

Goyemide on Slavery: The Liberating Power of The Word¹

FRANCOISE UGOCHUKWU

The Open University, United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

This article looks at Etienne Goyemide's novel, *Le Dernier survivant de la caravane*, a mythical foundation story set in the last years of the 19th century which records an episode of the northern slave trade in Banda land, RCA, and throws some light on the African roots of the northern slave trade. It considers the narrative by evaluating its relation to East African history and by showing the impact of displacement on the villagers' individual and collective identity. It highlights the violence of the cultural clash as expressed in the style and structure of the novel, and reveals the liberating power of the spoken word in a novel written like an oral epic, with an unusual mix of narration, speeches, songs, chants, folktales and legends. The concluding episode – the slaves' escape and foundation of a new village – is shown as the accomplishment of the patriarchal vision proclaimed and nurtured on the way.

Keywords: Africa, RCA, slave trade, Goyemide, Tuareg

1. A SURVIVOR'S STORY

Formerly known as Oubangui-Chari, a part of the then AEF (French Equatorial Africa), the Central African Republic (RCA) gained its independence in 1960. At the time, *Notre librairie* devoted one of its issues (97) to the country's literature in 1989, Etienne Goyemide (1942 – 1997), the RCA's best known writer, as well as politician and educator, had already published a number of novels – two of them in France – as well as poems and plays, and on several occasions won the prize for the best francophone novel². The second of his two best known novels, reprinted in 1998, *Le Dernier survivant de la caravane* (*The*

¹ This study began as a paper presented to the Conference on “Displacement, relocation, identity: re-visioning Histories of Slavery and Empire” organised by the Newcastle Institute for the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities on 3 March 2004.

² For more details on Goyemide, see J.D. Penel, Repères bibliographiques, in *République centrafricaine, Notre Librairie* 97, avril-mai 1989, pp. 111–112; F. Ugochukwu, *Le Silence de la forêt, un roman d'explorateur, Annales Aequatoria* 9, 1988, pp. 73–98; F. Ugochukwu, *Vie et mœurs des Pygmées – par un romancier, Ethiopiques* 5(1–2) 1988, pp. 232–241; A. Magba, La “petite leçon d'Etienne Goyemide, in *Littérature centrafricaine, Notre Librairie* 97, avril-mai 1989, pp. 76–79; M. N'Gouandjika, Le roman entre le silence et le défi, in *Littérature centrafricaine, Notre Librairie* 97, avril-mai 1989, pp. 60–67; and E. Goyemide, Le théâtre existe, in *République centrafricaine, Notre Librairie* 97, avril-mai 1989, pp. 88–93.

Last survivor), records an episode of the northern slave trade in Bandaland, RCA, revealing the double violence of slave trade and colonisation, implicitly linked in the first pages of the book. The author chose to treat the subject through the mythical foundation story of a village, as recalled and told by its patriarch, from its happy beginnings to its colonial days, with his memories of the villagers' enslavement, suffering and escape representing the bulk of the narrative. Through the last words of the griot to the displaced children he has been addressing, the conclusion reveals the targeted public as a generation keen to know its history – a clear allusion to a wide diaspora in search of its roots and of a lost identity.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Since Ouologuem's novel, *Le devoir de violence* (1968), and its vitriolic evocation of local overlords selling their subjects to Arab slave dealers, and apart from Boubacar Diop's two novels, *Le Temps de Tamango* (1981) and *Les Tambours de la mémoire* (1990), the subject of the northern slave trade has been rather muted in African literature. Goyemide's *Last Survivor*, set just before the country's independence, but whose internal narrative, as retold by the patriarch, dates back to the 19th century, echoes a violent inherited history of “tribal forced migrations and resettlements westwards under the threat of Arab slave traders who drained slaves towards Indian Ocean ports, and eastwards away from European slave traders.” (Decraene 1989: 60) Historical records – travellers' accounts, French colonial archives kept in Bangui and N'djamena, oral interviews noted down by Cordell in the 1970s in the Dar-Kouti dialects and other published research,³ all confirm the age-long practice of slavery in the Arab world. The impact of this northern trade, sparsely recorded and which never really grew to the proportion of the transatlantic trade, was more cultural and social than economic, with slaves serving as load-carriers, porters and guards, concubines and cooks, soldiers, agricultural manpower and eunuchs. Yet it still led to an important population transfer from the forests of Central and East Africa to Egypt, the Maghreb and the Arabic peninsula⁴. Cordell (2002: 17) considers that the ban placed by the Koran on the enslavement of fellow Moslems seems to have forced traders to raid deeper and deeper into the “pagan” South, first in Southern Chad and then in the RCA. War lords from Western Sudan traditionally raided the southern forests and savannah in the dry season, when travelling was easier. From 1830 onwards, records show that the sub-Saharan raids intensified. According to Cameron (1888: 265), in 1874 the slave trade was widespread around Lake Tanganyika and penetrated deeper and

³ Cf. Cordell D.D. 1986, 1988 & 2002; Baker S.W. 1880, Cameron V.L. 1877 and others mentioned in the bibliography.

