

History and Culture in Andre Salifou's *la Valse des Vautours*

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ABSTRACT

Cited among the personalities related to Zinder commune, Professor Andre Salifou is a famous historian before being a playwright, a writer, a politician and diplomat. A privileged observatory of African political life in general and Nigerienne in particular, he has decided, according to him, "to do with the public management, and also with the intrigues woven by leaders on power and around them, the main theme" (<https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/zinder>) of his novel entitled *The Waltz of the Vultures*.

This novel which depicts a real person nonetheless is the fruit of the author's imagination that extols or eulogizes the mechanisms through which these characters take their decisions and react positively or negatively.

The choice of this theme history and culture in Andre Salifou's *The Waltz of the Vulture* is not only linked to the fact that Zinder presents a rich patrimony made of history, traditions, architecture and objects but also, the historian, the man of drama art and the novelist has attempted to sweeten this novel with stories and legends extracted from Nigerienne oral literature. Stories of Chipkaw, natural son of Malam Makana; Arzika, the craftsman with golden brilliance, the King Sololo, personification of jealousy, are edifying.

Andre Salifou has said that "these stories and legends have been broadcast in Zindir area", his native city, "by late Malam Dan-Goujoungou, a blind practicing and moralist Muslim, who used them to illustrate the multiple sermons that he pronounced in the evening." Through a historical and literary approach, the role of culture seen by a historian will be put in epigraph.

Keywords: history, culture, Zinder

INTRODUCTION

Andre Salifou's *La valse des vautours* (*The Waltz of the Vultures*) is a novel which attempts to illustrate, among other themes, the stammering or hesitation of democracy in Africa. But in this paper, I choose to discuss another theme related to "History and Culture". Why history? It is simply because the writer decides to sweeten his novel with stories and legends extracted from Nigerienne oral literature. These stories rank from the story of Chipkaw, natural son of Malam Makana to the story of the King Sololo, personification of jealousy, through the story of Arzika, the craftsman with golden brilliance. (A.Salifou's warning on the *Waltz of the Vulture*, Niamey, September 1997:7)

Andre Salifou has said that these stories and legends have been broadcast in Zindir area, his native city, by late Malam Dan-Goujoungou, a blind practicing and moralist Muslim, who used them to illustrate the multiple sermons that he pronounced in the evening. Through a historical and literary approach, the role of culture seen by a historian will be put into exergue.

For a better understanding of the selected theme, this paper is divided into two (2) sections. The first section titled "Damagaram historical background" has three (3) parts: (i) *Damagaram* history before independence; (ii) historian social role; and (iii) history as a cultural support in *The Waltz of the Vultures*. The second section named concept of culture in *The Waltz of the Vultures*, deals with cultural tradition in Zinder, the writer and the culture of democracy in *The Waltz of the Vultures* and cultural identity as a nature in *The Waltz of the Vultures*.

DAMAGARAM HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Damagarawa or inhabitants of *Damagaram* (officially named Zinder) constitute a multilingual population (4.487.009 people [Niger Census 2018]) mainly composed by Hausa, Kanuri, Tuareg and Fulani located according to their historical migration sites. The name *Damagaram* was and is presently the original name of the main village of the empire and at the same time the name of the area and region. It also represents the whole Sultanate.

Damagaram History before Independence

Ancient capital of Niger Republic from 1922 (when it became French colony) to 1926, *Damagaram* was the headquarters of Nigerienne Military Territory from 1900. This head state is located on a commercial trans-Saharan caravans' road which is linking Maghreb to Black Africa, right from the 11th century; it is the same trans-Saharan way which connects Algeria to Lagos (<http://theses.univ.lyon2.fr>).

As stated by André Salifou (1971:90), after that Sultan Tanimun has changed *Damagaram* into an independent Bornu Kingdom, in 1899 his successor Amadu Kuuren Daaga faced French colonizers 'authority and was bound to surrender after several counter-attacks. The killing of two (2) French officers [Cazemaju and Olive] on May 5th, 1898 and *Tirmini* battle are true evidences.

