man... into a technically equipped and conditioned terrain for catering to the multiple needs of social life according to the conditions of a process of production' (Bennabi, *Conditions of Renaissance*,45).

In other words, the civilisation triad -man, soil, time- M. Bennabi devises to describe the elementary ingredients of civilisation can be shaken in the absence of the religious idea. In some words, Religion is the shell that shelters the three elements to enable them to interact productively in order to form a civilisation.

M. Bennabi further asserts that in order that religion will function as a catalyst of civilization, it should be nascent, dynamic, expansive and collective (see Bennabi, p.45). By being or becoming individualistic, religion proves to be unfit to propel a civilization and to be cloistered in and by the devotees' group who escape their responsibilities and withdraw from life (see Bennabi, p.45). Alternatively, its dynamism allows the cycle of civilisation to start. Indeed, Bennabi's division of the cycle of civilization into the spiritual, the rational and the instinctive stages attest to his position that religion is the root of civilization. Below is M. Bennabi's diagram (*Conditions*, p.66) that explains his perspective and the three phases any civilisation goes through. The spiritual expresses the strong ties the individual has with his religion which in its turn helps him propel his own civilization. The rational phase translates the individual's utter reliance on the mind, his abandonment of his religion and his static civilizational movement. The instinctive phase speeds up his downfall since his instincts become his divinity.



In other words, at the beginning of every civilization lies a religious idea. Characterized by an integrated man, controlled instincts and spiritual laws, the spiritual phase expresses religion dominance over individuals' behaviors,

feelings and thoughts and its role in shaping positively the social relations among members of the rising society. In the second stage, reason controls, society enjoys its developed relations network but ails from some defects, and the recourse to instincts starts to appear. The instinctive stage declares the end of the function of the religious idea. Society is disintegrated; instincts are totally liberated, and the network of social relations is finally disintegrated, science is swept away by chaos and ignorance (Bennabi 1986: 75). All in all, a civilization, according to M. Bennabi, is an interrelated cycle that commences with a religious idea and ends with dominant instinctive forces. Knowing each phase of the evolution of civilization and understanding its features will avail analysts of frameworks of development and decadence and thus of correction and re-emergence if solutions are wisely adopted.

At any rate, Bennabi's thesis can be summarized in the fact that the religious idea¹ in any civilization is the fuel that pushes society towards the civilizing process. It formulates an active synthesis of man, soil, and time. In some words, civilisation cannot emerge without a religious idea in its broadest sense. Therefore, in order to study the history of civilisations, one needs to dig deep in their religious foundations that made their rise possible. According to M. Bennabi, any civilization rests on the religious idea to emerge and flourish. In other words, the individual must be armed with religion² in order to be able to implement the civilizing project. In parallel, any individual without a religious basis will not be able to construct or continue the construction of a civilization and thus will be stuck in backwardness.

3. Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure*: the implicit fight between the French colonizing project and the Senegalese civilizing process

The first section of *Ambiguous Adventure* alludes to past historical relationships between France and Senegal. Cheikh Hamidou Kane, behind the narrator's voice, explains the process of the French successful colonization of Senegal. The French own the techniques such as the 'craftsmanship of joining wood to wood [and] **the art of conquering** without being in the right' (p.34). Besides, 'where they had brought disorder, they established a new order (p.49)

Indeed, the pair disorder/order allude to the inevitability of change that would suit the colonizer's needs and interests. The narrator's report sheds light

1-At this juncture, it is worth mentioning that by religion, M.Bennabi does not mean Islam *per se* but points to all religions.The latter embed any kind of relation between a human being and a divine power.

on the colonizer's coveting and seizure of the Diallobé's space and place³. Knowing that any 'space is alive [and] speaks' (Jean Marc Moura, *Les Littératures du Lointain*, 266) and consequently that the African space 'speaks' an African religion; i.e islam, the French colonizer makes the Senegalese space/place his first and most important target to take over. The French colonizer's aim is to enlarge his own space; hence his authority. The first act the French colonizer sees necessary to do in order to genuinely own the Diallobé space/place is to reconstruct it. Subsequently, he brings in it, as a first step of reconstruction, 'disorder'. The word "disorder" implies that it is the colonizer's order which prevails, not the Diallobé's, but which the Diallobé assess as disorder, for it erases their previous order. As a second step, the colonizer establishes a new order to make it *his* space and place, new in the sense that it buries what reminds the colonizer of the colonized.