⁴ The Zanzibar slave market, whose manpower mostly came from the interior, is well known and documented, but many slave caravans moved directly to the north.

deeper into the continent, depopulating entire regions. In Eastern Congo, slave traders used as intermediaries big businessmen like Tippu Tipp, whose real name was Muhammad Ibn Hamid and whose commercial empire lasted from 1880 to the 1890s⁵. In the Oubangui-Chari region, one of those potentates was Rabih bin Fadl-Allah, who established himself in what is now Eastern RCA in about 1876. He was succeeded by Muhammad al-Sanusi, who operated from Ndele, in Dar-Kouti, from 1896 until his death in 1911⁶.

3. THE PLIGHT OF THE BANDA

Running away from the north to escape the slave traders' razzias, the Banda, one of the main ethnic groups in the RCA and probably one of the most affected, met with both of them. Tisserant (1955: 19–20) reports that massive Banda migrations took place to escape the raids, and he wrote that he once met an old Banda man in Bambari; this man revealed he had been taken into slavery and travelled towards the Nile with other captives before meeting a party of white soldiers and running away during the scuffle that ensued.

French colonial administrators calculated that more than 6,000 people a year were enslaved and taken away from the region during the final ten years of the 19th century. Gordon (1987: 10), considering the years 1770 to 1900, gave a possible figure exceeding 1,250,000.⁷ But Raymond Mauvy, a French authority on Africa quoted by Gordon (1987: 19), considers that between the 7th and the 20th centuries some 14 million Africans were taken north, roughly two females for every male, with an estimated death rate of 3 to 2, putting the possible number of deaths around 19 millions⁸. Modat (1912: 232) reports that one such raid on Bria, one of the neighbouring towns mentioned in Goyemide's novel, took 600 men away in 1909, only 200 of whom were still alive on arrival in Ndele⁹. He then narrates the fate of slave cohorts on the move, trekking deserted paths, suffering from starvation and dehydration, the sick and those who resisted

⁵ For more on Tippu Tip, read F. Renault, *Tippo-Tip, un potentat arabe en Afrique centrale au XIXe siècle*, Paris: Société française d'histoire d'outre-mer 1987.

⁶ Cf. D. Cordell, "Warlords and enslavement: a sample of slave traders from Eastern Ubangui-Shari, 1870–1920", in P.E. Lovejoy (ed.), *Africans in Bondage: Studies in Slavery and the Slave Trade*, Madison, African Studies Program and The University of Wisconsin Press, 1986, pp. 335–369 and D. Cordell, "The delicate balance of force and flight: the end of slavery in Eastern Ubangi-Shari", in S. Miers et R. Roberts (eds.), *The End of Slavery in Africa*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, pp. 150–171.

⁷ Cf. also E. Julien, *La situation économique du Dar-el-Kouti, Afrique française: renseignements coloniaux*, 14 (1), janvier 1904, p. 38; E. Julien, *Mohamed-es-Senoussi et ses États*, *Bulletin de la société des recherches congolaises*, n° 10, 1929, pp. 69–70.

⁸ Quoted in R. Segal, *Islam's black slaves, The Other Black Diaspora*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux 2001 and in J.J. Miller, *The unknown slavery: in the Moslem world, that is – and it's not over*, *National review*, 20/5/2002.

⁹ See the map in appendix.

being killed and dumped on the way¹⁰. In a bid to escape further enslavement, the Banda were then forced to move further down towards the southwest. They eventually divided into small communities who settled in the Oubangui valley and near its tributaries¹¹. Unlike slaves taken on the transatlantic trade, those taken north and east did not usually leave any personal record or testimony of their ordeal. In this respect, Goyemide's novel is an eye-opener and a valuable hint at what really happened in those days¹². Goyemide's book, although fictional, corroborates historians' depictions, and can therefore be regarded as a valuable addition to the many accounts of that age-long and devastating slave trade. Tuaregs, considered to be among the most active slave traders, are those described in the novel, with their black turbans completely covering their heads except for the eyes (p. 100).¹³

4. THE STRUCTURE OF THE NOVEL

The Last Survivor is divided into four chapters, each one being a mix of different genres which together contribute to the progress of the narrative, from the initial slave-traders' raid and rounding-up of the villagers to their escape after several days of gruelling walking through the savannah. The bulk of the story describes in graphic detail the suffering and maltreatment of the slaves at the hands of their oppressors.

