

Africa's 'Two Publics': Colonialism and Governmentality

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INTRODUCTION

The enduring effects of colonialism in Africa continue to attract attention in the scholarly literature. The complex ways in which the process of colonization not only shaped the past, but continues to shape the ex-colonies' future (Cooper, 2005: 3; see also Mamdani, 1996) - particularly through what Nicholas B. Dirks (1996: 1) describes as 'cultural technologies of rule'¹ which sustained and strengthened colonialism - constitute very important entry-points for the analysis of contemporary challenges faced by postcolonial states. Particular forms of political culture 'constituted out of colonial encounters,' which also became 'fundamental to the development of resistance against colonialism' (Dirks 1992: 4), including *mentalities of rule* and the *art of government*, are critical in understanding how colonialism re-shaped Africa.

Against the backdrop of the unending interest in the role of colonialism in Africa's past, present and future, Olúfémi Táíwò (2010: 3), argues that most of the problems afflicting African countries 'are frequently traced to the lingering effects of colonialism.' One of the most celebrated pieces of political sociology/anthropology in Africa which examines such lingering effects, particularly in terms of the consequences of the 'cultural technologies of rule' and the political culture 'constituted out of colonial encounter' is Peter P. Ekeh's 'two publics' thesis.

Ekeh (1975: 91) argues that the experience of colonialism in Africa 'have led to the emergence of a unique historical configuration in modern postcolonial Africa: the existence of two publics instead of one public, as in the West.' Many of the fundamental problems afflicting the continent, Ekeh posits, could be explained as the consequences of the 'dialectical relationships between the two publics'. Transposing the normative assumptions of a shared *moral* foundation for the private and public realms in Europe to Africa, argues the political sociologist, can only be done 'at conceptual and theoretical [and evidently, practical] peril'. My purpose in this article can be divided into three parts. One is to point to how Ekeh's insight and its usefulness for examining the specific dynamics of the reality of Africa's largely unfortunate past and present in terms of *the conduct of conduct in the public realm* can be further enriched by relating it to the deeply penetrating insight on the nature of power and domination articulated through Foucault's concept of governmentality. As a specific engagement with what Peter Pels (1997: 164) calls the 'colonial dialectic of Western governmentality', it is interesting to approach Ekeh's two publics thesis through the lens of governmentality. As Frank Pearce and Steve Tombs (1998: 567) have argued, the concept of 'governmentality' presents us with 'sets of concepts which have helped to re-describe fruitfully the past and diagnose crucial aspects of contemporary and emerging social relations'.

Though Ekeh does not present the two publics as a form of colonially-induced governmentality, I explore this path in this article. I point to how colonially-induced mentalities of government are related to the emergent form of postcolonial governmentality in Africa and its consequences, particularly in terms of how such emergent mentalities have produced certain forms of 'thought made practical and technical' (Dean, 1999: 27) in postcolonial Africa. I suggest that the preoccupation of theorists of governmentality with the mentalities of government can be related to what I describe as Ekeh's postulations on the

mentalities of the two publics which govern the conduct of (public) conduct in postcolonial Africa.

Two, I attempt to show the theoretical and practical benefits of combining the two public thesis with the Foucauldian perspective on governmentality. There are three levels at which this can be useful. Doing so encourages a critical dialogue between two perspectives that arose out of two different historical and geographical experiences; it contributes to the 'increasing aware[ness] of different accounts of global history and various alternative modernities' (see Featherstone and Venn 2006: 1) and the implications of these different accounts not only for actually existing societies, but also for comparative social analysis. Though Foucault's governmentality challenges existing perspectives for understanding European (and global?) history of power, there is a variability to this that is evident in the 'two publics' thesis. Indeed, by analyzing the history of Europe in relation to that of the European encounter with Africa - including the fundamental impact of 'anticolonial refusal' (Scott, 1995: 192) - Ekeh draws attention to the limitation of assumptions of 'universal generic knowledge' produced in the West.

Three, I argue that relating the Foucauldian theory of governmentality with Foucault's perspective of sovereign power in the African context helps to further illuminate how Ekeh's thesis can be productively elaborated in understanding the question of rule and power relations in the postcolony. This is so because postcolonial interpenetration of the apparatuses of governmentality and sovereign power - as manifested in the split and contradictions of the civic and primordial publics - has had fatal consequences for the lives of most Africans who are still largely governed as *population* rather than as people in the postcolonial era

In the 'two publics' thesis, Ekeh examines the *problematique* of the *translation* of the moral foundation of the public and private realms in Africa, a translation imposed through the 'imperial encounter' (Mandair 2009: xiii) and its consequences. In translating the logic and practices of private-public dichotomy and the logic and practices of *the public* - a 'politico-theoretical [category] of deeply European origin' that has been universalized (Featherstone and Venn 2006: 2) - into Africa, the colonialists, Ekeh shows, either misunderstood the reality of actually existing societies in Africa, or failed to successfully encourage and promote the mentalities upon which the new public could be sustained in 'modern' Africa.

How can Ekeh's take on the public sphere and governance and Foucault's analysis of governmentality and sovereign power illuminate our understanding of the historical bases of the contemporary (im)mobilities of public governance in Africa? How do relevant aspects of Foucauldian governmentality and sovereign power relate to Ekeh's take on the conduct of the two publics as produced by colonial governmentality? I argue that conflating Ekeh and Foucault might help scholars working on Africa in looking afresh at corruption, the concept and practices of the 'Big Man' and neopatrimonialism, among others, and how the practices of the state in Africa is reflected in the pathologies of the 'civil society' and vice versa.

