

THE METAMORPHOSIS OF BLACK AFRICAN WOMEN (TO MY MOTHER, LUCY ADWA KRA KODWO, AND TO MY FATHER, PILLAH NIALI N'GUESSAN HENRI)

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ABSTRACT : For a long time, because of negative prejudices, the black African woman was considered as a being unable of performing certain activities considered as masculine. But today, thanks to her education and the universalization of human rights and human dignity, she has managed to position herself as a very important and essential being in the development and respectability of her community. Her present struggle for an effective equality between man and her is not a mere view of the mind because, in ancient history and even if they were not numerous, sub-Saharan women achieved great things which were by no means within the reach of any male human being. Tales and legends, which highlight the bravery and genius of women, as well as some current fighting women are, for her, an invitation to be ambitious, daring and tenacious to change her life and her society: if she has self-confidence, she will not only be able to compete with men in all areas of life but also catch up with them.

KEYWORDS: *black African woman, man, right, female soldier, woman leader, emancipation.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the history of humanity, the woman was once considered a being naturally destined to play the supporting roles in the family and society, because she was considered the weaker sex. So she was not allowed to engage in certain activities that were considered inherently male. This is how, generally, she took care of household chores, the education of children, worked in the fields, held small businesses, etc. Her occupations, although immensely important, were hardly judged at their true values because they were seen as minor, both by the man and by herself: for many feminists and historians, men have been able to trick women's brains to sleep by making them believe that their physical, intellectual, psychological and spiritual forces were so insignificant that they had to refrain from practicing certain activities and responsibilities (hunting, war, family leadership, the exercise of political power, etc.).

Given that time is not motionless but in perpetual motion and the very embodiment of infidelity, it goes without saying that the collapse of the old order is an integral part of its program. Thus, the real contestation of the traditional status of women both within the household and in the political community took off in the West, where the emancipation of women is now experiencing rapid progress. As for the women of the so-called poor states, they are organizing, little by little and better and better, to get rid of what their habits and customs contain that alienates them.

In black Africa, for example, her place in the family environment and outside it really began her grooming, that is to say her mutation, by her schooling in Western-type establishments and her hiring in the civil service, in the colonial period. Even if, at that time, the training she was following and the job she exercised were especially reserved for her, that is to say different and less honorific than those of men, she began an existence that had nothing to do with that of her female ancestors. Her metamorphosis also gains in rank in her participation, alongside men, in the anti-colonial struggle. However, the accession of the former colonies to independence is not really favorable to her in the sense that it gives pride of place to men: the doors of the modern school are hardly open to her because parents, in order for their tradition to remain alive, prefer to send their boys to school and keep their daughters at home for household chores.

The result of this discrimination is that workers in the public service and private companies, entrepreneurs and politicians are overwhelmingly men. The break with the anti-democratic marginalization of women, south of the Sahara, is essential in a world that wants to be more and more respectful of human rights and nature. It is therefore incumbent upon us to ask ourselves about this fundamental question: is discrimination against women in sub-Saharan Africa justified? Examination of this problem brings to light the following secondary questions: can black African women be political leaders in the same way as men? Isn't the feminization of the army an opportunity for sub-Saharan states? In what way Philomène Tia Glao, a fighting woman, is one of the exceptional models of the new sub-Saharan woman?

This article aims to rehabilitate sub-Saharan African women in their dignity in the face of gender-related injustices. Better still, this is for us to correct the prejudice caused to women for a long time and to restore them in their right to engage in the political game and in all the non-chosifying sectors of work that society offers. To achieve this objective, our text is based on sociohistorical, critical and demonstrative methods and spans three parts.

The first shows that some women leaders in the past, but in very small numbers, marked their time with their political genius. This means that political power has never been the domain of men in sub-Saharan Africa. Today, too, but too few women are rising to the highest peaks in the state and in particular occupy positions that were once considered the preserve of men. The aim now is to establish parity between women and men in the distribution of functions. The second part, on the other hand, argues that women have sometimes been valiant warriors both in reality and in myths, tales and legends and that in the present century their massive recruitment as female soldiers will, in part, solve their high unemployment rate, contribute to the development of countries and break the prejudice of the weaker sex. The last part indicates that the activities of illiterate women contribute to the development of African countries and P. Tia Glao is among them an exceptional model to imitate with a view to the revaluation and empowerment of women.

II. WOMEN LEADERS

Subhuman beings do not exist in law, but in fact they do. For the law and the facts to come together in osmosis, it is necessary to educate the lived experience that is behind reason and the law: given that man and woman are of the same substance, it is logical that the same rights and equal dignity be granted to them. This is why it is salutary to value women so that the world stops making men their superiors in everything. For this dream to become reality, it is up to women to evacuate from their minds that "[...] it is the woman (sword arm) who makes the man"¹, behind a great man is a great lady, because she is half of him, his equal in rights and in dignity, his alter ego: her place is therefore not to stand behind him, but at his side or in front of him. This is what reason and philanthropy recommend. In this regard, Marie-France Bazimon participates, in her own way, in the women's revolution by raising awareness, an appeal to women to question their status in society:

¹ ZOHOURI (Théodore Kouba), *La Délinquance ethnique*, Abidjan, Éditions Dieu D'Abord, 1999, p. 73.