In the novel the villagers' peaceful daily life before the raid is only hinted at; the rest of the narrative exudes the turmoil the violated community is thrown into. The violence of the initial clash caused by the irruption of the slave traders in the village at dawn is expressed in both the style and structure of the novel, a "burst" structure somewhat similar to that used by other African novelists to express conflictual situations (see Mar D. 2003) and which reads like a string of recovered narratives. These are carefully pieced together by the village storyteller as he remembers them, a single word acting each time as a knot holding the two pieces together and facilitating the reading. This unusual construction

¹⁰ For more details, see Ch. Tisserant, *Ce que j'ai connu de l'esclavage en Oubangui-Chari*, Paris: Plon 1955 pp. 17–21.

¹¹ Cf. P. Kalck, "Histoire de la République centrafricaine, des origines à nos jours", doctoral thesis, Université Paris-I-Sorbonne, vol. 1, 1970, pp. 171–172, 212–213 and 244. These population movements, in turn, permanently modified the people's architecture, feeding habits and agricultural practices.

¹² In 1928, the Islamic Conference met in Mecca and adopted a resolution condemning the slave trade. Though gradually abolished by the British and the French between 1794 and 1848, slavery continued to haunt African memories, cultures and literatures, prompting an individual and collective search for lost roots and identities.

¹³ Historians record Tuaregs's pillaging raids against the sedentary populations of old, which contributed to their reputation as proud slave traders. Many other details, such as their clothes, armaments and habits, all identify them as Goyemide's slave traders. Further references to Goyemide's novel will be included in the text.

tells a lot about the dismembered and scattered life of the villagers; it also has a powerful effect on their survival as it acts as a lifeline.

5. A VIOLENT CULTURE CLASH

Goyemide's style and vocabulary translate the violence of the cultural clash into sound, more like a cacophony involving shouting, yelling, crying, and the clanking of weapons, the whistling of whips. This contrasts with the harmonious sounds of nature – the singing of the birds, the murmur of flowing rivers watering the village and the familiar sounds of village life, revealing the transient and uncertain existence of the group as opposed to the stability and permanence of the earth. Violence is also manifest in the traders' use of weaponry and armament: scimitars, sabres, whips and assegais are constantly mentioned, contrasting with the unarmed slave cohort. The Tuaregs mounted on horses dominate the landscape so powerfully that their dismounting either places them in a vulnerable position or leads even to their deaths. Their dress code itself frightens the villagers: their "black" gowns and the way their clothing covers them are constantly highlighted and are perceived both as an integral part of their identity but also as concealing it. Their head-gear, the turban, is seen as an additional protection, hiding their faces and increasing the sense of the vulnerability of the bare-headed villagers.¹⁴

Next, violence translates itself into movement and action through numerous action verbs. Throughout the novel, the two groups, unable to communicate verbally since their languages are alien to each other, resort to violence as an alternative means of expression – mishandling, spitting, beating and killing. This is highlighted by the central role and status of speech in the village culture and in the villagers' survival. The narrator details the various punishments meted out to the slaves to speed up their walking or to stop them from talking or singing, the novel culminating in a passage relating the castration of the village head in retaliation for his having spat on the face of the head trader.¹⁵ What is being

¹⁴ Ch. Loyer, *Les Touaregs*, Paris, BNF (1863) 1995 p. 23, confirms that these men are covered from head to toe in "black" – in reality, indigo-dyed flowing gowns; their heads are wrapped in turbans of the same colour and made from a piece of cloth five to six metres long which they never remove in public. They are considered by the Fulani to be the old slave masters. The same author reports that Black Africans ran away from the first Tuareg they met, frightened by those they called "the veiled".

¹⁵ Cf. also details given in a radio broadcast on Anfani Radio, a private radio station established in 1995 and based in Niamey, Niger, acknowledging castration as a chastisement still practised by Tuaregs on slaves in 2003 for gross misconduct. This particular programme, entitled "Les pratiques esclavagistes et la démocratie: le paradoxe nigérien", and produced by Mahamadou Assoumane Toudou, a journalist working for Radio Anfani, presented evidence of the persistence of slavery in Niger. It promoted the work of a national human rights association, TIMIDRIA, founded in 1991 by Tuaregs with the aim of eradicating slavery and other discriminations. According to a census conducted by this association in 2003, there

passed on is an ever-growing hatred, voiced by the narrator on several occasions as this feeling gradually takes centre stage, until it eventually sets the two cohorts at each other's throats in what the last chapter aptly terms "the final struggle". The slaves' liberation, thanks to unexpected help from the only villager who has escaped the raid, a youth who had gone hunting, echoes one such real life liberation and escape of the Banda Linda who, in 1901, pushed their adversaries back towards the Ouaka river and drowned them there.¹⁶