It is relevant to note here that Ekeh and Foucault did not meet or directly engage with each other. There is no reference to Foucault at all in Ekeh's work, even though, in my reading, the latter's work seems to anticipate and to have been anticipated by the former's writings on sovereign power and governmentality. It is interesting, though, that Ekeh's thesis was published in the same year that Foucault published *Surveiller et Punir* (*Discipline and Punish*, 1975) in which he discusses sovereign power.² He later coined and elaborated the concept of governmentality in the College de France lectures in 1978 which were recently

translated into English. Thus, while recognizing the occasion, location, cultural and social history (Ahluwalia 2010: 6) and the 'plain empirical realities from which [theory] emerged,' (Said 1983: 35), in the cases of both thinkers, I believe that relating their perspectives, not only disrupts Enlightenment assumptions (Ahluwalia 2010: 8), but also brings cross-cultural discourses into some measure of convergence.

(POST)COLONIAL GOVERNMENTALITY, SOVEREIGN POWER AND THE PARADOX OF RESISTANCE

Against the backdrop of the greater attention that is being paid to the illumination of historical and contemporary social experience by scholars through the perspective of governmentality, 21st century scholarship on the postcolony ought to also pay greater attention to how we can understand the African colonial past and its indelible imprints on the African present through the Foucauldian lens of governmentality. The overarching purpose of Ekeh's thesis, even if not specifically presented in this language, is to address the conceptual and practical problems of the translation of the idea of *the public* in the Europe to Africa. In recognition of the 'multiplicity of times, trajectories, and rationalities' (Mbembe 2001: 9) evident in counter-translation as a form of anticolonial resistance, Ekeh shows how Africans make sense of their 'modern' lives in relation to actually existing publics. His identification of colonialism as an epoch in African history is as true for Africa as it is for other postcolonial societies. However, is it only recently that scholars have come to characterize the distinctive features of the epochal change as marked by fundamental changes in the 'conduct of conduct' – as Foucault primarily described governmentality – predicated on the initial colonial governmentality and the subsequent colonially-induced governmentality, that is, postcolonial governmentality. The reconstitution of the public sphere, which Ekeh describes as 'the public' (particularly the 'civic public'), has reshaped Africa with important implications for all areas of life in modern Africa. The applicability of Foucault's theory of governmentality to the colonial world, despite what Legg (2006: 711) describes as his 'almost total [silence] on issues of colonialism', has been explored by some scholars (Scott, 1995; Prakash, 1999; Kalpagam, 2000; Hindess, 2001; Chakrabarty, 2002; Abrahamsen, 2003; Charterjee 2004; Legg, 2006, 2007a, 2007b; Ferguson, 2007; Death, 2013; Matereke, 2014). However, Pal Ahluwalia (2010: 1), contra Legg's position – and Mignolo's (2009: 160, 170) assertion that Foucault 'did not have... the colonial experience and political interest propelled by the colonial wound' – argues that the anticolonial experience in Tunisia and Algeria influenced Foucault's thinking.³ The body of literature engaging with Foucault from a postcolonial context suggests ways 'in which colonial governmentalities can be articulated to critique imperial rule at the level of the everyday and the material' (Legg, 2007a: 2). Beyond the everyday and the material, as manifestations of the consequences of colonialism, governmentality can also be used in relation to the two public thesis to articulate the transformative nature of imperial rule in the *longue durée*. The latter, for Ekeh, is the basis for articulating the everyday and material critique of imperial rule in the postcolonial context.

While arguing that colonial governmentality reconstituted the public sphere and the economy in radically new ways in India, Kalpagam (2000; 2002) states that in adopting the Foucauldian framework, we need 'to focus attention on the colonial state's distinctive constitutive features of modern political rationalities and technologies of rule, and how these engendered and sought to regulate the public sphere' (Kalpagam, 2002: 35). Indeed, these 'modern political rationalities' and new technologies of rule constitute the most important ways through which the non-forcible aspects of colonial hegemony penetrated and dominated actually existing societies and pre-colonial rationalities and mentalities. In the specific case of Africa, in Foucauldian terms, Ekeh examines the role of colonial governmentality in the production of the apparatuses or technologies of rule, but also, and more importantly, the construction of new rationality and mentalities of rule. Colonial governmentality permanently changed not only the mode, method and structures (technologies) of public rule, and therefore the public sphere, but also the attitude or approach and the mind-set (mentalities) of Africans in their relationship with *the* (modern) *political*. Ekeh elaborates the ways in which colonial governmentality radically altered the public sphere in Africa, while noting the specific 'modes of subjectification' (Malmvig, 2014: 297) produced by the changes. Consequently, he uses these fundamentally transformed technologies and mentalities as the basis for the examination of specific social formations and the subsequent social crises in the areas of governance, civil society, ethnicity, culture, etc.

Colonial governmentality was inherently paradoxical. Some of the implications of this paradox which inhered in the colonial public sphere constitute part of the terrible legacies of colonialism in the contemporary postcolony. The colonial enterprise, in general, and colonial governmentality, specifically, were (or, in some aspects, pretended to be) based on the Enlightenment, which, as Kant famously espoused, was premised on the fact that 'the promise of self-determination was essentially contingent on using one's reason in public' (Kalpagam, 2002: 36). However, the 'subject-constituting aspects of modern power' based on 'a new and modern political rationality' which was transposed to the colony was one that theoretically 'constitutes citizens as rational and autonomous agents capable of exercising their free will' (ibid). This was where the contradictions of colonialism or the paradox of colonial governmentality became evident. This paradox is illuminated by scholars who have argued that we need to go past Foucault's initial⁴ teleological or 'stagist' analysis of the genealogy of governmentality which assumes that (i) governmental power succeeded sovereign power (Drinot, 2011: 180-181) and that (ii) governmentality is exclusive to liberal societies (ibid: 181). Indeed, governmental and sovereign powers were simultaneously mobilized under colonialism. I illustrate this through the analysis of Ekeh's two publics.