In 1906 according to M. Danda (2004), the successor of Kuuren Daga, Amadu Dan Bassa was, in his turn, deported to Ivory Coast and the Sultanate abolished up to 1926. New ways, new political practices were progressively imposed to the *Damagarawa* by the colonizer. And that will be the starting point of an eternal protest; the *Damagarawa* keep on protesting for the restoration and the reconstruction of their lost past and heritage. Nowadays even inside political parties, such claims are noticed especially with the "green party".

To conclude this part before moving to the social role of a historian, I can say that *Damagaram* has an important history. Here, I have just given you some hints as a reminder, for the sake of developing my own topic dealing with André Salifou's *The Waltz of the Vultures*.

Historian Social Role

What can be the social role of a historian? In the context of A. Salifou's *The Waltz of the Vultures* and in relation with my topic, I can say that the historian is in the middle of social and political dynamics of democratic process, ranking from ethnical clashes to elections disagreements or other divergences related to political leaders personal ambitions and/or selfishness or even their own group wish, desire or self-centeredness tending to pure egoism. Through history, he can remind people similar events that have passed at a certain point of time. And by recalling what has been passed, he attracts leaders or decisions makers to be careful. In that way, some problematic or awkward actions can be avoided.

At this point, I will hardly share the anti-slavery hero's viewpoint, Abraham Lincoln, who has

said that "democracy is the government of the people, by the people and for the people". I think that in Africa in general and in A. Salifou's novel, as a historian, he considers that democracy is an everlasting process of discovering new rights and freedom. In my opinion, African democracy is just an illusion, a kind of utopia. When African political leaders are talking about self-government, the people are not ruling, they will just choose their rulers and they will ask them to govern. By doing so, the mandatory will think that they will no longer need the people who delegate them. They will be governed neither by themselves, nor for themselves.

According to K. Biaya (<https://bullesdesavoir.com/2013>), the new constitutions of African democratic countries are hardly directed towards the future; there are intended to facilitate the coming back of dictators, scarifying then the possibilities of settling down a democratic regime which will contribute to the enhancement of future development and that will defend our local conditions in a world of globalization.

To sum up, the historian has a social responsibility as it is manifested today, due to developing need of history by the society, linked to a growing jurisdiction or control of social relationship. The deal is to know if one has to fear or not, with the sliding of the historian assigned social, political and judiciary duties, the crumbling of the fundamental principles of historical method and the essence of each science.

History as a Cultural Support in the Waltz of the Vultures

Paraphrasing T.A.Ezeigbo (1991:11), André Salifou's aim in *The Waltz of the Vultures* is to make the past present, to bring the distant near. Salifou has the same viewpoint with the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe. They both believe in the recreation of the African past for three purposes: (i) to restore the dignity and self respect lost by Africans; (ii) to inform Africa's detractors that Africa is not a *tabula rasa*; (iii) and to educate the Africans themselves.

Mixing history to culture takes roots in Salifou's ingenuity, imagination and observation. The use of stories and legends extracted from Nigerienne oral literature is an additional stylistic device which renders the novel to be a famous masterpiece. In *The Waltz of the Vultures* each character corresponds to a story and a moral is drawn in their chronological or sequential order: (i) Story of Gaika and the three charlatans; (ii) Story of Tarana; (iii) Story of Shipkaw; (iv) Story of Sololo

and his marriage; (v) Story of Arzika, cousin of Gaika; (vi) Story of Zeynam and Zinaria; (vii) Story of Kasko; (viii) Story of Tamure.