From a Bennabian perspective, it is the collision of the French colonizing project with the Senegalese Islamic civilizing one which is articulated at the level of space/ place. The village as space in *Ambiguous Adventure* is the first site that bears the Diallobé people's defeat foreshadowing similar aftermaths. Indeed, disordering and re-ordering the Diallobé space/place evidence a cessation of the Diallobé people's ownership of their space/place resulting in an erasure of their presence as subjects having turned to objects 'divided up, classified, labelled, conscripted and administered' (p.49). Furthermore, the French spatial practice in the formerly African space persists and in another form. The French colonizer introduces his school which is 'bound up with a new order' (p.49), making of it an indirect rival of the Glowing Hearth, the Koranic school. In other words, destroying the Senegalese civilizing process passes through destroying its religious idea incarnated in teachings developed in the Glowing Hearth. There, Samba Diallo learns the beauty of the word, the closeness to God and transcendence.

All these spiritual constructive tools are targeted and destroyed by the colonizing order via the 'white school'. The French school, an emblem of 'superior' knowledge, is irresistible. Indeed, if the french colonizer imposes his presence in the village, he proposes his school to the villagers. Its characteristic and the way it is introduced in the village encourage the Diallobé people to accept it. The latter start to consider its benefit doubting a little the possibility of the school assistance to the cannon. 'The new school shares at the same time the characteristics of a cannon and of a magnet. From the cannon it draws its efficacy

³Jean Marc Moura differentiates between place and space (lieu et espace). 'place' must have some characteristics to be named as such. He writes thus 'L'homme a un lieu qu'il habite, qui lui est familier...le lieu est une image qui...devient une force de protection...refuge, centre, le lieu nourrit les images de l'intimité, *Les Littératures du Lointain*, pp.264-265.

as an arm of combat [...] it makes the conquest permanent [...] [it] bewitches the soul' (*Ambiguous*, p.49). This statement summarizes how colonial education functions. It shares with the cannon its effective role in perpetually conquering the soul.

The Diallobé people's reaction is twofold. Some members like Thierno thoroughly reject the French school, arguing that it will destroy their religion and impose secularism; i.e a precept incompatible with their convictions. He even considers their defeat to the colonizer as a divine punishment because 'they have offended God' (*Ambiguous*, p.11), and that their independence relies to a great extent on their penance from their sin of forgetting God. Thierno's group proclaims its discontent of the French colonizer and his education of their children. This symbolizes the resistance of the civilizing process against the colonizing one. The Knight, Samba Diallo's father, believes that 'thanks' to this school 'the victory of the foreigners [will be] complete' (*Ambiguous*, p.47). When he receives a letter from the Diallobé telling him that Samba Diallo must be enrolled in the French school, he feels 'a blow in his heart' (*Ambiguous*, p.67)

This resistance is enfeebled from within though unintentionally. The Most Royal Lady, having understood that 'the [the French] true power lay not in the cannons of the first morning but rather in what followed the cannons' (*Ambiguous*, p.49), urge the village to accept the French school. She intends to structure a political strategy arguing that the Diallobé will acquire the ability to fight against the colonizer in the long run. The Most Royal Lady views the recourse to the French school as a means of appropriation for the sake of her people's survival.

Subsequently, the Knight bitterly accepts to appropriate the white man's knowledge of how 'to check the external' (*Ambiguous*, p.79) as he says to Paul Lacroix. Indeed, the conversation between the Knight and Lacroix stimulates more than one observation. First, both Lacroix and the Knight are representative voices of their respective religions. Lacroix boasts with materialism and atheism. The Knight defensively explains spirituality and theism. For the former science is primary; for the latter death is primary. Second, the Diallobé world 'believes in the end of the world, which at the same time hopes for it and fears it' (*Ambiguous*, p.77); thus being opposite to the French world which believes that 'the world will not come to an end' (*Ambiguous*, p.75), and its conquest is planned 'each day thanks to science' (*Ambiguous*, p.76). At the end of the conversation, the Knight decides to send his son to the French school making Paul Lacroix happy and implicitly victorious; hence his own defeat and the Diallobé's. At any rate, the decision to send Samba Diallo to the French school openly expresses the villagers' determination to resist their adversary. They are certain that

they must send [their] elite there expecting that all the country will follow them (...)if there is a risk, they are the best prepared to cope successfully with it because they are the most firmly attached to what they are. If there is a good to be drawn from it, they should be also the first to acquire that (*Ambiguous*, p.37).