Enlightenment ideals which foregrounded colonialism and the liberal ideas wrapped around it – in their 'modernizing' and 'civilizing' missions – condemned the existing rationality and mentalities of precolonial societies and the colonized. While seeking to supplant and replace these, colonialism promised to transform the colonized into a new order of being (modern citizenship), but suspended the actuality of this transformation until the future – the end of colonial rule. In this context therefore, colonial governmentality invited the colonized into a new sphere of life governed by a new ethos of public life and common morality on which modern public rule was to be based; yet, it denied the colonized of any common ownership of, and therefore full participation in, that new public sphere.⁵ This led to a bifurcation of 'the public (sphere)' first in the colony and consequently, in the postcolony. While David Scott describes the concern with this bifurcation as 'a general

problematic in which what is at stake is the way colonialism as a practice of power works to include and exclude the colonized' (1999: 25), Táíwò (2010: 4) has argued that the proper approach to this is to separate colonialism and modernity so as to present a critical 'account of [how colonialism aborted] the implantation of modernity in Africa.'

This bifurcation with its impact on the apparatuses of rule, particularly in postcolonial Africa, was produced by a subversive rationality - what Mignolo (2009: 177-178) calls 'decolonial strategy' - which became the mechanism for resistance against the foreignness or *otherness* of colonial governmentality. This, unfortunately, but logically, was transposed to the postcolonial era, thus producing a continuity in the mentalities of rule.

Colonial governmentality sought to conduct the conduct of the colonized in a way that ensured that while the promises of a *new order of being* (based on the Enlightenment and liberalism) were 'evident' and 'achievable', the *native* could enter the public sphere of rationality only on the terms of colonial power; thus, only in a way that would not threaten the colonial enterprise and its hegemonic (exploitative and expropriating) project - with its associated doctrine of racial superiority. Thus, sovereign power presented itself in the language and practices of 'the promise of self-determination' even though this was a strategy that allowed what Foucault (2007: 108) described as the 'exercise of [a] very specific, albeit, very complex power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and the apparatus of security as its essential technical instrument.' A good example of how (post)colonial governmentality works in Africa would be the (mis-)use of 'native' authorities and traditional rulers under the 'Indirect Rule' system in colonial and, later, postcolonial Africa (see Mamdani 1996). Traditional rulers were initially used as a bridge between the civic and primordial publics under colonialism; they continued to be so used in the postcolonial era. This had and still has what Zygmunt Bauman (2008: 107-108) would call 'adiaphorizing effect' on the bureaucracy, in particular, and the civic public, in general, in that it stripped them of their 'ethical core,' thus rendering actions in the civic public 'ethically neutral and therefore exempt from ethical evaluation and censure' by most Africans. What happened in British colonial Africa, for instance, was therefore not merely the transition from sovereign to governmental power, but an intermeshing of both, such that, through Indirect Rule, colonial sovereign power was partly invested in the tribal authorities. These authorities 'traditionally' constituted a technology of 'self-rule,' a modality of governing the population as well as a system of extraction of taxes and labor. The most infamous examples of how colonial governmentality constructed or invented and leveraged 'tribal' sovereign power were the 'native courts' with their arbitrary powers of prohibition, confiscation and destruction. Though Ekeh overlooks this point, traditional institutions whether they existed prior to colonial rule or became part of 'invented traditions,' had one 'legitimate' leg in the primordial public and an 'illegitimate' one in the civic public. As a result, the primordial public, when it manifested as tribal governmentality, particularly in British colonial Africa, was contained on two sides. Therefore, the primordial public was, as Foucault (1994: 214; 1997: 648) states about sovereignty in seventeenth century Europe, 'trapped within the inordinately vast, abstract, rigid framework of the problem and institution of sovereignty' and 'hampered by a model of governance as familial' (Singer and Weir, 2006: 448).

Colonialism also produced 'certain governing-effects on colonial conduct' which totally transformed extant rationality and mentalities of rule in relation to the public sphere in colonized societies. Not only did colonialism usher in 'politics' in the modern form in Africa, it produced a new form of politics (*cf.* Kalpagam 2002: 38). The absence of common

morality or moral consensus turned the state in Africa into an 'eatery' which everyone uses his or her identity to access. Thus, in reacting to the civic public as an *arena of mis-conduct* in Africa, the people, for instance in Kenya, approach access to public office as 'our turn to eat' (Wrong, 2009). In reading Ekeh and Foucault together, I argue that the inherent contradiction at the heart of colonial governmentality led to the emergence of 'two publics' in Africa, producing therefore the bifurcation of public reason, apparatuses of rule, mentalities of rule and rationality.