The situation of a woman is not always bright because we women neglect a lot and even come to ignore that we are steeped in talent. We prefer to hide behind the logic that women would be better off in the shadows. Too long, I think, has this injustice lasted and if you don't like something, you have to change it; if we can't change it, let's decide to change our attitude²

M.-F. Bazimon considers that the first stage of feminine transformation takes place in the mind of the woman, namely to say no to what her past and her present contain reifying and this is in her power. Remaining attached to her projects, to her convictions is the *sine qua non* condition of her success, even if the discordant voices of men and women, respectable or not, contrary actions of individuals of good or bad faith attempt to dissuade her from continuing to take the path in which she has embarked or in which she plans to walk because they believe that it is hopeless, suicidal.

The crossing of the other stages of her glorious march towards success depends either on herself or on the combination of her forces with those of her peers or men and this is obtained in the short, medium or long term, depending on the obstacles faced. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the former president of Liberia from 2006 to 2018, and the first woman to be elected head of state in her continent, first believed in her "star" before seeking the indispensable support of her fellow citizens (also including both women and men) to make her the most powerful person in her nation. She has defeated female candidates and, especially, male candidates in a democratic competition (election): in view of the past, her victory is a "miracle" and makes us think, in a way, of that of Barak Obama as the first African-American elected President of the United States of America and Kamala Harris as the first person of the female sex and moreover black to reach the post of American Vice President. Indeed, it was something unimaginable when Liberia was founded and, in 1960, when most sub-Saharan states gained independence because the legacy that their former masters as well as their former colonists and their own traditions bequeathed to them was phallocracy, machismo.

Although of the fifty-four countries in Africa as a whole, less than twenty-five percent of them (all from the South of the Sahara) have chosen women to govern them, this pleases us enormously insofar as it is the testimony that democracy is increasingly integrated into the mores of Africans and that tomorrow will be radiant. The elevation of these exceptional ladies to the highest sphere of the State does not coincide with the exhaustive evaporation of the ordeal of women in their respective homelands insofar as this is not and cannot be their objective either: society does not change, suddenly, with the help of a magic wand, a simple word or intention of the rulers, but gradually, like the transition from baby to adult in humans. That is why, before the end of their mandates, they are doing everything in their power to substantially improve the situation of women, in view of the realities experienced by each of them.

²BAZIMON (Marie-France), « Le Pouvoir de la femme », in *PerspectiveS*, Édition 2016, p. 59.

³*Africa* has registered, in all, twelve women heads of State, some of whom have served as interim heads of State through a vote or the measures provided for in the constitution of their countries. Apart from Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, two other women have been democratically elected to lead their countries: Sahle-Work Zewde, the current president of Ethiopia, elected in 2018 and Ameenah Gurib-Fakim of Mauritius who did not complete her term (2015-2018). As for the following presidents, they are interim: Carmen Pereira (Guinea-Bissau: three days in 1984), Sylvie Kinigi (Burundi: 1993-1994), Ruth Perry (Liberia: 1996-1997), Ivy Matsepe-Cassaburi (South Africa: a few days in 2005 and 14 hours in 2008), Rose Francine Rogombé (Gabon: 2009), Agnès Ohsan-Bellepeau (Mauritius: 2012), Joyce Banda (Malawi: 2012-2014), Catherine Samba-Panza (Central African Republic: 2014-2016) and Samia Suluhu Hassan (Tanzania: in office since 2021). So far, in the world, there has been about sixty female presidents. These include seventeen acting and two chancellors. Today, eleven female presidents are in office.

The emancipation of women is not only a matter of these ones but also of men, and the benefits granted to women, for example, in Rwanda, Botswana and Ethiopia (in Ethiopia, most executive power is held by the Prime Minister and not by the President) led by men are extraordinary. Some voices in Africa and elsewhere in the world are calling for women to be granted between thirty and fifty per cent of political and other positions, as partial compensation for all the harm they have suffered over millennia, in order to bridge, in part or in whole, the unjust gulf between them and men. Françoise Kaudjhis-Offoumou is one of their leaders⁴. Others, on the other hand, although in favour of the development of women, oppose the quota system, believing that it is merit and not sex that should determine the fate of individuals.

Beyond this debate, it is the remarkable presence of women on the democratic scene that will really seal their political fate. The disappointment caused by the serious mistakes repeated by politicians is a boon for women because they can take advantage of it to take power away from them. Bernard Binlin Dadié thinks so too. Thus, in search of a solution to break the chain of servitude of sub-Saharan Africans, he highlights a heroine, Dona Béatrice, who is an exceptional woman, as or more valiant than men. Indeed, in the face of the silence, selfishness, fear and inaction of the male sex and in order to lead her people to truly democratic independence, she becomes the leader of the opposition, of the fight against incompetence, corruption, cruelty, colonialism and neocolonialism⁵ and justifies the circumstantial reversal of roles between women and men by reason of state:

Women have raised the banner of dignity because the love of money has killed courage in the hearts of men, because honours have corrupted men [...] but we are determined to teach them [...] to no longer be afraid of being hungry, thirsty, cold; to no longer be afraid of today, afraid of tomorrow, of the day after...⁶

D. Beatrice died at the stake⁷ for having been revisionist, insolent, daring, she a woman, to compete against vampire men (some of her compatriots and imperialist Europeans) while she knew perfectly well that several respectable sovereigns had been cowardly murdered by the system of darkness of her executioners⁸.