But violence also manifests itself negatively, in the near total absence of interaction between the two groups, who move along side by side, yet live completely different lives and more or less ignore each other. Everything that contributes to the depiction of the traders as different, foreign, alien, is insisted upon; their language, the colour of their skin, their dress code, their horses, their daily prayers and ablutions, and their eating and drinking habits. The slaves' feelings as expressed by the narrator are very violent, and the way the Tuaregs are described in their daily routine is extremely derogatory. Hatred is explicitly mentioned on several occasions and, interestingly, the same feeling is expressed (in the first chapter) with regard to primary schools teachers who break the children's backs with rulers as a punishment (p. 12). All this plays on the reader's mind and makes the novel a difficult text to read: the Tuaregs are called "men in black" (4 times), "warriors of darkness", "death riders", "copper men" (6 times), but also "tormentors"(14), "devils" (3), "beasts", hyenas, grasshoppers (4), locusts and owls. Yet the two words which are by far the most frequently used to describe the Tuaregs, apart from the generic term of slave traders (27), are: "our masters" (20) and "ghosts" (22 times) . The first term rightly sets the scene, reminding us of the huge inequality between the two groups; the second one, somehow similar to the names of animals given to them, and derived from their appearance, refuses both the reality of their existence and their human status, justifying and supporting antagonism, exonerating ill feelings, hatred and murderous thoughts and conjuring up hunting memories and killer instincts.

6. THE IMPACT OF DISPLACEMENT

Villagers are forced out of their homes, their huts and village set ablaze and everything destroyed; they are then corralled, shackled and taken away, a practice also recorded by historians. Their new, subservient position is constantly acknowledged in the novel, the word "slaves" being repeated thirty

were 870.633 slaves in Niger at the time. Toudou's programme, which included an interview with a runaway slave who was almost castrated for rebelling against his master, was awarded the 2003 Swiss prize for Southern radios in Geneva on 24 September 2003, and led to the promulgation of an anti-slavery law by the Niger Parliament.

¹⁶ Other successful liberation struggles took place in 1892, 1893 and 1896.

times.¹⁷ Goyemide presents the impact of displacement on the villagers' individual and collective identity as massive, which again confirms historical studies of the subject.¹⁸ Their collective situation is graphically depicted: bereft of all they have cherished, nuclear families, in spite of their efforts to protect each other, are torn apart and gradually depleted as more and more die on the way. Every right, no matter how little, has been taken away: their movements are restricted; they are not free to express themselves and definitely forbidden to sing. Constant whipping and maltreatment, coupled with the fast pace of the caravan and the rough terrain they are treading, leave them wounded, starved, weak and tired.

The slaves' situation is made worse by their complete ignorance of their whereabouts. Now away from their familiar surroundings, having been dragged out of the forest and driven into an empty savannah they have never previously seen, they have no clue as to the direction they are heading in. Although we know that Khartoum, founded by the Egyptians in 1824, had become the base that slave traders started from, the novel is completely silent on this. The only landmarks along the way are the markers of time: the monotonous succession of night and day, crucial to the slaves because each evening comes as a vital period of rest and an occasion to meet and talk. The prominent place given to descriptions of the landscape indicates how traumatic the displacement must have been, a hint at the slaves' desperate effort to read meaning into the sand and rocks and to interpret the slightest changes in the scenery.

7. TRADITION AS A SOURCE OF POWER

We read between the lines that the villagers had an initial edge over the slave-traders: a couple of days before the raid, the narrator's uncle, a diviner, learns from the village ancestors that a huge calamity threatens the community (p. 78). Even though the leaders are unable to exploit the knowledge imparted to them, and in spite of their obvious vulnerability, there are treasures that neither the slave traders nor their practise of enslavement could take away from the former villagers.

No matter how far they are from their homeland, the former villagers still communicate with nature, the trees, rivers and animals, thus renewing their strength at its source. The narrator takes great pains to depict the villagers' happiness derived from their close contact with nature. The fact that the last, titanic fight between the two leaders – the trader and the village head – takes place in the river is no coincidence. The flowing waters and trees are not only central to the village location and daily life in the depths of the forest but also

¹⁷ The last one proclaims them "liberated slaves".

¹⁸ Cf. Dennis Cordell, "des réfugiés dans l'Afrique précoloniale? L'exemple de la Centrafrique, 1850–1910", in *Politique africaine* 85, March 2002.

appear at strategic points in the narrative as symbols of life, and as the slaves approach them, their strength is renewed.

The village solidarity and the vital importance of their ancestral ties have been outlined right from the beginning. Now, at the very moment that they shackle them together in groups of three, the slave traders have failed to realise that, in intending to enslave the villagers, they have only strengthened the blood ties that already cement them together as a group, thereby fortifying their resolve and endurance. Though turned into slaves, these are still united, still able to encourage each other and make the most of their own plight.