GOVERNMENTALITY: THE CONDUCT OF CONDUCT AND RATIONALITIES OF RULE

In explaining the historical trajectory and processes that led to the emergence of the phenomenon that he describes as governmentality, Foucault notes that 'Government as a general problem' exploded in sixteenth century Europe, 'posed by the discussions of quite diverse questions' (Foucault, 1994: 201). The most relevant part of this defining moment for my purpose here is the emergence of state centralization. As Thomas Lemke (2007: 45) notes, Foucault deploys the concept of governmentality as a guideline for a 'genealogy of the modern state.' . In reviewing Machiavelli's important work, *The Prince*, and the reactions to it, Foucault notes two important strands of the emergent 'political form,' including a new art of government 'centered on the state and reason of state', and an art of government that was 'both rational and legitimate' (Foucault, 1994: 203). The important point for reflection in this, for Foucault, was the attempt to establish a rationality for government that was not subordinated to the 'problematic of the prince' and his relationship to the principality which he ruled (ibid: 204).

In many ways, Machiavelli's prince constitutes a parallel for the colonial state in Africa. Machiavelli's prince 'acquires his principality by inheritance or conquest, but in any case he does not form part of it, he remains external to it.' Given its externality, the domination of the principality continues to be fragile, and under threat, both from the outside by the prince's enemies and, crucially, 'from within by subjects who have no *a priori* reason to accept his rule' (ibid). The conclusion that is drawn from this is very important in comparing the prince with the colonial state and the forms of colonial governmentality that arose from the relationship between the colonial state as an external imposition and the 'natives' in Africa: The objective of power is not to protect the 'subjects and the territory' but rather to strengthen and protect '*the prince's relation to what he owns*' (ibid: 204-205, emphasis added).

Machiavelli's prince is the colonial state in Africa. However, the capacity to retain a prince's principality, as Foucault argues, is not the same as possessing the art of governing. After identifying three fundamental types of government at the dawn of the Enlightenment, which includes the art of self-government (morality) – around which Ekeh locates the primordial public – Foucault notes that 'the art of government is always characterized by the essential continuity of one type with the other' (ibid: 206). But for Foucault, the ultimate target of power, or government, is actually 'men [sic] in their relations, their links, their imbrications with those things that are wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with its specific qualities' (ibid: 208-209).

Against this backdrop, governmentality offers an 'expansive [and dialectical] way of thinking about governing and rule in relations to the exercise of modern power' (Watts, 2003: 13). Through the concept of governmentality Foucault goes beyond the 'limitations' of sovereign power (state) to interrogate the diverse and disparate ensemble of authorities and agencies which 'conduct' (people's) 'conduct,' and therefore lead to the

‘governmentalization of the state’ (Foucault, 2007: 109). In British colonial Africa, the Indirect Rule system appropriated and/or reinvented ‘tribal’ authorities which deliberately meshed sovereign (civic public) and governmental (primordial public) powers during and beyond the colonial era.

Foucault treats the state ‘as a relational ensemble,’ and governmentality ‘as a set of practices and strategies, governmental projects and modes of calculation, that operate’ (Jessop, 2007: 37) on what is called the state. The state, thus, is ‘nothing more than the mobile effects of a regime of multiple governmentalities’ (Foucault, 2004: 79), while governmentality is ‘at once internal and external to the state, since it is the tactics of government which makes possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not, *the public versus the private*, and so on’ (Foucault, 1991: 103, emphasis added).

What is very critical for me here is how governmentality in its generic sense, not only encourages us to study ‘the historical constitution of different state forms in and through the changing practices of government without assuming that the state has a universal or general essence’ (Jessop, 2007: 37, emphasis added), but also how it instructs us to focus on the fundamental (dis)continuities and epochal mentalities of rule that the historical (re-)constitution of particular state formation engenders, in and through the practices of government. Furthermore, Foucault illuminates the fact that the differences between the state and society, politics and economy are not foundational, rather, they are elements and effects of ‘specific governmental technologies’ (Lemke, 2007: 58). I argue that relating governmentality and the two publics thesis helps us to underscore Ekeh’s articulation of how colonial technologies of domination produced certain mentalities of rule in the (post)colony which have generated particular kinds of ‘conduct of (mis-)conduct’, as well as certain forms of ‘counter-conduct’ (Foucault, 2007: 202). This notion of (governmental and societal) ‘counter-conduct’, which is one of the little discussed aspects of Foucault’s lecture series, is critical in many ways, including in its concern with ‘how *not* to be governed’ (Cadman, 2010: 540). For Foucault, counter-conduct implies actions and practices – including rationalities, beliefs and assumptions – which work ‘against the processes implemented for conducting others’ (Foucault, 2007: 2001; see also, Cadman, 2010; 540).

Also, relating governmentality and the two publics in the context of Foucauldian ‘resistance’ and ‘subjugated knowledge’ (Cadman, 2010: 540) shows that, ‘reactive’ and ‘resistant’ reading of the bifurcation of the public sphere as a result of, and by the subjects of, colonialism is one of the most prominent aspects of Peter Ekeh’s work. Yet, Ekeh’s analysis of the continuities in the rationalities, practices and mentalities created by colonialism in the postcolonial era suggests that, as counter-conducts, they are no longer merely ‘additional or reactive mechanisms,’ (Cadman, *ibid*) which we can acknowledge and emphasize in our analysis of emergent political governmentality in Africa. Indeed, they have become ‘wholly immanent and necessary to the formation and development of [postcolonial] governmentality’ (*ibid*). This is because, among other reasons, they have produced forms of subjectivity and agency, which, even though *provoked* by colonial governmentality, have survived the colonial era and have become imbricated in post-colonial governmentality. The practical implication of governmentality in the light of two publics thesis for the study of contemporary African state and societies is that, as the *originary* basis for the modern conduct of conduct in African public life, both those who perpetrate or suffer/endure the consequences of the ‘adiaphorizing effect’ of colonialism (may) no longer recognize the fundamental source of their predicaments. Consequently, they mobilize their own agency to

elaborate and consolidate the technologies and rationalities of rule which further complicate their *rational* re-action to social, economic and political predicaments. Obi Okonkwo in Chinua Achebe's famous novel, *No Longer at Ease* (1960), fully demonstrates this as communal and familial demands for financial and other forms of assistance force him to abandon both his conviction that African cultures will 'necessarily succumb' to the 'superior' Enlightenment and 'modern ideas,' and his 'bureaucratically rational' attitude in the civil service, thus, leading him to demand and accept bribes.