Her audacity, her invitation to the oppressed to overthrow the oppressors and her murder are not gratuitous, however, in that they instill in her fellow citizens and the world patriotism, a sense of constructive sacrifice and the possibility of women validly competing with the men, especially to reach the top of the state because not all heroes are doomed to failure, to death. D. Beatrice, the pious and humanist, therefore symbolizes African hope⁹, the seed that dies to give birth to a plant that will in turn produce many other seeds. Expressing her gratitude to influencers of the caliber of D. Béatrice, who transform their environments or the world not for their own glory but for that of humanity, Avis A. Jones-Deweever writes:

There is something special about those who lead change. These women know that what they aspire to in this world is not limited to their personal experience, or even their lifetime. They are changemakers. They are those who engage in a million unnoticed acts prelude social, legal or cultural upheavals, sources of broader perspectives or better results for millions of people. They do the work. Often in silence, without waiting for thanks, but always with energy and efficiency. They lead change. And in doing so, they create a better world for all of us.¹⁰

- 4 KAUDJHIS-OFFOUMOU (Françoise), *Femme, genre et pouvoir en Afrique*, Abidjan, NEI / CEDA, 2011, p. 267: "The Beijing 95 conference provided for a 30% quota for decision-making positions. But fifteen years later, this quota should be raised to at least 40%, even if it is not applied in many countries." □ □
- 5 DADIÉ (Bernard Binlin), *Béatrice du Congo*, Paris, *Présence Africaine*, 1970, pp. 113-118.
- 6 *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 156.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 144.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 146
- 10 JONES-DEWEEVER (Opinion A.), *Black women, women of power. Les secrets de réussites phénoménales au travail et dans la vie*, trans. by LE SÉAC'H (Michel), Paris, *Nouveaux Horizons*, 2017, p. 109.

These women leaders are more and more numerous and less and less illiterate and we notice that the "Woman of the fields, of the rivers, of the great river, [...] of resignation, [...] of the great family of blacksmiths"¹¹ by Camara Laye is now a "has been", i.e. outdated. The outdatedness in question here does not mean that she no longer exists but that another race of women has appeared alongside her and tends to move away from her crescendo. Indeed this new female person is the woman of the presidential chair, of the university chair, of capital, of entrepreneurship, of big cities, of claims, etc. Despite the difference between these two types of women, they are complementary and contain within them extraordinary beings, but unfortunately in derisory numbers compared to that of men.

The Bible tells us that the queen of Sheba, that is to say of Ethiopia, went to King Solomon, who reigned over Israel and was presented as the wisest, richest and most powerful human being of ancient history. The scriptures record that this great lady was not only wealthy but also so cultured that she dared to compete with him:

Solomon's fame reached to the Queen of Sheba; she came to test him on riddles of wisdom. She entered Jerusalem with a considerable procession, camels bearing spices, gold in very large quantities, precious stones. When she was introduced to Solomon, she told him everything she had in mind (1K:X, 1-2).

He solved all her riddles brilliantly and among all the authorities who came from different horizons of the earth to drink in his wisdom and admire his immense and incomparable achievements, she is the only one of whom the Bible speaks, so impressive was she, radiant with glory and deserved to be historically immortalized.

In her image, other African women of the pre-colonial era were remarkable politicians, patriots sometimes greater than men and Queen Abla Pokou is one of them. She was born at the beginning of the 18th century. On the death of her uncle, Osei Tutu, who was also the king of the Ashanti kingdom located on the present Ghanaian territory, broke out a war of succession which carried off her brother, Dakon, one of the pretenders to the throne. Opokou Waré emerged victorious from the confrontation. Fearing then for her own life as well as for that of the members of her family and the supporters of her late brother, Abla Pokou fled overnight with them, towards the Ivory Coast (the present Côte d'Ivoire). The primacy of her people over her personal interests led her to sacrifice, according to legend, her only son by throwing him into the Comoé River, as required by the genius of the place, in order to calm the strongly agitated stream¹². It was the price to pay in order to escape the troops of Opokou Waré¹³ who were pursuing the sovereign and the Ashanti who had remained loyal to her because the fugitives were about to be caught and massacred.

The oral tradition also relates that since the fugitives had no means of locomotion to cross the river, the genius of water (after the gift of the child) created an animal bridge: "[...] hippos, enormous hippopotamuses emerged and, following each other, formed a bridge and over this miraculous bridge the fleeing people passed"¹⁴ across the river, which now serves partly as a natural border between Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Once her baby was offered to the genius, A. Pokou went from the rank of princess to that of queen because it was the latter's sacrifice that enthroned her as monarch of the new ethnic group or of the new people who did not recognize themselves any longer as Ashanti but as

¹¹ CAMARA (Laye), *L'Enfant noir*, Paris, Plon, 2020, pp. 7-8.

¹² DADIÉ (Bernard Binlin), *Légendes africaines*, Abidjan, NEI-CEDA, 2015, p. 7.

¹³ KWAM (Belettres), *Abla Pokou ou le salaire d'une légende*, Abidjan, Éditions Tabala, 2019, p. 89-97: in his book, Belettres Kwam refers to Opokou Waré as Kussy Obodum.

¹⁴ DADIÉ (Bernard Binlin), *Légendes africaines*, Abidjan, NEI-CEDA, 2015, p. 7.

baoulé: the oral history says that when her son died, she would have pronounced these words: baouli (ba wŏli), that is to say "the child is dead"¹⁵, and it is since then that her procession and herself as well as their descendants (the most famous of whom is Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the first Ivorian president) settled mainly in the Center of the Côte d'Ivoire are called Baoulé.