They also maintain their traditional values and lore, which rate interpersonal relationships more highly than any relationship between men and their ancestral village – they make regular use of their ancestors and still feel able to transmit these beliefs to their children. Because the villagers owe allegiance to the group above the individual, no matter what happens to individuals the group still triumphs.

The novel, written like an oral epic, presents an unusual mix of narration, speeches, songs, chants, folktales and legends. It reports a foundation myth as told at night to a children's audience by the village patriarch and story-teller who happens to be the last survivor of the slave caravan as well as the last of the great army raised long ago to oppose the French colonial invaders. Although he has been telling stories about the colonial battles, he had never previously told the one about the caravan. His story starts, prompted by an owl's cry: this technique will be used again and again, with the appearance of animals prompting him to start yet another tale. On several occasions, the narrator/storyteller escapes the excruciating violence by drifting into a cushioned dreamworld of folktales and childhood memories. Yet this apparent escapism is in fact a way to stay alive since it renews the tribe's mind. What is now keeping them alive and fighting is not their enjoyment of leisure time or past pleasures, but rehearsing precious lessons and words of wisdom from their collective past.

8. THE PAST REVISITED

The role played by orality in the narrative is central: folktales, legends, chants and epics are used individually and collectively to drive fear away, dilute physical pain, maintain the group's morale, sustain their hope of a better future, and prepare men for the final liberating attack. The first song sets the tone: it is a war song that gives clear moral directions for the fight (pp. 36–37). It is also premonitory: it looks to the future and will guide the people to the very end. This song will be followed by a second one, which the patriarch sings before he dies (pp. 43–44). The second person to sing is the village head, the embodiment of the ancestors' voice (p. 53), as he foresees the future and proclaims that there will remain one survivor to tell the tale. His song has a powerful effect: not only

is no one able to quench it, but it signals the surge of a collective song of hope, a celebration of freedom. It also brings joy and renewed vigour to the weary slaves. In turn, the patriarch's wife speaks before she dies, reiterating the last singer's prophetic words: life will go on, and history will be passed on (p. 57). Another prophetic word is then uttered by the village head following a violent incident, to fight despair and assure the victims of the impending retribution. (p. 63).

The three folktales, with the wren, the toad and the lizard as unlikely heroes (pp. 69–76, 88–95 & 150–155), draw on the traditions handed down from one generation to the next, words of wisdom and ancestral knowledge, a valuable education inseparable from the power encapsulated in the words. As they are told, they not only enthral their audience with the victory won by the weak over the strong and the evil but they read as a transposition of the slaves' reality into fiction by means of a prophetic lesson – the promise of liberation, as the wren is a sacred bird whose appearance signals the end of the storm. Those tales that are only recalled by the story-teller, offering him a vital respite while encouraging him in his resolve to stay alive, but he deliberately narrates the last one to the entire camp just before the final attack.

9. COMMUNICATION AS SURVIVAL

The novel reveals the crucial role of language, both verbal and non-verbal, in communication. This starts with the Ippy school children expressing their delight at being able to read French and telling their direction (p. 11). The novel later reveals the slaves' frustration at being unable to understand their new masters' language, "*a language totally unknown to us*" (p. 45),¹⁹ "*a guttural and incomprehensible jargon*" (p. 133). The word, uttered, proclaimed, chanted or sung by the tribal leaders and sealed by their sacrificial death once they uttered the words, is a medicine, a creative tool and a weapon of war. Like a balm, it heals, refreshes and strengthens the weary. It is a weapon that destroys contrary words voiced against the villagers, a charm that protects, shields and precedes the speaker, and moves and fights on his behalf. It is a creative tool that locates the future, shaping it and ensuring it is eventually accomplished in its own time. All along, the spoken word proclaims the victory of the weak over the strong, the ineluctability of retribution and the coming deliverance. The concluding

¹⁹ The only word they manage to grasp is "kirdi" (p. 99). This word of Kanuri origin has been translated by Cyffer (1994: 130) as pagan (kerdi/krdi = pagan) with a derogatory connotation. The first mention of "Kirdi" is by D. Denham, *Voyages et découvertes dans le nord et dans les parties centrales de l'Afrique : au travers du grand désert, jusqu'au 10e degré de latitude nord : et depuis Kouka, dans le Bornou, jusqu'à Sakatou, capitale de l'empire des Felatah* (1826) 2001 p. 145 who translates the word 'Kerdies' as 'Negroes who have never embraced the Mohammedan faith'.

episode – the slaves’ escape and foundation of a new village – is the accomplishment of the patriarchal vision proclaimed and nurtured on the way.