Ekeh's problematization of the public in this context is relevant for understanding how colonial governmentality (re)produced postcolonial governmentality in Africa. It is also relevant to contextualizing the critical challenges that these have constituted to modern rule and democratic and transparent governance in the continent.

EKEH AND THE 'TWO PUBLICS' IN AFRICA

In his attempt to use history, particularly the history of colonialism and its implications, to interrogate the 'unique configuration' of postcolonial African politics, Ekeh, concludes that the most significant *effect* that the imposition of foreign rule has had on Africa is the creation of 'two publics'. Colonialism, therefore, is the foundational point of analysis in the understanding of modern rule in Africa.

In examining the history of the emergence of modernity and modern politics (and government) in Europe, Ekeh argues that this history is based on 'generalized Christian beliefs' which have provided the 'common moral fountain' for Western society (cf. Táíwò, 2010, 6-10). Western society, in this context, evolved a distinction between the private realm and the public realm. However, both realms, even though distinct, have a common *moral* foundation; therefore, 'what is considered morally right in the private realm is also considered morally right in the public realm' (Ekeh, 1975: 92).

The assumptions of this 'model' of a unitary moral foundation of state and society in the public and private realms which are made manifest in what he calls 'Western conception of politics', Ekeh argues, were translated to Africa by the colonizing Europeans. Indeed, a division between private and public realms has always existed in Africa before colonialism. The rationalities and technologies of colonial rule, however, in the imposition of a new (*civic*) public and the attempt to swallow up the existing indigenous (pre-colonial/*primordial*) public, ended up creating two publics. The two public realms which emerged from colonial governmentality have different moral linkages to the private sphere. In Ekeh's view, the private sphere in Africa survived the new rationalities and mentalities of colonial governmentality.

This was not so with the public realm. There emerged a *primordial public realm* made up of primordial groupings, ties and sentiments which determine individual public behavior as they 'impinge on the public interest' (ibid). The primordial public '*is moral and operates on the same moral principles as the private realm*' (ibid, emphasis in original). In Foucauldian analytics, Ekeh's primordial public is one represented as a 'non-political sphere' – in contrast to the 'political sphere' (cf. Rose and Miller 1992: 176-177).⁶ The other public, what Ekeh calls the *civic public*, is historically associated with the colonial administration which, in the late colonial and postcolonial era, were (are) identified with 'popular politics' (and sovereign power) – including the military, bureaucracy, the police, etc. The civic public is however, '*amoral and lacks the generalized moral imperatives operative in the private realm and in the primordial public realm*' (Ekeh 1975: 92)

Articulating the implications of this bifurcation in the public sphere with its attendant separate moralities – and therefore rationalities and mentalities – Ekeh notes the essential realities that make this historical experience devastating for public rule in Africa: ‘the same political actors simultaneously operate in the primordial and the civic publics.’ (ibid: 93).

An example of how this works is that the head of an important public agency in, say, the national civil service, which implements decisions regarding fair-sharing of national resources can also be the leader of an ethnic or communal organization championing access and opportunities (often, over and above their due) for a particular ethnic or communal group. Thus, sovereign and governmental powers can inhere in the same actors. In a sense, those political actors whose *conduct* (that is, practices) are central to the encounters within the primordial public are the same who *conduct* (in terms of action or performance) and structure the *conduct* (that is, domination, management or administration) of the instrumentalities of the civic public. I will argue that one can deduce from Ekeh’s analysis that for most people in Africa – particularly those whose primary and fundamental loyalty is to the primordial public – the state is neither real nor illusory; it is a ‘transactional reality’ (*réalité de transaction*) (Foucault, 2004: 301), one which reproduces perpetual *transactional politics*. In the context of such transactional politics, the ‘public’ is always available for capture and always amenable to complicated adjustments and adaptations, even while presented as embodied rationality of one particular type or the other⁷. Thus, to turn Mignolo’s (2009) example around in the context of my argument in extending Ekeh’s insight: While the civic public *notionally* addresses itself to the question of how to save and improve *the state*, the primordial public *practically* focuses on the question of how to save and improve *the community*, or ‘*our*’ people.

However, Ekeh seems to assume that while the pressures for the bifurcation of the *public* were created by colonialism, the consequences could not have been desired by the colonial Leviathan and the successor state. Yet, a Foucauldian analysis of the relationship of subjectivity and state formation, pushes us to recognize how the dualization of the *public* caused by colonialism and the embrace of this dualization by the postcolonial state makes the actors – both the operators of the state and their constituents – ethical and unethical at the same time. The dualization also provides them with both material and ideological tools to live with, live well within, as well as defend the existence of, this dual public. Since most people do not see themselves as joint-owners of the civic public, the postcolonial state is able to free itself from the single moral-political order that could impose bureaucratically-rational responsibilities on it. This evidently invalidates one of the most crucial foundations of modern citizenship in Africa.