What matters to us in the life of the first queen of the Baoulé is not to know whether the story relating to the sacrifice of her son and the crossing of the river on hippopotamuses is true or false, but to underline that if among the fugitives were counted men and women who were as well noble as ordinary subjects and slaves it means that she was a strong personality, a charismatic leader. The unflinching attachment, trust and submission of these people (among which were dowries) to her are, indirectly, the denunciation of the shocking misogyny of Arthur Schopenhauer who presents people of the female sex as eternal brainless minors. Of this he says, "[...]this sex could not produce a single truly great mind, nor a complete original work [...] of lasting value"¹⁶ or "[...]I am of the opinion that women are never fully of age, but should always be subject to male guardianship, that of father, husband, son or state as in India"¹⁷. A. Schopenhauer, if not a physical serial killer of women, was intellectually and psychologically so in the sense that his contribution to the infantilization of women, to their brainwash plunged them into their inferiority complex towards men and led them to unconsciously accept the status quo.

He also tried in vain to forever sabotage the tremendous work that John Locke and many other thinkers initiated to restore women's rights and dignity. Of Locke, here is what this public insulter and enemy of women finds to say: "Compared to Kant, Locke is down to earth, dry and thoughtless"¹⁸. The parallel he draws between these two writers is in fact a trilogy and is in no way a coincidence because, for example, in matters of women Kant and he are very close to each other and light years away from the one who is commonly called the philosopher of Oates, ie J. Locke, who divorces from an anti-democratic tradition with regard to women and children¹⁹.

This precursor of contemporary feminism rejects the superiority of men over women by reframing the relationship between them. Thus, he considers it inappropriate to speak unilaterally of "paternal power"²⁰ because the mother also exercises authority over her child, whether she lives alone with him or with her offspring and her husband. This is justified by the Lockean expression "parental power"²¹ and these biblical words that Locke takes up: "Honour your father and your mother (Exodus, XX, 12); Anyone who curses his father or mother (Lev. XIX, 3); Children, obey your parents (Eph. VI, 1)"²². The equality of power of the father and the mother over their child is explained by the fact that they are the "property"²³ and the "servants"²⁴ of God, who entrusts them with the same mission, namely the education of their offspring over which they have no arbitrary power, because reason or natural law teaches that "no one shall injure another in their life, health, liberty, or property."²⁵ In God's service, the father plays the role of "guardian"²⁶ of his offspring until they reach the age of majority and the remark is particularly valid for the mother: if they mistreat their child or neglect to take care of him, they will give an account to God at the last judgment.

Educational equality between man and woman begins, for Locke, from the state of nature and extends into political society. He also considers that human beings are the same yesterday, today and always, that men and women are "endowed with similar faculties"²⁷ because they are equally able to dispense the same education to their descendants (daughter and son) whose faculties will be identical to theirs when they leave the minority. He rightly makes little distinction between male and female in the state of nature where "[...]each one is both judge and executioner of the law of nature"²⁸. Knowledge and strength are therefore not dependent on sex, but are intrinsic to the human being, depend on the experience of each individual combined with the influence of the environment to which he belongs.

If the power to rule on a dispute refers to the capacity of adequate reasoning of the judge and if that of sanctioning the person at fault refers to the effective use of force by the executor of the verdict, these obviously mean that both female and male individuals are able to defend themselves against unlawful aggression, judiciously judge their opponent or enemy under control and correct him or her appropriately. Locke, we see it and contrary to some current laws in the world, does not invite humanity to consider the woman as an eternal minor who needs the authorization of a man to leave her house or to be accompanied outside her place of residence by her father, her brother, her uncle, her cousin, her son or another man, because he considers her responsible. Let us specify in particular that even if in the Lockean state of nature every human being has the right and the duty, when this is necessary, to join the victim to do him justice, the person rescued or avenged is not necessarily a woman because it can also be a man and the rescuer can be a woman as well as a man. This Lockean position introduces us surreptitiously into the reflection on the composition of the army and more

concretely into the question relating to the feminization of the army. Historical or mythological facts tell us that the female sex can be or is a formidable warrior and a few examples are enough to illustrate our point.

15 Ibid.

16 SCHOPENHAUER (Arthur), *Insultes*, Paris, Éditions du Rocher, 1988, p. 61.

17 Ibid., p. 63.

18 Ibid., p. 97.

19 LOCKE (John), *Deuxième traité du gouvernement civil*, trans. de GILSON (Bernard), Paris, Vrin, 1977, p. 104: with regard to his refusal to align himself with the tradition that instrumentalizes woman and child, Locke writes: "Perhaps one will censor, as an irrelevant criticism in a speech of this nature, the fact that I find fault with words and names that are common in the world; However, it may be useful to propose new ones, if the old ones are likely to mislead people."

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., p. 78.

26 Ibid., p. 110.

27 Ibid., p. 78.

28 Ibid., p. 147.

III. WOMEN-SOLDIERS: A CHANCE FOR AFRICA

The brave women, known as the Minon or Mino, who fought alongside men in the army of Béhanzin, king of Dahomey, are known worldwide. They excelled so much in the art of waging war that they were given the nickname of Amazons, in homage to the legend of the women of Asia Minor who lived in isolation, far from men, mated once a year with people of the male sex, got rid of their male children and were experienced in armed conflict. The Minon of Béhanzin did not have to envy the men as for the courage, the combativeness, the handling of the weapons because they believed themselves superior to them and made not only the pride of their monarch but also that of all their compatriots. A re-interpretation of the mixed nature of the Dahomey army reinforces our conviction that sometimes the past is an "attic" of solutions, a well full of hope, a beacon, a paradigm for the present and that feminization of the army will, in part, solve the problem of female unemployment and gender parity.