The book itself starts to recall the history of the famous Central African Mission commended by two French officers (Captain Voulet and Lieutenant Chanoine) in charge of recognizing the limit of the French border with England after the convention of 1898. Then the history continues with the exactions of the villagers and even the carriers and finally the author introduces us to the tragedy of Dan Kori where another French officer (Lieutenant-Colonel Klobb) was killed on July 14th 1899 by his French mates (Salifou: 9-11). Throughout the novel, history is the basic means used to develop or to express André Salifou's observation of the political life and the manifestation of the African culture.

The portrayal of Gaika, one of the round characters is enlightening. The writer starts to talk about the African continent culture in general before evoking the particular significance of certain African names as it is the case with *Gaika*, in these terms: "In this African continent where each name has a particular significance, Gaika also has its own meaning. In fact, her name has already a link with her own history in the sense that it means 'late comer'". [Sur ce continent noir qui veut que toute appellation revête une signification particulière, le prénom Gaika ne déroge pas à la règle. En effet, il contient déjà une partie de l'histoire personnelle de la jeune fille qui le porte dans la mesure où il signifie « tard venue ».] (*The Waltz of the Vultures*: 12)

From this quotation one can guess about who the character of Gaika is. Here the novelist is preparing his audience to be used to the type of actors he wants his readers to be used to. The habits, the state of being, the behavior and the way of life are elements foreshadowed by the author in order to render his work accepted and enjoyed by his readers. As one goes along, he is introduced to Gaika's full curriculum; her parents are introduced to the reader in a historical narrative technique and at the same time, the author seizes the opportunity to insert Nigerienne cultural practices as stated on page thirteen: "Tarana Gaika's mother and Doundouroussou her father, have got only three male children after twenty five years of married life. And yet, if it is true that in this society, the birth of a male child is highly appreciated it does not deserve that any mother wishes to have at least one daughter in her life. Either true or false, mothers think that girls are more sensitive than boys to their parents' difficulties. Female

children are much closer and always prompt to answer to their parents' solicitations rather than male children who prefer to take care of their in-laws." [...Tarana la mère de Gaika, et Doundouroussou son père, n'ont que des garçons, au nombre de trois, après 25 ans de mariage. Or, s'il est vrai que dans cette société, la naissance d'un enfant de sexe masculin est particulièrement appréciée, il n'en demeure pas moins que toute mère de famille souhaite, elle, avoir au moins une fille dans sa vie. A tort ou à raison, les mères considèrent en effet que les filles sont plus sensibles aux difficultés de leurs parents, plus proche d'eux et presque toujours plus promptes à répondre à leurs sollicitations que leurs frères auxquels il est souvent reproché de s'occuper chacun davantage de sa belle famille que de ses propres parents.] (*The Waltz of the Vultures*: 13).

This historical desire of having male or female children takes root in Africa due to matrimonial or patriarchal practices depending on the ruling system of the area. It is an issue raised by some African novelists like the two Nigerian novelists: Flora Nwapa in her book *Efuru*, Buchi Emecheta in *The Joys of Motherhood* or the Nigerienne writer Abdoulaye Mamani with *Sarraounia*.

To come back to Salifou's style of writing, it is clear that he uses Gaika as a harbinger or forerunner of the other stories. Through her depiction, he succeeds to introduce some other characters' stories. That is the case of Sololo, one of the main characters, Gaika's nephew and chief of the security forces. (*The Waltz of the Vultures*: 14-15). And through the same lady, we are introduced to Chipkaw another protagonist (19-25). What is proper to A. Salifou is his ability and capacity to use exact dates especially while he describes the Voulet-Chanoine expedition and that of Lieutenant-Colonel Klobb's. This attitude is particular or specific to cultural history.

To end up this sub-part, one can say that when history is dedicated to culture, we assist to a wonderful combination that renders writing highly expressive, easy to read and to understand. But let us see the second part dealing with the Concept of Culture in *The Waltz of the Vultures*.