Sleep and death are equated in the novel as delivering the captives from their condition. Death in particular is said to “deliver slaves and rehabilitate them, giving them back their status and human privileges and levelling the difference between them and their masters.” (p. 64). Yet it is crucial that someone stays alive to tell the story, to pass on the acquired knowledge together with the life and power contained in the word. The fact that the author, after offering an abundance of geographical precisions about Ippy, still chooses to call it a “tiny village lost in the immense Africa” in the midst of “vast stretches of forests and savannahs”(p. 10), encourages a reading of the narrative that replaces it in the global context of colonisation. Before moving on, in the second chapter of the novel, to recall memories of slavery, Goyemide, in the first chapter, has evoked colonisation and what it has brought in its wake – education and the Church. Reported as having found it rather difficult to take root at Ippy, both institutions are clearly depicted there as “inhuman” (p. 12), aiming, as the author puts it, at preparing people for better tomorrows through “one thousand and one deprivations and hardships” and leading to the “encounter of two worlds and two cultures fundamentally inimical”, which in turn generate “clashes, misunderstanding and strong rejection” (p. 10).

10. CONCLUSION

The evocation of white civilisation, epitomised by its cemetery, and depicted as a vehicle of death, a killer that sent Africans to wars that were not their own, is not just a sarcastic introduction to the story-teller’s tale: it is the clue that allows the reader to Place the slave narrative in its proper perspective. As the story-teller, his tale over, leaves the scene, we remember his prophetic words, uttered in the first chapter (p. 28): just as the slaves have freed themselves from the Tuaregs, the Africans will one day free themselves from their colonial shackles: “*sooner or later, war will start again, he said, and this time we will win.*” Today, the struggle of countries like Niger to eradicate slavery, and recent interviews and publications on the subject²⁰, all provide a new relevance for Goyemide’s novel.

²⁰ Cf. Mouralis’s interview with M. de Almeida, RFI, May 1998. Since then, debates and research on the subject have intensified. After a first round-table on the subject in December 2002, the CNRS mixed laboratory unit MALD (UMR8054), housed in the Malher Centre (9, rue Malher, Paris IV), now meets every month on the theme “slave trade, slavery and dependency in East Africa, 15th–20th century.

REFERENCES

Baker, S.W. 1880/2001.

L'Afrique équatorial: récit d'une expédition armée ayant pour but la suppression de la traite des esclaves. Paris : Hachette/ Bibliothèque nationale de France (transl. & abridged by Vattermare H.). 187 p.

Beaulieu N. 2004.

Niger : Atelier de sensibilisation des Chefs sur le travail forcé: imbroglios et chassés-croisés, 2nd February, <http://www.alternatives.ca/imprimer1110.html>. First published in **Alerte, Bulletin d'information & d'éducation en droit humain** 5, Dec.2003 p. 2, <http://www.rjdh-niger.org/Bulletin/Alerte5.PDF>

Cameron, V.L. 1877/2002.

Across Africa Vol.I. Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France. Reprod. from London: Daldy, Isbister & Co, 389 p.

1877/1971 *A travers l'Afrique, de Zanzibar à Benguela, 1872–1876.* Paris: Lettres modernes/Hachette. 185 p. (transl. Henriette Loreau).

1888 Slavery in Africa: the disease and the remedy, **National Review** 10: 265.

Cordell, D. D. 2002.

Des “réfugiés” dans l’Afrique précoloniale? L’exemple de la Centrafrique, 1850–1910. **Politique Africaine** 85, pp. 16–28.

1986 Warlords and enslavement: a sample of slave traders from Eastern Ubangui-Shari, 1870–1920. In: *Africans in Bondage: Studies in Slavery and the Slave Trade*, P. E. Lovejoy (ed.), pp. 335–369. Madison: African Studies Program and University of Wisconsin Press.

1988 The delicate balance of force and flight: the end of slavery in Eastern Ubangi-Shari. In: *The End of Slavery in Africa*, S. Miers et R. Roberts (eds.), pp. 150–171. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Cyffer N. 1994.

English-Kanuri Dictionary. Köln: Rudiger Koppe Verlag, 226p.

Decraene, Ph.1989.

L'Afrique centrale. Paris: CHEAM, 154 p.

Denham, D. 1826/2001.

Voyages et découvertes dans le nord et dans les parties centrales de l’Afrique: au travers du grand désert, jusqu’au 10e degré de latitude nord: et depuis Kouka, dans le Bornou, jusqu’à Sakatou, capitale de l’empire des Felatah. Paris: Arthus Bertrand, Mongie aîné / BNF /INALCO/ AUPELF (transl. from English by MM. Eyriès et de Larenaudière), 366 p.

Diop B.B. 1981.

Le Temps de Tamango. Paris: L’Harmattan. Reprint. Le Serpent à plumes 2002, 250 p. Prix du Bureau sénégalais des droits d’auteur.