In southern Africa, Chaka Zulu notably had female soldiers in his army. Even if they went to the places of conflict, they did not really take part in armed struggles like the Mino because their role was to stimulate the warriors to battle, to push them to victory. The soldier who ventured to have sexual intercourse with one of the young girls was put to death when his trickery was discovered. Nevertheless, exceptionally, Chaka authorized warriors to mate with female soldiers. When they gave him full satisfaction on the field of battle, he rewarded them with freedom and marriage: "[...] when a regiment had shown bravery, it was disbanded; Chaka at the same time freed young girls and arranged marriages. Thus Chaka ensured the control of sexual urges for military purposes and appeared as the orderer of matrimonial strategy"³⁰. The "chakaist" military service appears as an initiatory phase which takes boys and girls from the status of celibates to that of future married people.

29 DESCAMPS (Élodie), « Les 'Amazones du Dahomey', des femmes-soldats dans l'Afrique précoloniale », in jeuneafrique.com/452511/culture/las-amazones-dahomey-armee-de-femmes-soldats-lafrique-pre-coloniale/.

Text published on 11-11-17 at 14h14. Updated 08-03-18. Site consulted on 25-08-21 at 02h00 : "Considering themselves stronger and braver than men, they advocate a reversal of values and the division of labor, claiming a form of over-feminism before the time: 'men, men, stay! Let the men stay! Let them grow corn and grow palm trees. We're going to war.'"

30 M'BOKOLO (Elikia), *Black Africa: History and Civilizations. Du XIXe siècle à nos jours*, Paris, Hatier, 2004, p. 59.

From the time of Chaka to the present day, the rights of peoples and individuals have undergone enormous upheavals: absolutism has been abolished, marriage has become free, women's rights prohibit making them a puppet and see in them responsible persons, who have the right to dispose of their life as they see fit, etc. The founder of the Zulu people, i.e. Chaka, is right to say that the place of women in the army is normal and beneficial; but contrary to his politico-military conception of it, in the 21st century, the importance of woman is equal to that of man: she is a warrior in her own right and not an object of sexual pleasure and an inferior being to man. Sub-Saharan terrorists misinterpret Chaka in their trade with females whose number is constantly

growing these days in their infernal population³¹. The reasons for the presence of these women among beings who want to "kill" sub-Saharan Africa are multiple.

Women soldiers are increasingly numerous among outlaws because they are increasingly forcibly recruited by terrorists. Other females become female soldiers by voluntarily and freely enlisting in rebel troops with whom they share the same ideologies or because they are disappointed with the authorities in power against whom they seek revenge for their incompetence and corruption. Still others, for fear of sooner or later being violated by the partisans of terror, join them on their own in the sense that they cannot count on the rulers to protect them as they should. All these categories of recruits are "poisons" because they voluntarily and freely or reluctantly assist men in all the harm they do to the state and especially to the female sex. Instead of being feminist revolutionaries, they shine as counter-revolutionaries who row in the opposite direction of philanthropic history and reason and have nothing to do with Chaka's female soldiers and the Amazons of Dahomey who were model patriots in the service of the State.

Female terrorist soldiers risk jeopardizing the future of sub-Saharan Africa because the brainwash they undergo in jihadist camps coupled with the easy and quick money earned from handling weapons is likely to attract a growing number of women who constitute the bulk of the unemployed in this region of the world. To avoid this situation, the rulers of sub-Saharan Africa have a duty to put the interests of their people above their own, to fight frankly against corruption and terrorism, to make excellent investments, to create jobs, to take very good care of their compatriots and especially the girls. The incorporation of women into terrorist groups also testifies that they truly have their place in the national armies (police, gendarmerie, army, customs, forestry service, etc.), that the political and military leaders of the countries do not have to be afraid that they will be pregnant and absent from their posts from time to time: their recruitment must therefore increase exponentially and Bottey Zadi Zahourou shares our point of view.

31 KAUDJHIS-OFFOUMOU (F.), op. cit. cit., p. 220: "This phenomenon of 'women soldiers' like child soldiers is increasing because of the proliferation of small arms and automatic weapons, which are not difficult to handle. Initially, there were only eighteen-year-old boys as child soldiers. Today, the presence of many 'child soldiers' girls does not suffer from any discussion."

He is inspired by African tales and myths to plead favorably for the massive integration of women into the national and even international defense and security forces. This is how he talks about the legend of women who lived with their only lover, Zouzou, at the beginning of humanity. Apart from him, they knew nothing of the existence of other men and their master of initiation and leader was Mahié³². In another place in the world were the men, who had neither seen nor heard of the females. One day, a hunter, in search of game, met the women and great were the astonishment, the disappointment and the anger of the two communities to discover that they were not the only human beings and bosses of the universe³³. To remedy this apparent anomaly, each of the groups decided to exterminate the other. During the war, women, under the rule of Mahié, stood up to their adversaries and routed them in each battle³⁴. Intrigued by the excellent organization and supremacy of its unexpected enemies, the clan of men managed, through cunning and espionage, to unravel the mystery surrounding the cause of their success: the clan captured Zouzou whom it suspected of being the central element of their power and thanks to the drug that it administered by force, this one ended up breaking down and revealing to the clan, at the end of a skilfully conducted interrogation, that it is the horn, not Mahié, who gave the orders³⁵.