CONCEPT OF CULTURE IN THE WALTZ OF THE VULTURES

The concept of culture is very broad. But after some edifying definitions, we will discuss culture in *The Waltz of the Vultures* mainly the cultural tradition in Zinder, The writer and the culture of democracy in *The Waltz of the Vultures* and cultural identity as a nature in *The Waltz of the Vultures*.

What is then the concept of culture? According to Pascal Perrineau (<https://www.persee.fr>), the scientific concept of culture is still largely poly-semantic. It will be interesting to situate this concept into a "halo semantic" which configurations are the direct inheritants of "culture" meaning in literature. And culture by definition is the sum of attitudes, customs and beliefs that distinguishes one group of people from another. Culture is then transmitted through language, material objects, rituals, institutions and art from one generation to the next. In other words, culture refers to all the African beliefs, customs, and arts.

UNESCO in its side asserts that culture gives human being the ability to use his mind; through thinking, he discerns the values and looks for their new significances. It is true that culture has not preserved its original innocence; nevertheless, one has to recognize that traditional culture is always present in modern Africa. (<https://www.google.com>).

For Essential Humanities the term *culture* is defined as "the distinctive features of a group that are *learned* rather than biological". Language, artistic traditions, and religious beliefs all fall under this definition. Language is often the primary *identifying feature* of a culture... (<http://www.eolss.net>).

To conclude this introductory paragraph, I can say that culture is the process by which man develop his intellectual faculties including practices, knowledge traditions and particular norms of a given community or whole people.

The Cultural Tradition in Zinder

Culture among the *Damagarawa* is multiple and varied ranking from polytheist beliefs (gods and spirits, oracles, magic), to societal organization (dignitaries, free men, cast), via traditional political organization (centralized and decentralized societies) and African traditional philosophy (respect of elders, wisdom, traditional education, African communalism, morality, taboos and arts).

Damagaram, before the advent of colonization, was a vast, rich and prosperous empire which contains a diversity of cultures and customs so that it will take time to define in one word its cultures. In this particular paper, I will put an accent on the use of language (as the vehicle of any culture) and the traditional outfit (as an element of culture which allows an individual to recognize his own culture). Here culture stands for a complex meaning representing an identity for each people.

Damagarawa's culture is a specific culture found in Africa and born by Africans and demarcating *Damagarawa* from other people. The way they speaks their Hausa language is different from the other Nigerienne Hausa speakers. Words or group of words like *ka! Halo ma! shiriya za kayi! To! Jimin shi gide* or *ku ji shi*, are specific to them. Perhaps their intonation and their speech may have a relationship with their historical background of Kanuri language and their link or connection with Bornu people. It can also be the fruit of their encounter with several and various traders since historically *Damagaram* was a trade center; and historians have said that "Zinder [*Damagaram*] is located on a commercial road of trans-Saharan caravans which joins, right from the 11th century, the Maghreb and black Africa." (<https://wikipedia.org>)

Traditionally *Damagaram* has some hints of Islamic religion culture since its foundation in 1812. *Damagarawa* are Muslims like the majority of the other Nigerienne. Historians are liable to say that Islamic religion is introduced in the Sultanate thanks to Arab and Berber traders between the 13th and the 14th centuries. (<https://wikipedia.org>). It is also said that *Damagarawa* have accepted the Islamic religion freely and peacefully without any constraint. Nonetheless, they have waited until 1840, under Tanimoune's reign, to officially gain the title of Islamic kingdom.

I am not specifically interested in the religion itself but I particularly want to point out the cultural aspect related to Islam, that is to say, the Koran school which was /and is presently developed in Zinder area. These traditional schools are attracting many young boys from all over Niger country and even beyond. These students of the Koran come to Zinder with their own traditions and practices that they will combine with the local culture so that *Damagaram* acquires additional elements of culture to their own which is enriched and *de facto* strengthened.