- 1990 *Les Tambours de la mémoire*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 237 p. Grand Prix de la République du Sénégal pour les lettres.
- Gordon, M. 1987.
L'esclavage dans le monde arabe VIIe-XXe siècles. Paris: Robert Laffont 265 p. (transl. from English by C. Vlerick from Murray Gordon, *Slavery in the Arab World*, reprint New York, New Amsterdam, 1989, 272 p.).
- Goyemide, E. 1984.
Le silence de la forêt. Paris: Hatier, 157 p.
- 1985/1998 *Le dernier survivant de la caravane*. Paris: Hatier/Le Serpent à plumes, 169 p.
- 1989 Le théâtre existe. In: *République centrafricaine, Notre Librairie* 97, avril-mai pp. 88–93.
- Julien E. 1904.
La situation économique du Dar-el-Kouti. **Afrique française: renseignements coloniaux** 14 (1), janvier, p. 38.
- Julien E. 1929.
Mohamed-es-Senoussi et ses États. **Bulletin de la société des recherches congolaises** 10, pp. 69–70.
- Kalck P. 1970.
Histoire de la République centrafricaine, des origines à nos jours. Doctoral thesis. Paris: Université Paris-I-Sorbonne, vol. 1.
- Loyer, Ch. 1863/1995.
Les Touaregs. Paris: B. Duprat/BNF, 30 p.
- Magba A. 1989.
La “petite leçon” d’Etienne Goyemide. In: *Littérature centrafricaine, Notre Librairie* 97, avril-mai, pp. 76–79.
- Mar D. 2003.
Le roman des conflits en Afrique contemporaine. **Ethiopiennes** 71.
- Miller J.J. 2002.
The unknown slavery: in the moslem world, that is – and it's not over. **National Review** inc. 20th May.
- Modat 1912.
Une tournée en pays Fertyt. **Afrique française: renseignements coloniaux** 22 (5), 6th June, p. 185.
- Mouralis B. 1998.
L'esclavage vu de l'Afrique, interview with M. de Almeida, **Radio-France international**, May
http://www.rfi.fr/fichiers/langue_francaise/LangageActuel/EntrevueAvec/135.asp
- N’Gouandjika M. 1989.
Le roman entre le silence et le défi. In: *Littérature centrafricaine, Notre Librairie* 97, avril-mai, pp. 60–67.
- Ouologuem Y. 1968.
Le Devoir de violence. Paris: Seuil, 208 p.

Penel J-D. 1989.

Repères bibliographiques. In: *République centrafricaine*, **Notre Librairie** 97, avril-mai, pp. 11–112.

Renault, F. 1987.

Tippo-Tip, un potentat arabe en Afrique centrale au XIXe siècle. Paris: Société française d'histoire d'outremer, 360 p.

Segal, R. 2001.

Islam's Black Slaves: The Other Black Diaspora. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 480 p.

Tisserant, Ch. 1955.

Ce que j'ai connu de l'esclavage en Oubangui-Chari. Paris: Société antiesclavagiste/Plon, 112 p.

Ugochukwu F. 1988.

Vie et mœurs des Pygmées - par un romancier. **Ethiopiennes** 5(1–2), pp. 232–241.

1988 *Le Silence de la forêt, un roman d'explorateur*. **Annales Aequatoria** 9, pp. 73–88.

Willis, J. R. (ed.) 1985.

Slaves and Slavery in Muslim Africa. London: Cass, 2 vols.