In his focus on ‘fractured social foundations,’ Eghosa Osaghae (2006: 234; see also Sklar 1985: 1) contends that ‘Ekeh became one of the African pioneers of a perspective’ that has since blossomed into such frameworks as (neo-)patrimonialism (Bratton & van de Walle, 1994), clientelism (Lemarchand, 1972; van de Walle, 2003) prebendalism (Joseph, 1987; Adebawo and Obadare, 2013), economy of affection (Hyden, 1980), politics of the belly (Bayart, 1993), instrumentalization of informal politics (Chabal and Daloz, 1999), and ‘the disorientations of civil society’ (Kasfir, 1998; John and Jean Comoroff, 1999; Hearn, 2001; Obadare, 2005). Osaghae (2006: 234-235) suggests that the significance of Ekeh’s theory of two public must be located within a broader context of African politics which is marked by three important features: (i) colonialism as the organizing framework of analysis of modern

Africa; (ii) the dominance of the modern state, both as fundamental instrument of colonialism and as the main arena of politics in postcolonial Africa;⁸ and, (iii) explanations of African politics through analogies with Western experience approached as a universal.

Therefore, in analyzing colonial governmentality as one that constituted not only the conduct of conduct, but also one that provoked counter-conduct, Ekeh, as Osaghae (2006: 235) argues, 'does not regard colonialism as a one way traffic in which the colonizers held sway, as notions of imposed colonial structures which limit the roles of Africans to those of passive actors and subjects in the colonial process suggest.' However, in his account of the struggle for power and the ensuing negotiation of interests between the colonializing and colonized elite, Ekeh – and some of his interlocutors – elides something that is yet implicit in his two publics thesis: the non-elite, that is the masses. The existence, operation and strength of the primordial public is a function of the masses, whose generalized and common morality forms the basis of this public. Here the counter-conduct which led to the bifurcation of the public realm in reaction to colonial governmentality was a collaborative action between the colonized elite and the colonized masses. In some contexts, such as in the creation of 'traditional institutions', 'customary courts,' etc., colonial governmentality even unwittingly collaborated in encouraging and strengthening the primordial public which became a major obstacle to the 'hegemony' of the civic public, in the colonial and postcolonial period. It is therefore evident that sovereign and governmental powers were co-constitutive in the colony – and have been so in the postcolony.

Ekeh's thesis has influenced considerable scholarly analyses of how Africa is (not)governed. Whereas Ekeh does not use the specific lens of *conduct*, which is a central term in the explication of governmentality, his thesis essentially elucidates how the conduct of conduct in relation to colonial sovereign power, at both the private and the public realm, was historically reconfigured by colonialism. The bifurcation of the public realm resulting from this, I argue, can be read as a historically problematic technique of resistance, with *resistance* approached both as tactical resistance and as autonomy. In the light of this, comparing the illumination provided by Ekeh to the idea of governmentality inspired by Foucault can open up new vistas of analysis of the crisis of rule in modern Africa.

BETWEEN FOUCAULT AND EKEH: (POST)COLONIAL GOVERNMENTALITY AND THE 'TWO PUBLICS'

One important thing that Ekeh shares with Foucault is the attempt at historical grounding of the emergent forms of governmentality in modern times. However, while the background for Foucault's historical analysis is set between the 16th and 18th century Europe, Ekeh's historical backdrop is the late 19th and early 20th century Africa.

Following Davis Scott (1999: 43), I argue that if 'we take the important point about colonial power to be its structure, its project, and its target', based on the fundamental logic and practices of 'displacement of one kind of political rationality...by another', then it will become evident that Ekeh's analysis of the epochal nature of colonialism speaks directly to the concept and practices of (post)colonial governmentality. For Ekeh, the fundamental changes in the rationality of governance and the mentalities of rule that were occasioned by the colonial project in Africa help to explain the antinomy of the public in Africa and the associated crisis of nationhood, statehood, public (common) wealth, citizenship and belongingness, etc.

As a 'distinctive political rationality' colonial governmentality was one 'in which power comes to be directed at the destruction and reconstruction of colonial space so as to

produce not so much extractive-effects⁹ on colonial bodies as governing-effects on colonial conduct' (Scott, 1999: 40). Indeed, most African and Africanist scholars who focus on the exploitative relations between Europe and Africa in the colonial and even postcolonial eras either do not recognize, understate and/or simply overlook the fundamentality of 'governing-effects' on conduct. Even though the governing effects were resisted and continue to be resisted, they have worked in the end to devastate the possibilities of the triumph of modern bureaucratic rationality in the public sphere in Africa. Colonial governmentality, in my interpretation of Ekeh's argument, did not merely reconstitute power so as to dominate the colony and the colonized; indeed, the theory of two publics shows that colonial governmentality was based 'upon the systematic redefinition and transformation of the terrain on which the life of the colonized [and subsequently the postcolonized¹⁰] was [is] lived' (Scott, 1999: 41, emphasis in original).

There are several paradoxes in the rationality of governance and mentality of rule on which colonialism was based. While the colonial powers sought to impose the moral basis which guided both the private and the public realm in the West in Africa and on Africans, they did not attempt to do the same with other critical apparatuses of rule and modern public life which were combined with morality in the formation of the modern state in the West. The modern economy was one of such apparatuses. Kalpagam argues correctly that 'Colonial governmentality was premised on a unique relationship of the State to the population' (2000: 432). Because colonialism was fundamentally a technology of exploitation through domination, colonial governmentality did not consider, and therefore, did not approach, the population in the colony as wealth (ibid: 432-433). Subsequently, it did not consider the colonial economy, unlike the economy in the metropolis, as one which principal aim was the building of wealth. The relationship of colonial governmentality to the economy was, therefore, one of extraction and exploitation of resources. Owing to this, the conduct of conduct in the area of the economy meant that ensuring 'disciplinary control over labor rather than through the enhancement of human capital' was the target of the colonialists – despite the introduction of modern education, sanitation and Western medicine (ibid: 432), which, at any rate, was originally the project of Missionary Christianity. In examining the governmental implications of colonial (apartheid) economy in South Africa, Mahmood Mamdani (1996: 17) has argued that within settler capitalism, direct rule prescribed 'the defeat and dispersal of tribal population,' yet, in practice, 'direct rule meant the reintegration and domination of natives in the institutional context of semiservile and semicapitalist agrarian relation.' The racist regime in the South Africa therefore, in its relationship with the non-white population, deployed both sovereign and governmental powers to ensure, on the one hand, incorporation in the economy, and on the other, exclusion from citizenship.

