Beyond Eurocentrism and Anarchy
Culture and Religion in International Relations

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Beyond Eurocentrism and Anarchy

Memories of International Order and Institutions

Siba N. Grovogui
Aux feus Pétit Pié Sambri, Mamadi “Frank” et Kolou-Kolou Grovogui
To Jann Grovogui—a measure of skepticism is a good thing
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Acknowledgments

Beyond Eurocentrism and Anarchy is the second of a trilogy aiming to reevaluate “international knowledge” in light of recent scholarship in the fields of hermeneutics, ethnography, and historiography regarding the “non-West,” the “past,” and the “present” of “international society.” The first book of the trilogy, Sovereigns, Quasi-Sovereigns, and Africans, explored the position of the non-West in international jurisprudence. The present book offers a view of the “present” in the form of a critique of Eurocentrism (the taking of Europe as sole reference for understanding international existence) and Occidentalism: the postulation of Europe as exclusive proprietor of legitimate science, universal morals and institutions and indispensable intellectual canons. In contrast, Beyond proposes empirical support for plausible inflections on modern ideas, norms, and institutions as bases for alternative political possibilities. It will be followed by an as-yet-to-be-named third book that bears on the “past” of international relations and society and their multiple agencies. Together, the three books should provide new insights into modern conceptualizations of power, interest, ethics, and subjectivity. Their objective is to offer plausible grounds for new norms and institutions through which to orient the study of international relations.

The present project began at the National Archives in Guinea with a review of primary source materials on nationalism, colonial policies, and the postcolonial imaginary. To supplement these data, I traveled twice in 1991–1992 to the National Archives of Senegal. Before Dakar, I received research support from the Center for Afro-American Studies of the University of Michigan, the Ford Foundation Project Research-Travel funds in 1990. It is only after Dakar that the RDA (also Democratic African Rally) and African intellectual movements in France emerged as the focus of my project. During this time, I also received institutional support from Eastern
Michigan University in 1995, in the form of a Spring-Summer Research Fellowship, and The Johns Hopkins University: a Faculty Summer Research Fund in 1998 and a Dean’s Incentive Grant for Junior Faculty in 2001. This support afforded me four research trips to the Overseas Archives Center (CAOM) in Aix-en-Provence, in France; the French National Archives (CARAN), Paris, and the African Center for Research and Documentation (CRDA), Paris. It also led me to the Research and Training Center for Development (CEFOD) of Chad, in N’djamena.

I would like to thank the many professionals and staff members of these archives for their invaluable assistance. They are too numerous to list here. I would like to single out Vassiafa Touré who is primarily responsible for directing me to the writings of my principal subjects: Ouezzin Coulibaly, Gabriel d’Arboussier, and Boubou Hama among others. Vassiafa, his wife Claude, and children Christelle and Eric have since become members of my extended French family. Thanks.

This book would not have been possible without the inspiration of the late professors Murray Edelman and Lemuel Johnson. Along with Diane Rubenstein, Mary Layoun, and Michael J. Shapiro, Murray and Lem provided me with the intellectual curiosity and the language to think about the present project. I owe them the inspiration for the general direction of this book and I am forever indebted to all of them. I would also like to acknowledge the influences of Michel-Rolph Trouillot and Uzoma Esonwanne, particularly their comments to me on the postcolonial condition and postcoloniality. I am equally grateful to the participants of The Johns Hopkins University Institute for Global Studies in History, Power, and Culture, particularly Giovanni Arrighi, Sara Berry, Veena Das, Niloofar Haeri, David Harvey, Ali Khan, Felicity Northcott, Beverly Silver, and, again, Michel-Rolph Trouillot. I have learned greatly from them as well as other participating Hopkins’ faculty, visiting scholars, and “distinguished lecturers.” As always, my colleagues William E. Connolly and Margaret E. Keck served as mentors in this process. Ka mamma!

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than revealed to me the richness of my data. Their assistance was crucial to laying the foundation for the entire manuscript.

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I also wish to acknowledge some members of the Grovogui family. Although my entire family back home has lent me support and understanding, my life away from home would have been more arduous were it not for my brother Kékoura Grovogui. Mbemba, also Kégro, is at once my counsel, manager, and caretaker. I would be lost in the world without him and I am thankful to have him as a brother. And finally to the indefatigable Madeleine (Mado) Lamah, my sister-in-law: E Mamma E Hèghè!

The completion of this book has elements of happenstance, complicity, and joy. As stated earlier, it began in Guinea and drifted from there to Senegal, the United States, and then France. But it ended in Chad, thankfully. Chad is both a place and a metaphor. As a place, it is a country at the southern edge of the Sahara desert. It owns the oldest human skeleton and a vast reservoir of oil coveted by Western multinational corporations. But Chad is also a metaphor for a world of anguish, goodwill, and contingency. First, Chad exemplifies the often contentious meetings of black and Arab and/or Christian and Muslim Africans. It has born its share of civil wars fought over power, culture, and resources. No one knows yet what oil revenues will add to this situation. On the other hand, Chad has been at crossroads of another sort, bearing witness to the best of human sentiments: goodwill and solidarity. It is here that a black man from the French Antilles, Félix Eboué, articulated a new humanism that allowed the colonized to both rise in defense of a vanquished colonial power and join other communities around the world in defense of humanity. Chad also contributed to giving form to PanAfricanism by attracting outstanding members of the politically-active black diaspora. It was home to another Antillian, the much misunderstood and underrated Gabrielle Lisette, who dedicated his life to “giving voice” to the “black world.”
Finally, Chad is the place where a young woman from La Crescent, Minnesota, ended up as an American peace corps volunteer. Now a Johns Hopkins assistant professor, Lori Leonard still spends the better part of her professional life in public health in Chad. She is the one who first took me to this part of Africa; and to her I dedicate this book as a tribute to love, ours.