The last point to be discussed at this level is the culture of protest. *Damagarawa* seem to be rebels. Very likely and perhaps, this attitude takes root in their history, particularly their fight against the white invaders who imposed their law on the people after the destitution of their ways. Even the destitution of their Sultan and the shifting of the capital (1926) from Zinder to Niamey can contribute to their eagerness and excitement. Anyway other Nigeriennes consider *Damagaram* as an eternal kingdom of contestations. But at the present time things are changing positively.

Before ending this paragraph, it will be informative to mention that in *Damagaram* with the colonial encounter and the change that has occurred, three Christian churches have been created since more than half century: one Catholic Church and two Protestant Churches. But nowadays there is a multiplicity of churches who are from time to time victims of brothers Muslim's threat. That was the case on January 15th 2015 during brothers Muslim's demonstration against *Charlie Hebdo* where churches, Christian estates and beer parlors were destroyed under the *leitmotiv* of *Allah Akbar!* (<https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zinder>).

The Writer and the Culture of Democracy in *The Waltz of the Vultures*

André Salifou's *The Waltz of the Vultures* has started with a three (3) pages warning. But myself, I am more interested to the author's own statement on page seven (7). He has written it in Niamey on September 1997, three (3) years before the copyright (2000) of his novel. The announcement written in French is as follow: "A privileged observatory of African political life in general and Nigerienne policy in particular, I have decided to do with the public management, and also with the plotting woven by leaders on power and around them, the main theme of this novel". [Observateur privilégié de la vie politique africaine en général et nigérienne en particulier, j'ai décidé de faire de la gestion de la chose publique, ainsi que des intrigues qui se nouent par les hommes du pouvoir et autour d'eux, la matière centrale de ce roman.]

To discuss political issues, Andre Salifou wanders his reader through history. He uses Nigerienne traditional chieftaincy's terminology which he rearranges to the modern political scheme. He is accusing Wizir nicknamed Ouban-Gouri and Langa-Langa for their domination of political life in the country in these terms: "...The more time is passing, the more we assist to the bipolarization of the country's political life. In fact, disregarding a good governance and, being careless as regard the State, each of the two highest responsible of the Kingdom, starting with the Wizir, is mobilizing his partisans to fight the others so that, the country's political debate has turned into an endless offend between the two sides." [...plus le temps passe, plus on assiste à la bipolarisation de la vie politique du pays. En effet, au mépris du bon fonctionnement, voir de la survie de l'Etat, chacun des deux plus hauts responsables du royaume, à commencer par le Wazir, mobilise ses partisans et diabolise l'autre au point que le

débat politique du pays se résume en un affrontement quotidien entre les deux camps.] (*The Waltz of the Vultures*: 35).

The above quotation proves Salifou's capacity, frankness and honesty to criticize the ruling class's behavior by telling the story of the irresponsible chief of the armed forces Sololo. This reckless man is taken in noticeable offence of adultery and is beaten by a warrant officer helped by some neighbors as written on pages 35-36 of the novel: "It is a big, fat and strong warrant officer who, while crying for help, in front of a thief, just to alert his neighbors, continues to beat severely his undesirable guest. Some of the neighbors seize also the opportunity to give a memorable correction to Sololo since they recognize him... For sure, the adultery made by Sololo is rapidly heard by everybody throughout the country..." [C'est un sous-officier grand, gros et fort, qui tout en criant "au voleur" pour ameuter ses voisins, se met à administrer à son indésirable hôte une correction magistrale. Quelques-uns de ses voisins rendus sur les lieux en profitent également pour frapper Sololo avec d'autant plus de plaisir et de hargne qu'ils l'ont bien reconnu... Evidemment, l'adultère commis par Sololo fait grand bruit à travers tous le pays.]