The apparently destructive mercantilist logic and the parasitic relationship that (settler and non-settler) colonialism established, Ekeh argues, resulted in the creation of an amoral civic public in Africa. Postcolonial governmentality continues this parasitic relationship, resulting in a situation in which the ruling elites, whether they are mono-ethnic or trans-ethnic, focus on increasing personal or communal wealth rather than the national wealth. The examples of resource-rich countries in Africa such as Nigeria, Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sierra Leone and Equatorial Guinea where a succession of wars, violent crises, economic collapse and national paralysis have defined the postcolonial era are dreadful examples of the consequences of postcolonial governmentality. In one of the most tragic

examples of these countries, the DRC, the country is regarded in public speech as one that has become '*Rdécès*' (the 'deceased' or the 'dead') – or, as the Congolese say, the 'country ... has died' (*mboka ekufi*) (de Boeck 2005: 17). Here, the combination of sovereign and governmental technologies of rule produce 'necropower' (Mbembe, 2003) through which the population is subjected to the status of the living dead.

Ekeh identifies three *ideologies* that were critical to the construction of colonial governmentality, which in Foucauldian view are the rationalities that form the basis of the government of the state. The first are *imperial ideologies*, that is, the 'rationalization and justifications' used by the European bourgeoisie to justify imperial expansion and colonialism (Ekeh, 1975: 95). The second are *colonial ideologies of legitimation*, that is, the rationalization ('civilizing mission') offered for foreign rule by the European bourgeoisie to Africans (ibid: 96). The third are *African bourgeois ideologies of legitimation*. Given their lack of traditional legitimacy, the emergent African bourgeois class invented 'a number of interest-begotten theories to justify [their] rule' (ibid). These theories were reconciled with the principles implicit in colonialism even while insisting that the local bourgeoisie must replace the colonial masters (ibid: 100).

These three sets of ideologies produced the mentalities of rule and the rationalities of power that made colonialism successful and eventually led to the transfer of power to the emergent African bourgeois class. Lemke (2002: 50) has argued that '(t)he semantic linking of governing (*gouverner*) and modes of thought (*mentalité*) indicates that it is not possible to study the technologies of power without an analysis of the political rationality underpinning them'. This indeed is what Ekeh attempts to do with the theory of two publics by focusing on the political sociology/anthropology that underpins the mentalities of rule in the (post)colony.

'The modern', 'modernity' and 'modernization' have constituted central tropes in the process of the conduct of conduct. The 'political forms of modernity' discursively articulated by the colonial powers was not '*merely coincident with colonialism*', as Scott (1999: 26) argues¹¹, its concern 'above all [was the] disabling [of] old forms of life by systematically breaking down their conditions, and ...constructing in their place new conditions so as to enable... new forms of life to come into being.' For Olúfémi Táíwò (2010), indeed, when it was imposed in many parts of Africa, colonialism systematically broke down or aborted modernity which has been heralded by (post-Reformation) missionary Christianity from early 19th century Africa. What was at stake, therefore, was not merely a break from the past, which Ekeh describes as momentous enough to constitute an epoch, but '*how this break was configured and what it is understood to consist in*' (Scott 1999: 26). However, Táíwò's point reminds us of Foucault's about the religious 'government of souls,' a point which Ekeh totally elides in understanding colonial governmentality. Some African leaders have argued that Christianity, even though it preceded colonialism, was complicit with colonial governmentality in that its 'regime of truth' provided the rationalities or mentalities that were conducive to the imposition of colonialism, colonial exploitation and racial superiority. With the predominance of Pentecostal Christianity and the challenge of fundamentalist Islam in contemporary Africa, the government of soul has become even more important in examining postcolonial governmentality in Africa.¹²

Read through Ekeh's perspective, the key elements of colonial governmentality include its bifurcation of the public into civic and primordial public, the emptying of the moral content of modern politics; its predication on subject-citizen dichotomy, its remaking of civil society as a pseudo (shadow)-state, its immersion in corruption, neopatrimonialism,

clientelism, its halting and subsequent bastardization of modernity as based on subjectivity, reason and freedom, etc. By dismantling existing rationalities of rule, (modern) colonial power put in place new conditions that produced 'governing-effects' on the public conduct of Africans in the postcolonial era.