However, this decision bears an aura of trauma. How can a child snatched away from his mother's breast at an early age accept easily and rapidly another woman's ?. In other words, how can Samba Diallo, a boy about to learn 'how to conquer truth' keep believing in God and doubt the coming of the end of the world at the same time ?. The Royal Lady and the Knight -in a lesser degree- seem, in Bennabian words, going to the pharmacy of the occidental civilization to ask for a remedy to recover without knowing exactly the illness, the virtues of the therapy and its duration(*Conditions*, 44-45). Instead of coming to terms with the illness, they will end the life of the sick i.e, figuratively speaking they will kill Samba Diallo. They enact what Bennabi calls the piling up (*entassement*) of the occidental objects (*Conditions*, p.47) , herein the French school, its techniques, its curricula and ideologies that would lead to the construction of 'une civilization choséiste' (*Bennabi*, 47) instead of, as the Knight says, 'a civilization [of] an architecture of responses... measured by the comfort man feels in it [and] by the added portion of liberty it procures for him' (*Ambiguous*.p.62).

Indeed, after absorbing the French school and being 'consummated' by the colonizing project, Samba Diallo undergoes a metamorphosis. He first puts into question his past religion which he symbolizes as 'that man sleeping more and more within him' (*Ambiguous*, p.86). His 'new' ideas lead him to separate life from religion, he who was taught by Thierno that religion is the pivot of life. Currently, he thinks that his father' does not live; he prays' (*Ambiguous*, p.94). This dissociation is complementary to the 'importance' Samba Diallo gives to prayer. First, he forgets it. When he remembers it and gets up to pray, he thinks that he is disturbing his rest. Second, after coming back home, he altogether refuses to pray. Samba Diallo's metamorphosis reaches its zenith when he announces that he is an individualist. He thinks that he has 'the right [...] to withdraw from the arena of [his people's] desires [...] to retire within [himself]' (*Ambiguous*, p.126). The umbilical cord which has tied him to his motherland and his fellowmen is severed. On the whole, Samba Diallo's exile teaches him the ability to choose, and he chooses to be exiled from God and his people; thus, an inner exile.

But Samba Diallo remains with two minds : for one thing he never shows a desire to be assimilated to the french culture. He even views Paris negatively and attributes to it a number of characteristics such as vacuity and inhumanity. '[the French] are objects of flesh [...]and empty' (*Ambiguous*, p.128), and their 'time is encumbered' (*Ambiguous*, p.129). It is true that as a child Samba Diallo was lured by French culture which held him under the spell of its language.

When he mastered it, his happiness was limitless. But when he grows up, he expresses hatred towards all that is French. He confesses to Adèle that '[he] hate[s] them. [...] [He] loved them too soon unwisely without knowing them' (*Ambiguous*, p.158).

Rejecting his past culture and refusing to be westernized result in a sense of loss. Samba Diallo recognizes that what he gains from his contact with the West is incommunicability with the world which becomes 'silent [...] [Samba Diallo] has the impression that nothing touches [him] anymore' (*Ambiguous*, p.150). Even death which was repeatedly treated as the centre of his mystic culture is in oblivion; 'everything combats it, [He] see[s] [it] only as an abstract eventuality' (*Ambiguous*, p.134).

Feelings of loss and alienation do not prevent Samba Diallo from remembering God and his teacher Thierno. He expects that God's 'wouldst not know how to forget [him] like that' (*Ambiguous*, p.174). Besides, he sincerely implores his teacher's grace, 'the shout of [his] voice to revive [him] to the secret tenderness' (*Ambiguous*, p.161). This ambivalence of loyalty simply crystallises the suffering of a being whose religious ethics are dramatically displaced. On the whole, his adventure underlines the movement from a harmony with himself to its annihilation of his personality. This annihilation does not mean a lack of awareness. On the contrary, Samba Diallo is aware of what happens to him and what results from this 'ambiguous adventure'. He tells Pierre Louis that he is subjected to a shameful metamorphosis; thus, caught by anguish due to his never ending self-evaluation and to his questioning of the Diallobé values and the French ones. His current situation expresses a fabulous success of the French colonizing project and a dramatic fall of the civilising one finally declared by Samba Diallo's death. By refusing to pray, Samba Diallo provokes the Fool who kills him.