At this level, both Nigerienne writer (Andre Salifou) and Nigerian novelist (Chinua Achebe) have a similar viewpoint. For them, democracy in Africa is limited to a regime of "relatives, friends, allied and acquaintance" as Gaika, Sololo's niece has said it openly in the following lines: "... Providence has been decided to take care of us; it propelled you to the presidency of this country to profit and let your relatives, allies and close associates serve themselves, too." (66). [... la providence ayant décidé de veiller sur nous, elle t'a propulsé à la tête de ce pays pour te servir et pour laisser tes parents, tes alliés et tes proches collaborateurs, se servir aussi.]

Gaika's declaration foreshadows the thought of bad governance brings to mind by Salifou and Achebe in *A Man of the People* (1966) and *Anthills of the Savannah* (1988). The single dissimilarity resides in the approach. While Salifou, at the same time, criticizes the democratic and "military-civil" regimes in Niger, in the same novel, Achebe does it in different novels and in a distinct style, with Nigeria as the setting. Yet the Ghanaian Ayi Kwei Armah has also criticized the malfunction of the new ruling class just after independence in his masterpiece, *The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born* (1969). Andre Salifou's conclusion completed at the end of his novel on page 137 is

instructive and illuminating: "... The militaries came to power, cut the throat of Dao and Yao and threw in prison scores of barons of the late regime, including Mougou, Wawa and Chedane. The kingdom-republic of Zangana must restart all over again." [... Aussitôt les cadres-janissaires s'emparent du pouvoir, égorgent Dao et Yao et jettent en prison une vingtaine de barons du défunt régime dont Mougou, Wawa et Chédane. Le royaume de Zangana doit repartir à zéro.]

To end up this part, I will say that in many African countries, political leaders on power lose their life in a stupid way, while trying to glue to power. Unfortunately, the new ruling class does worse than the dethroned ones. And sometimes the new comers are more covetous than the overthrown rulers. Each time it is duplication, the country is ruined. We assist powerlessly to what André Salifou qualifies as: "*La valse des vauteurs*" or *The Waltz of the Vultures*, a kind of one step forwards, two steps backwards policy.

Cultural Identity as a Nature in the Waltz of the Vultures

Cultural identity is the claim of the self. It is the *identity* or feeling of belonging to a group. It is also part of a person's self-conception and *self-perception* and it is related to *nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, locality* or any kind of social group that has its own distinct *culture*. In this way, cultural identity is both characteristic of the *individual* but also of the culturally identical group of members sharing the same cultural identity or upbringing. (<https://en.wikipedia.org>).

In *The Waltz of the Vultures*, André Salifou has selected an interesting story to claim the Africans self identity. In fact, through the characters of Chipkaw, Mato, and Nomaw, he has achieved a good artistic historical background of the African culture. Before any further study, it will be educational to let you (readers) know that Gaika is the central character who has a social link with all the actors in the novel. Here she is said to be Mougou's *fiancée* one of Chipkaw's sons. And the three protagonists (Chipkaw, Mato, and Nomaw) are the children of Makana, a rich famous herdsman who becomes an eminent Muslim leader who has left a colossal fortune. But Makana in his testament has said that one of his three children is a bastard and for that, he will not be concerned with the heritage. Later on, in the book we will discover that Chipkaw is the one.

To know who among the three children is a bastard, the author uses a succession of stories

based on observation. These stories have a common denominator which is true evidences based on African cultural identity. To support my assertion, I will first give the example of Sololo's African wisdom when he starts to get information on his aunt's suitor: "...his real identity but also his social origins and mainly his personal history." [... son identité réelle mais aussi ses origines sociales et, plus généralement, son histoire personnelle.] (16).

The above quote reminds readers the African basic and preliminary inquiries and information needed by in-laws before any formal arrangement concerning marriage. In the old days, marriage in Africa was a family affair. There is no hurry in marriage agreement. African people take their time to settle any matter before celebrating any wedding.