Thinking that the only man in his community, who was also the only human being who knew how to play this wind instrument in the said society, was a traitor who had freely and voluntarily incited men to steal the magical musical instrument, Mahié, filled with hatred towards him, had him killed when he returned to his companions³⁶. The death of this "innocent" also, unfortunately, created dismay among his ex-compatriots who revolted against their leader because the void born of his eternal absence could not be filled by any member of the horde: disappointed by his peers, Mahié went into exile and the women joined the men with whom they made peace and founded a mixed society which did not privilege, in this or that, any gender over the other³⁷.

Conciliation between men and women was possible because the reigning goddess at that time was Mamie Wata (a mermaid), who was mystically cumulatively Zouzou and Mahié, male and female³⁸, "the perfect unit of number 7; 7=1"³⁹. However, over time, no one knows what happened to cause the primitive trade between males and females, symbolizing the golden age of the human species, to deteriorate and cause the domination of the latter by the former. Indeed the discovery of the beauty of the female body, the wonders of sexual relations, the benefits of family life and other advantages resulting from a community life including both men and women have no longer sufficed to hide from men that the horn had become their private property, that

Zouzou was dead, that Mahié had disappeared and that the women were henceforth at their mercy. More serious, is the wickedness settled not only between individuals of different sexes but also between people of the same sex. To regain the lost peace and harmony of yesteryear, human beings no longer invoke the ancient siren but have recourse to God, to their own ways and means, including the mixing of the army and respect for human rights and of human dignity. Experience shows that however long the period of peace and joy so prized by human beings lasts, there comes, for various reasons, the time of crisis so dreaded by them, and so on.

32ZADI (Bottey Zaourou), « La Guerre des femmes », in *La Guerre de femmes suivi de La Termitière*, Abidjan, NEI, Abidjan, 2001, pp. 28-29.

33 Ibid., pp. 29-30.

34 Ibid., pp. 38-41.

35 Ibid., pp. 41-45.

36 Ibid., pp. 46-47.

37 Ibid., pp. 50-58,

38 Ibid., p. 69.

39 Ibid.

Generally, times of peace are seen as conducive to inventions, discoveries, and prosperity. Despite everything, times of crisis sometimes turn out to be conducive to the spirit of creativity, to individual or collective prowess. The life of Philomène Tia-Glao⁴⁰ easily proves it to us. To solve her existential problems, she uses her own genius and the help of God because she considers that without him she would not be the person she is today.

IV. PHILOMENE TIA-GLAO: AN EXCEPTIONAL WOMAN

P. Tia-Glao is a struggling woman born of a polygamous father having five wives and forty-two children, including seven sons. He was so poor that to ensure the schooling of her older brother who had just obtained the entrance to sixth grade, he decided to marry her customarily to a rich and old polygamous man like him, when she was only nine years old. The dowry amounted to thirty-five thousand CFA francs or seventy American dollars (if one considers that one dollar is equivalent to five hundred CFA francs). Being too small to live with her husband, she had to join him when she reached middle age. At each new school year, the father visited his son-in-law to receive money or goods in kind of any kind to take care of his schoolboy son. However, when she was between seventeen and eighteen years old and her father found it appropriate to take her to her husband's house, she refused to comply and, as luck would have it, during the period when she and her parent were discussing the imminence of her move, one of his friends who lived in another village was passing by. Without hesitating for a second, he gave her to him in forced marriage. To force her to accept the unexpected union, he threatened her mother with divorce. She, in turn, put pressure on her in order to force her to become the seventh companion of this old man. For fear of being denied by her parents and especially for the honor of her mother, she bowed to her father's demands because in their tradition it is shameful for a woman to be repudiated by her husband or to be single at a certain age.

A very important detail deserves to be factored in: her husband was like a termite queen who does not work but is fed by the workers, only mates with the king and lays eggs. In fact, her husband did not exercise any profession and it was his wives who fed him, provided him with what he needed and took care of the children because each of them had a small business or owned a personal field that she had acquired by her own means. As for him, he was a "kinglet", a gigolo who wandered, ate, drank, slept, made love and procreated. In short, he was a parasite, an anti-Lockean, that is to say, an enemy of work.

40 A : 1- LEITMOTIV-Guest : Mrs. Tia Philomène épouse GLAO, in <https://news.abidjan.net/videos/38123/leitmotiv-invitee-mme-tia-philomene-epse-glao-1ere-partie>. Video posted on 12-02-18 (no time of publication). Site consulted on 27-05-21 at 2h00.

2- LEITMOTIV-Guest: Mrs. Tia Philomène épouse GLAO, in <https://news.abidjan.net/videos/38212/leitmotiv-invitee-mme-tia-philomene-epse-glao-partie-2>. Video posted on 19-02-18 (no time of publication). Site consulted on 27-05-21 at 3:00.

B: 1- C'Midi-Testimony of Mrs. Glao-Tia Philomène: "I built my empire from scratch". Part 1, in <https://m.facebook.com/?next=https%3A%2Fm.facebook.com%2Fipnet.togo%2Fvideos%2F-jai-bati-mon-empire-en-partant-de-zero-t%25C3%25A9moignage-de-mme-glao-tia-philom%25C3%25A8ne-ana%2F346155626225104%2F>. Site consulted on 12-05-21 at 13h30.