Surprisingly, the Fool and Samba Diallo; i.e the murderer and the murdered are similar in more than one aspect. First, both have experienced the cultural encounter with the West and its aftermath. Second, they belong to the margin of society : Samba Diallo by his alienation, the Fool by his insanity. This insanity, however, makes him utter what Michel Foucault calls 'the masked truth' (Foucault, p,14). 'One might have said that the man knew a secret which was baleful to the world' (*Ambiguous*, p.86). Cheikh Hamidou Kane attributes to him the role of defending fanatically and violently the religion of the Diallobé.

Yet, because of this role, he is the opposite of Samba Diallo. The latter represents traditional Africa unable to resolve its crisis before an invading modern West. Symbolically, 'through Samba Diallo perhaps Europe has vanquished Africa without being in the right [...] Through the Fool, Africa has vanquished Europe without being in the right' (Ma Thiam, p.234; my

translation). This symbolic discrepancy is foregrounded by the crossing of their itineraries. When Samba Diallo abandons Thierno and goes to the French school, the Fool returns from Europe and joins Thierno prior the latter's death. His return implies the necessity of the perenniality of traditional Africa. If the late Thierno represents its spirit, the Fool represents its hand, and the hand decides to kill Samba Diallo, the rightful legatee of Africa's spiritual wealth; thus precipitating Africa's defeat. Samba Diallo's death, preceded by feelings of loss, anguish, shame and solitude, attests to a fatal fall of the Senegale religious idea and civilization.

The other sign of this fall is translated by the role played by Demba. During Samba Diallo's absence, Demba takes over leadership of the Glowing Hearth from the aging Thierno and brings changes such as shortening the hours of the Koranic school so that Diallobe children can attend the colonial school. Apparently, he does not see it a threat. Demba and his changes express the defeat of the civilizing process by the colonizing project.

4. M. Bennabi's religious idea and the end of ambiguity:

With regard to *Ambiguous Adventure*, C. H. Kane tries to highlight the functioning of the colonizing project that will imprison perpetually the colonized in backwardness and controllability, or what M. Bennabi calls, colonizability. In order that the colonizing project would succeed and perpetuate, the colonized should be shackled. Some of the means of the colonizing project are violence, brainwashing and indoctrination, tools that are used by the colonizer against the religious child/man.

What the colonizing project performs is to expose the best child, Samba Diallo, who got used to his religious ethics and practices and thus achieved an inner peacefulness, to other religious realities in order to sow doubt in his own. As a *bildungsroman*, the novel follows Samba Diallo's development and uncovers a project that appears beneficial for the Diallobé in that it preaches to teach its children leadership for the future whereas following Samba Diallo's trajectory, it destroys these children and youth and throws them in madness and vacuity. Because of his being imbued with his religion, he refuses to surrender to the new religion and because of the strong and continuous influence of the new religion starting from school to university and from the village to Paris, he questions his own ending up an unbeliever.

The novel is aptly entitled. The expectation from Samba Diallo's journey is to learn 'the art of victory', yet the outcome is the art of failure. After having sampled French education, Samba Diallo experiences ambiguity once he abandons the confines of his culture, and he shows an inability to link the positive sides of the two cultures; hence becoming an 'ambiguous' member of the

Diallobé not fitting into the French culture nor into the African one. The failed leader of the Diallobé country dies alienated from his people's way of thinking totally disbelieving in their religion. Apparently, the French school has blurred the natural course of events that would have made him Thierno's successor. The Most Royal Lady's plan does not work, nor does the teacher's endeavour to make him a pillar of the Diallobé Islamic spirituality.

Relating this outcome to M. Bennabi's theory, one can say that Samba Diallo is emptied of his religious ethics and thus he, from projecting to make of him a leader for the future of the village, becomes in M. Bennabi's words, a problem. He becomes an inappropriate agent of the civilising project. In other words, the future of the Diallobé which the Royal lady thinks depends on its best children, will fade away in darkness in as much as these very children are made to reach not only adulthood/maturity but also unease and insanity 'thanks' to the colonizing project which achieves to erase the civilizing process. The colonizer with his colonizing project targets the religious idea knowing beforehand that it is the core of any civilization and thus a possible resistance against the colonializing enterprise seems impossible. Demba?