Despite the efforts of democratic and radical social forces in Africa since the colonial era, the evidence of (post)colonial governmentality still confronts any engaged observer in Africa today. This is evident in many ways, including how corruption¹³ has been deployed as the means of conducting conduct in the public sphere, and in the endurance of the 'Big Man' (and neo-patrimonialism) in African politics with the imbrications of power and magic.¹⁴

As the conduct of conduct, colonial governmentality produced counter-conduct which in the context of postcolonial governmentality in Africa has become a classic case of *how not to (be) govern(ed)*. The bifurcation of the *public* in what Fredrick Lugard, the archetypal (British) imperialist, called the 'dual mandate,' however continues to also produce a contradictory impulse in Africa. Given that social relations have become so heavily governmentalized even while alienating, different social formations (ethnic, cultural, religious, and particularly separatist) in the primordial public constantly seek to capture the civic public and deplore its benefits to their own narrow advantage. Examples of this abound from the creeks of the Niger Delta in Nigeria where militants in the oil-bearing communities seek 'self-rule' through sabotaging the flow of crude oil, through the ungovernable spaces in Somalia to the perennially savaged resource-rich Katanga region of DRC. Because these social formations are often successful in capturing the civic public, they not only establish and expand, but also share some form of sovereign power with the state. Therefore, we can no longer understand sovereign power under postcolonial governmentality as unitary, because tribal, ethnic or religious (and enclave) sovereignties co-exist with state/national sovereignty. This is not surprising given that from the colonial era in Africa, 'projects of rule are [often largely] enacted against the population' (Drinot, 2011: 183).

In his lectures at the College de France, Foucault (2003) emphasized domination as the proper entry point for theorizing politics (Singer and Weir, 2008: 50). He maintained that it would 'be preferable to situate political theory in the examination of how the subject is formed in power, the multiplicity of powers, and the study of domination' (ibid). I have argued here that Ekeh's two publics, in examining the establishment and elaboration of (colonial) domination and the powerful resistance to this which eventuated in postcolonial governmentality, encourages us to recognize the co-constitution of sovereign power and governmentality in both the colonial and even more important, the postcolonial era. In the attempt to resurrect and reaffirm sovereign power, the civic public in the postcolony failed to reify its power. Though the postcolonial civic public sought legitimacy through governmental practices, the sovereign power that emerged, mirroring the colonial era, is not, to use Butler's (2004: 56) words, 'the sovereignty of a unified power, under the conditions of legitimacy, the form of power that guarantees the representative status of political institutions.' Rather, what emerged was 'a lawless and prerogative power, a rogue power *par excellence*' (ibid) that proliferate in different sites with little or no legitimacy. Thus, in contrast to the Peruvian example that Drinot (2011: 186) articulates, postcolonial Africa, owing to the 'governmentalization of the state' (Foucault 1997: 656), is characterized by islands of sovereignty in a sea of governmentality, or what, following Achille Mbembe

(2001), I will describe as episodic manifestations of *commandement* (as ‘authoritarian modality per excellence’) in the context of widespread *zombification* of the populations.

Finally, analyzing the two publics thesis in the light of the theory of governmentality have important comparative implications. The thesis illuminates the limitations of governmentality informed by Foucault’s limited attention to the practical realities of what is suffered by those who are the targets of governmentality in the colonies¹⁵ (see Mignolo, 2009: 169-170, 174; Legg, 2006; Ahluwalia, 2010). However, Ekeh’s two publics thesis can also be strengthened, in terms of the more general implications of the bifurcation, through the lens of (post)colonial governmentality, regarding existing and surviving structures of rule and sovereign power. This will make the two publics thesis even more illuminating in examining postcolonial societies beyond Africa, say in Asia and Latin America. Thus, Ekeh’s ‘conversation’ with Foucault can be further enriched.

NOTES

¹ Because, as he argues correctly, ‘colonialism was itself a cultural project of control’, p. 1.

² I thank the journal’s editors for pointing this out.

³ Yet, Muriam Haleh Davis (2011: 139) warns that ‘the challenges to empire’ by European intellectuals such as Foucault which was produced by their African experience ‘did not take place outside of the epistemological (and institutional) structures of empire.’

⁴ Singer and Weir (2008: 58) notes that Foucault (2004: 374) eventually insisted on the co-occurrence of sovereignty and government.

⁵ This has been described by David Scott (1999: 24) as ‘colonialism’s false liberalism.’

⁶ John Rawls (1996) has described this as ‘background culture’ – distinct from ‘public political culture’ (Ekeh’s civic public) – with ‘a shared set of relevant moral ideas’ (14) But both cultures, for Rawls, are based on a ‘criteria of reciprocity,’ which is not true for the civic public in Africa.

⁷ I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for articulating this point - which I have paraphrased here - in reaction to my argument.

⁸ Here, I suggest that Osaghae is pointing to sovereign power (colonial state) and governmentality (‘arena of politics’) as ‘commensurable forms of power’ in the words of Drinot (2001: 181).

⁹ For an examination of the relations of the ‘extractive-effects’ and the ‘governing-effects’, see, U. Kalpagam, 2000, 418-438. Cf. Clapham, 1996: 809-824.

¹⁰ Indeed, it can be argued that at the end of colonialism, in many cases, Africans were subsequently *postcolonized*, both by the local elite and by the foreign powers. This fact of being *postcolonized* was described in various ways as ‘neo-colonialism’, ‘imperialism’, etc. by radical African(ist) scholars.

¹¹ Scott challenges Partha Chatterjee’s (1993) position that marks a distinction between colonial and modern power. See, pp 27-28.

¹² I thank one of the reviewers for raising this point about the government of souls.

¹³ Which Ekeh describes as the ‘acme of the dialectics’ of two publics, p. 110.

¹⁴ Ekeh points out that among the educated and high office-holders in Africa, there is ‘widespread and growing beliefs in supernatural magical powers.’ See P. 107.

¹⁵ Foucault pays greater attention to those who are excluded in European history from the public sphere of rational enlightenment, such as the mad, prisoners, etc.

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