2- C'Midi- Testimony of Mrs. Glao-Tia Philomène: "I built my empire from scratch". Continuation and end. Part 2, in [youtube.com/watch?v=8F37Rn8i2bk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8F37Rn8i2bk). Video published on 16-01-2018 (absence of publication time). Site consulted on 12-05-21 at 16:00.

C : SUCCESS –Côte d'Ivoire : Philomène Tia Glao, the powerful entrepreneur of Man (Maindeba Group), in <https://youtu.be/FIJ9T20Cuv0>. Video published on 05-08-20 (absence of publication time). Site consulted on 13-05-21 at 18:45.

When P. Tia-Glao arrived at his house, she only ate the remaining of what he ate, when he could, of course, play with the vigilance of his six other partners in the sense that they were not at all ready to serve as servants to a person younger than them, valid but who was inactive, moreover their rival and the favorite of their husband. After a few months of married life, she was expecting the birth of the first of her children and then asked herself a central question: what to do to eat properly and provide for the needs of her future baby?

This existential concern makes her a Lockean par excellence because in his *What to do with the poor?* Locke suggests obliging the idle poor, physically and mentally healthy and of working age to find work or to impose employment on them⁴¹. P. Tia-Glao's major concern was not physical laziness insofar as she would have liked to imitate her husband's co-wives who were going to sell at the market or cultivate their plots of land. Her puzzle was laziness or reflexive lack related to a lack of audacity, money, available land and work tools.

In her cogitations, she perceives that something concrete can be born from nothing, that from the immaterial can spring material, happiness. This is how, taking her courage in both hands, she explains her living conditions to one of the neighbors of her good-for-nothing husband who authorizes her to create a one-hectare plantation on his land. But being penniless, she resolutely engages in plantations as a day laborer with a daily income of six hundred CFA francs. Every day, she uses one hundred CFA francs for her meal and buys groundnuts at five hundred CFA francs for the seed. The system put in place by her husband and his co-wives obliging her to carry out an activity in order to survive, that is to say, to ensure the *minimum* of food for her descendants, that of her husband and herself, has taken time before being decoded by her. But this system still introduced her to the very restricted circle of "hyper-human-beings" that no one around her knew.

Whereas in her milieu one is by no means ambitious, imaginative, does not work to get out of misery, but to stay in extreme poverty, she has a revolutionary conception of work. Indeed after a few months, she becomes a millionaire thanks to her personal field work and the diversification of her activities. She buys a truck for seventeen million CFA francs on credit. Out of the three million three hundred thousand CFA francs which constitute the entirety of her assets, she gives directly to the owner three million CFA francs and the remaining fourteen million, she undertakes to pay them in two years.

But well before the twenty-four months, that is to say at the end of half of this time, she totally pays off her debt. The car dealer is so amazed and delighted with the speed with which she, an illiterate and newbie in business, has paid off her debt that he offers her to take a transportation mini-bus on credit. She immediately accepts his proposal. As time goes by, she becomes more and more respected and rich but also very envied. One of her strong ideas is that whoever risks nothing never has anything and that one must always take life on the bright side. Teaching women to take risks is part of the strategies to reduce or remove the gap between women and men.

Tia-Glao's encouragement to all women, whatever their level of education and social rank, to face danger and not to live dangerously (to get involved here or there without a sense of business, to invest money haphazardly in this or that economic activity or doing nothing at all) finds a favorable echo in these words of Mary Spio:

From what I've seen, people often stumble on the road to success because they can't see the whole journey from where they are to where they want to go,

41 LOCKE (John), *Que faire des pauvres ?*, trans. de BURY (Laurent), Paris, PUF, 2013, p. 29-38.

so they give up trying. They worry about different possible scenarios and how everything will turn out and let these uncertainties about the future hold them back⁴².

Dealing with danger includes tears (predictable or unexpected falls), but also the strength of character to wipe away tears, get up, heal wounds and continue on your way, sometimes starting from scratch and P. Tia - Glao knows it.

In 2002, she lost all her possessions when the armed rebellion, that is to say the Forces Nouvelles, led by the ex-terrorist Soro K. Guillaume tried in vain to overthrow President Laurent Gbagbo by a bloody coup which turns into an armed rebellion. This stage of her existence makes her understand that not only can material, light, exploits be born from nothing, but also that from chaos, desolation, hostility, evil, the critical thinking and master of resilience is capable of generating the extraordinary, the success, the incomparable. P. Tia-Glao knows how to read the course of history concerning her and positively transform into good luck what previously presented itself as bad luck. In short, she adapts to lived historical contexts to always remain equal to herself, in other words efficient and successful. This is why, despite the scandalous and inhumane events of the Ivorian crisis, which began in 2002, she continues to believe in the depths of herself that work liberates and rewards people who have faith in it and especially in God.

To regain her former radiance, she buys empty drink bottles, criss-crosses the streets and gutters to collect and sell them. She also borrows a hundred and fifty thousand francs from one of her aunts who now knows that she is an "alien" and that in no time she will repay her more than she lent her. When her savings allow her to buy enough racks of drinks, she starts distributing drinks. Faster than a shooting star or the light, she quickly remakes her fortune to the great surprise of her supporters and enemies. However, years later, what she earned by the sweat of her brow is once again stolen and destroyed. While people applaud her descent into hell, others lament her fate and herself, despite the pain that torments her, she immediately gets back to work because she is a phoenix, a sphinx. Today, she is a billionaire and the richest woman in the western part of the Côte d'Ivoire. She is also a real estate promoter, directs a cooperative of more than ten thousand women, also owns several animal parks, plantations of cocoa, coffee, rubber, etc., beverage depots, a hotel complex, a transport company whose cars are air-conditioned and contain toilets and a restaurant (she is the first person to introduce this type of vehicle in her country), and many other properties.