Therefore, one can declare the end of ambiguity in *Ambiguous Adventure*. Bennabi's philosophy of civilization allows seeing the novel from a new critical lens. What appears ambiguous becomes crystal clear. The title and the narrative imply that the ambiguity is African in the sense that the Diallobé expect a forceful standing against colonization after the journey to the French educational institutions whereas the outcome is the opposite bringing about a worsened situation seen in the perdition of its *élite*. In no way, this ambiguity is French or Western. The colonizer knows beforehand the outcome of this adventure and plans its functioning toward this very ending.

This explains why Paul Lacroix shows his happiness when The Knight accepts to send his son to his school. It may also explain why the pastor, Paul Martial, who dreamt to go to Africa in order to christianize the Africans, is reminded by his superiors of his 'naiveté' engendered by his certainty that Africans will plainly accept his religion which he sees the fittest. Implicitly, he proposes himself to religiously take in charge the Africans taking for granted that they are unable to think to choose what suits them. Instead of being naive, his cunning superiors intend to go through another phase that should precede the pastor's plan which is that of colonizing the mental/religious space via education which would 'devise' doubts in the African religious idea to finally erase it and replace it with the foreign religion, be it Christianity, materialism or atheism.

What matters is a new religion which destabilizes the Africans and bewitches their minds. In fact, the Bennabian religious idea uncovers this plan and informs its readers -expectedly the Africans who are attached to their

religion - of its systematic destruction of the internal religious ethos while it appears an aid for a better future.

At this juncture, one can recall Mudimbe's classification of the missionary. He sees it as 'an agent of a political empire' (Mudimbe, p.60) whose mission is summed up in 'the conversion of African minds and space' (Mudimbe, p.60). Though the explorer and the soldier take part in the project of empire, the missionary is the most dangerous as he has sincerely committed himself 'to the ideals of colonialism: the expansion of Civilization, the dissemination of Christianity, and the advance of Progress' (Mudimbe, p.59) which are no more than pretexts to build the empire. It is true that in C. H. Kane's novel there exists no direct reference to Christianity but the call to change Islamic spirituality with western materialism can be classified as a form of conversion to a foreign ethos which targets the local religious idea and by large the civilization that it bears. It is in this light that one can classify Paul Lacroix, the French school and university as indirect agents of missionary conversion.

Herein lies the second erasure of ambiguity. The religious idea is replaced by the educational idea or by colonial education. The latter appropriates the colonized for the sake of the colonizer's perennial hegemony. Misleadingly described as the colonizer's gift for the colonized, colonial education backs up the White's man's superiority as long as it deeply works for the subservience of the colonized. It looks like, in Mahatma Ghandi's words, 'the fabled snake with a brilliant jewel on its head, but which has fangs full of poison'¹⁶. This may explain why Casely Hayford (1866-1930) advocated the creation of an African university with an Africanized curriculum so as to overcome Eurocentrism diagnosed as an apparatus of the colonial rule (Guy, p.49)

Moreover, C. H. Kane highlights another ingredient which meets M. Bennabi's theoretical framework. Behind choosing the interruption of Samba Diallo's studies with the Teacher of the Diallobés' at the very moment when he was about to initiate [Samba] at last into the rational understanding of what up to then [he] had done no more than recite (*Ambiguous*, p.159), C. H. Kane underlines the necessary rational relation one needs to build with his religion. It is not sufficient for a local religious idea to be dynamic and collective to launch a civilization, it should be solid enough not to be shaken by foreign poisonous ideas. Its solidity is derived from the necessity to be understood.

Conclusion

This paper establishes bridges between C. H. Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure* and M. Bennabi's theory. It has aimed at shedding light on similarities between the two African Muslim figures. The two believe in the essentiality of religion in launching a civilizing project. While M. Bennabi focuses on the role of any

religion in the building of a civilization, C. H. Kane through his novel of formation encompasses the soft and indirect destruction of the Dialloé via erasing Islam and ascertaining the colonizer's obedience, hence the durability of the colonizing project. By relying on M. Bennabi's theory on civilization and the religious idea as a catalyst of civilisation, one can effectively declare that there should be no ambiguity in the African mind but caution before any project presented to Africa under different and attractive names as they might hide colonizing/imperialist aims, fatal to the development of Africa.

Following Bennabi's theorization, one must bear in mind that religion will remain forever a target to destroy for the sake of a successful exploitation and destruction of Africans. Al Qaeda, Daeesh and Boko Haram are relevant and interesting examples to foster on as they constitute another chapter in hampering religion to play its strong civilizational role in a global era.

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