WEB BIBLIOGRAPHY

<http://www.antislavery.org/homepage/antislavery/award/nigerbackground2004.htm>

<http://www.alternatives.ca/imprimer1110.html>

<http://www.rjdh-niger.org/Bulletin/Alerte5.PDF>

<http://www.swissinfo.org/sfr/swissinfo.html?siteSect=105&sid=4276312>

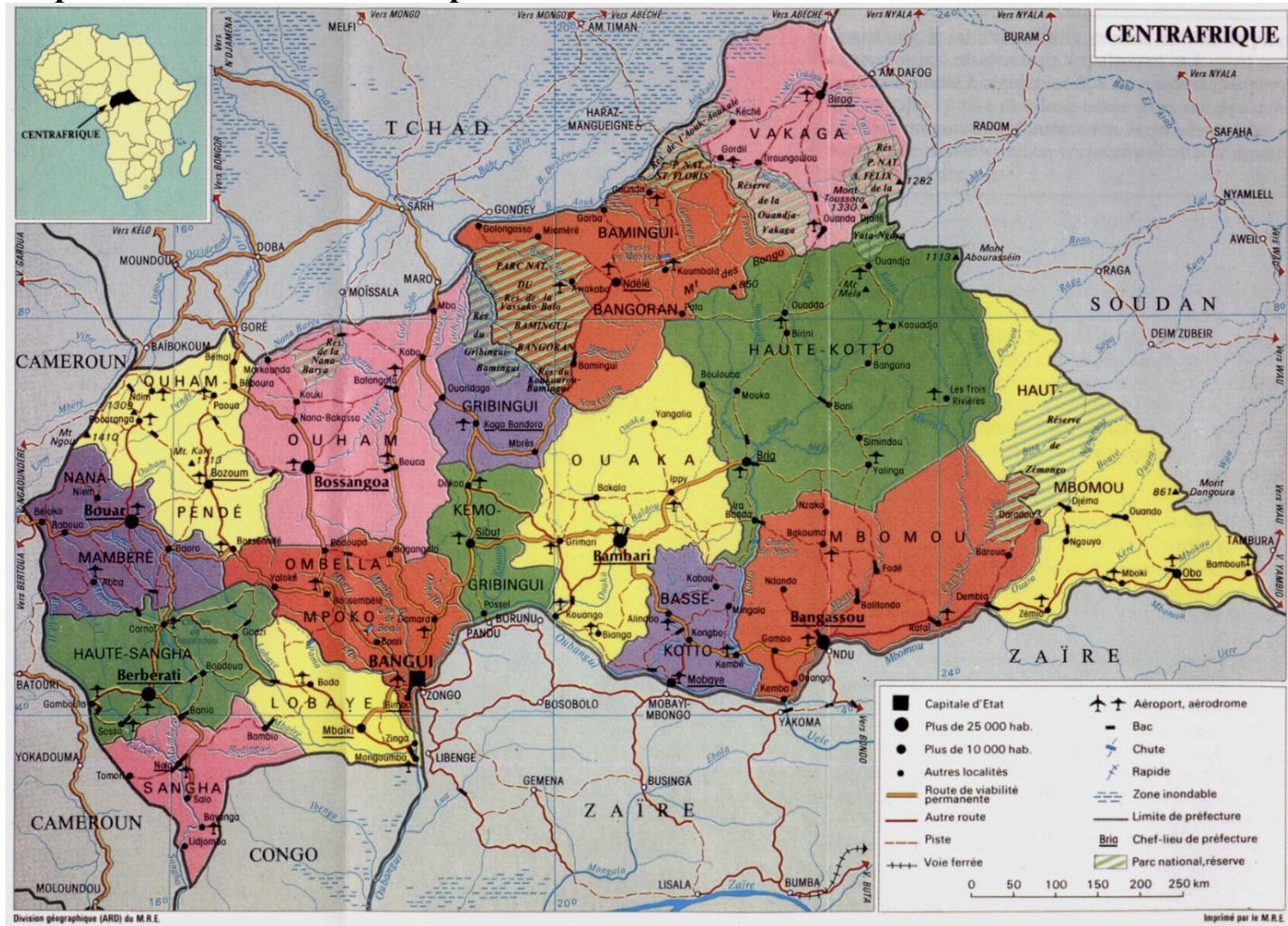
http://www.rfi.fr/fichiers/langue_francaise/LangageActuel/EntrevueAvec/135.asp

About the author: Françoise Ugochukwu (prof., MIL, ILTM, Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Palmes académiques), habilitée à diriger des recherches, has been lecturing in Higher Education in Nigeria, France and the UK for some thirty years. She joined the University of Central Lancashire, in September 1997. A specialist in Comparative Literature, with special interest in African Literatures and Cultures and Ethnolinguistics, she is the author of several books, a number of book chapters and some forty articles in reputable journals in France, Belgium, Britain, Italy, USA, Canada, Australia and several African Countries. Her latest publication is a co-authored bilingual dictionary sponsored by the French Institute in Africa, Ibadan (Nigeria). An external collaborator to the CNRS-LLACAN (Paris), with research links with INALCO (Paris), CAS (Edinburgh) and IFRA (Nigeria), she is a member of several professional Societies including the ILT, SFPS, ISOLA and the Société des Africanistes du Musée de l'Homme, Paris. She has been a correspondent for the Senghor Foundation journal for years, and is a regular reviewer for the Cahiers d'Etudes

africaines. Her pioneering work in the field and her longstanding contribution to the strengthening of cultural and educational ties between France and Nigeria awarded her the national distinction of Chevalier des Palmes Académiques in 1994. She also figures on the university of Western Australia website www.arts.uwa.edu.au/AFLIT/UgochukwuFrancoise.html for her creative writing publications, some of which have been on school programmes in Francophone Africa.

APPENDIX

Map of the Central African Republic



Source: <http://www.sangonet.com/ActualiteC15/15ms03-organis-polit/Centrafcarte-rappel-ms03.html>