From different countries, admirers of all kinds, including students who have completed their higher education, come to draw inspiration from her experience and her wisdom. She has been decorated and received awards at least eighteen times in her homeland and outside it. She was also received at the presidency of the United States of America by Donald Trump, the former American President, because although living outside this country, she in a way embodies the American dream for her keen business sense. and the revolution in the non-separation of tasks between men and women that she has brought about: most of the activities she carries out are traditionally carried out, in subsaharan Africa, by men and not by women.

The choice of her occupations is explained by the fact that for her, in matters of work, the woman is the equal of the man because God has endowed each of them with ten fingers. Which means that the latter is able to perform the same activities or exploits as the former. The equality of which she speaks does not mean that people of these two sexes are physically alike in all respects because there are parts of a woman's body that do not exist in a man and vice versa. Nor does she say that, for example, in sport they will necessarily be equal in all areas, that they are invited to compete individually or collectively: she does not ask that, in an official competition, Serena Williams plays tennis against Rafael Nadal, that the Cameroon women's national football team opposes to the France men's national football team in that, for now, men are, a priori, physically more stronger than women.

42 SPIO (Mary), *You don't have to be a genius to succeed. 7 clés pour changer la donne*, trans. by ROCHERON (Marie-José), Paris, Nouveaux Horizons, 2016, p. 192.

This is in no way equivalent to asserting that all men are physically and naturally more powerful than any woman, that they work better than her. She argues, for example, that if a male and a female farmer are asked to develop the same amount of land, both will have the same result. In mixed schools, we also have both boys and girls as top of class. This means that there are areas in which men and women can enter into direct competition. At the school of life, of entrepreneurship, P. Tia-Glao is one of the best students because she is better off than millions of her male compatriots and foreigners who live in Côte d'Ivoire and is, moreover, the boss of some of them. This truth suggests not to neglect the fact that the human being is not only made of body but also of spirit and it is the excellent or the bad use of one or the other which determines, in many cases, the difference between human beings.

The ability of women to do as well as or better than men does not completely distract P. Tia-Glao from her tradition because, like Locke⁴³, she holds that the husband, not the wife, is the head of the family. Around the world this idea is widespread but is beginning to lose ground, because women and men are questioning it: for them, its justification is unscientific, random and many women deserve to "wear panties" compared to their husbands because they are richer, more educated, more awake, more responsible, etc., than their husbands are. In the Côte d'Ivoire, for example, even if the constitution no longer automatically recognizes the man as the head of the family but leaves each couple the latitude to decide who is the man or the woman, most newly married couples choose the men as heads of the family (this does not mean that in fact all these men are in fact the heads of their respective families because, in order not to offend the traditionalists, couples pretend to be in agreement with the tradition).

V. CONCLUSION

In its progressive march, history seemed, forever, to seal the fate of black African women in domestic activities and minor roles. But having become aware of its illogicality about the suffering and injustice endured by the female gender, the same history has reversed its course by questioning the harm inflicted on women. She maintains, now, that it is improper and condemnable to speak of superior human beings and inferior human beings, because in right and in dignity woman is equal to man. The greatness of soul of sub-Saharan women leaders such as the Queen of Sheba, the Ninon of Dahomey, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Philomène Tia-Glao is the proof that women are not dunces, eternal minors, as A. Schopenhauer and his followers would have us believe, but responsible people, workers with a very strong sense of duty and excellence. It is therefore reasonable to encourage girls to attend school in the same way as boys because they are, as much as the latter, capable of making exemplary studies, of supporting their parents in a valid way and of taking care, as necessary, of their small families. They are, in particular, thanks to their many and extraordinary talents, able to accomplish great and beautiful things for their villages, cities, regions, countries, continents and even for the world. This reality of things requires democratic competition between women and men at school and in the search for work. It also imposes a democratic method of designation (internal election, draw, etc.) for the choice of candidates within political parties with a view to representing them in such and such elections.

43 LOCKE (J.), *Deuxième traité du gouvernement civil*, trans. de GILSON (Bernard), Paris, Vrin, 1977, p. 120: Locke, en fait de couple, judges that "[...] the command . . . naturally falls to man [...]. Yet . . . the husband acquires no more power over her life than she has over his. So much so, that the power of the husband equals that of an absolute monarch."

But the sub-Saharan woman cannot really emancipate herself if she cuts herself off from those in north of the Sahara and vice versa, because it is by sharing their experiences with each other that they will really discover the authentic identity of the African woman: they are each one face, one half of what she or their fusion is, that is to say their mutual and assiduous association with each other, which will make them strong, will allow them to claim this or that together from their political authorities and from the African Union. Given that the contemporary world has become a global village thanks to the means of communication, African women in general, and sub-Saharan women in particular, cannot afford to live in a vacuum because they need to take from other continents what they have positive to embellish, to enrich their existence and to contribute to the catch-up of the delay of Africa on the Occident. This is a conviction of Afro-optimists.

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