Let us come back to our three protagonists Chipkaw, Mato and Nomaw. They have left their home town in order to find out who among them is not Makana's son. Their trip is full of plots and stories. "Villagers, they enjoy nature and it has no secret for them... They know trees, flowers, animals and birds' names, and know how to identify mammals' tracks and also songs of all the birds. Wherever they pass, they scrutinize everything, knowing that nature has always something to reveal to human beings." [Hommes de la campagne, ils adorent la nature et celle-ci n'a aucun secret pour eux ... ils connaissent les noms des arbres et des fleurs, des animaux et des oiseaux et savent reconnaître les traces de tous les mammifères ainsi que les chants de tous les oiseaux. Partout où ils passent, ils observent tout, persuadés que la nature a toujours quelques chose à révéler à l'homme.] (16-17).

The above assertion is edifying. It foreshadows the forthcoming role that the three gentlemen will play later on in the novel and at the same time, it is an expression of the African wisdom and cultural identity. Before the clash of culture and the change brought by the colonial encounter, every African youngster has a minimum of knowledge to grasp. That is exactly what the three men have learned. All these things tend to disappear. Their Learning will be useful for them when Bounou drives them to the chief of the village court (Goga) for a she-camel affair. One by one the three men answer to the chief's questions.

Nomaw justifies himself in these words: "... I have understood that Bounou's camel has no tail just by observing its droppings on the ground. They are positioned in a rectilinear manner on the path... normally the swinging of the tail

from left to right and vice versa, during the dejection, must reject the droppings alternately on the left and right side.” [... J'ai compris que la chamelle n'avait plus de queue, uniquement en observant la distribution de ses crottes sur le sol. En effet celles-ci sont disposées de manière presque rectiligne, sur la voie ... normalement, le balancement de la queue de gauche à droite et de droite à gauche, au moment de la déjection, devrait rejeter ces crottes tantôt à droite tantôt à gauche du chemin.] (19).

Here again, African cultural identity is expressed through observation which is the key word of André Salifou's motto. Chipkaw in his turn justifies his allegation as follow: "... I deduce that the animal is one-eyed for having notice that on three different trees, some nearest bushy branches are not eaten whereas some which are high are eaten; then I conclude that the camel is one-eyed.” [... j'ai déduit que l'animal est borgne pour avoir remarqué que, sous trois arbres différents ... des branches assez proches du sol et couvertes de feuilles particulièrement tendres, sont restées intactes, tandis qu'à côté, d'autres, plus hautes ont été dégarnies de leurs feuilles. J'en ai conclu que cela est dû au fait que l'animal ne voit que d'un seul œil.] (19). Once again, it is not supernatural or psychic power but observation.

The last person to express himself is the third brother Mato. He has explained why he has said that the she-camel is about to give birth on the same day. Satisfied with the three men's answers, the chief thanks them and due to the fact it is late, they are intimated to stay and pass the night. They refuse to eat the food presented to them because of a certain number of reasons (19-21). From story to story Chipkaw hears from the chief Goga that he is the bastard among the three brothers.

The aim here is not to discover who is legal or bastard but to point out the diversity, the significance and the usefulness of the African cultural identity as compared to European ways. In short, André Salifou wants to prove that Africa is not a *tabula rasa* and Africans are not mindless.

CONCLUSION

To conclude this paper, I can say that taking historical evidences as base, André Salifou, in his novel *The Waltz of the Vultures* has produced a real masterpiece dedicated to

denounced African political leaders on power who confuse executive power to traditional chieftaincy. He thinks that democracy in Africa is "a one step forwards, two steps backwards policy" as Hausa people used to say *gidan jiya noman goje*.

To defend and support the theme of cultural identity, the writer succeeds to combine a succession of edifying stories to fight the false prejudice of *tabula rasa*. At this point, I can paraphrase the Chinese President, Xi Jinping who asserts that the only thing inherited by Africans from Arab and European colonization is religion that they practice exactly like how the colonizer would like it to be. The rest is not their concern: Education is a disaster, administration is corrupted, health is precarious, but religion is wonderfully good; and the African rebels against everything except religion (2020).

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