Shivji, Issa G. *Law, State and the Working Class in Tanzania, c. 1920-1964*

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jeune âge, est inscrite dans les choix politiques du futur empereur. Autant que la personnalité exceptionnelle de son père, cousin de Ménélik, ou l'éducation donnée par des pères capucins, c'est la résidence dans le Hararge, où le contact avec les Européens est permanent, qui explique cette précocité. Comme l'auteur le note, jamais le jeune ras, puis l'empereur, n'admet être un politicien ni ne cessa de se proclamer homme d'État. Pourtant l'histoire des luttes intestines de la cour que retrace Marcus indique bien son grand talent manœuvrier. Habile tacticien, il réussit par exemple à s'imposer lors de l'éviction mouvementée d'Iyasu, épiphème successeur de Ménélik II qui révait d'une recomposition de l'élite dirigeante où la domination shoa et chrétienne serait nivelée. Face à l'impératrice Zawditu, brillante représentante des conservateurs, Tafari sait attendre son heure tout en nommant peu à peu des postes clés à ses partisans, les « Jeunes Éthiopiens » héritiers de la modernisation étatique.

Autant que l'unité problématique de l'empire légué par Ménélik II, sont apparentes les tensions qui divisent alors la cour et l'église. La mort de l'habuna Mattewos en 1920 donne lieu à une crise qu'on aurait aimé voir plus longuement analysée. L'activité du ras Tafari est alors centrée sur la construction d'un appareil d'État fort et centralisé grâce à des transformations économiques importantes et des réformes administratives. La modernisation de l'armée, la recherche d'un armement moderne en sont des aspects fondamentaux.

Grâce au dépouillement des archives anglaises, italiennes, françaises et américaines, l'auteur fournit des analyses très stimulantes des politiques extérieures de l'Éthiopie et des puissances européennes. L'entrée de l'Éthiopie à la Société des nations en 1935 apparaît autant comme une victoire interne que comme un choix international. D'une part elle plébiscite le programme de modernisation à l'intérieur du pays, d'autre part elle consacre la volonté de reconnaissance internationale et l'intérêt de Tafari Makonnen pour la sécurité collective, concept auquel il restera attaché, envers et contre tous, jusqu'à sa défaite contre les Italiens en 1935. H. G. Marcus décrit très finement les attitudes européennes. Les chancelleries italienne et britannique partagent durant toute cette période l'idée qu'il n'y a pas de gouvernement réel en Éthiopie, que le peu d'administration centrale est incapable de contrôler les provinces. La France, un temps alliée de l'Éthiopie, s'en éloigne bientôt pour tenter d'empêcher un rapprochement entre Mussolini et l'Allemagne. Commencée par des succès réels, cette période s'achève par un échec cuisant pour Haïlé Sellassié : incapable de s'allier avec l'Angleterre, il ne peut mettre un frein aux ambitions italiennes qui débouchent sur la guerre, en 1935, et une cuisante défaite payée par l'exil... Sans doute eût-on aimé en savoir davantage sur l'origine des « Jeunes Éthiopiens », leurs rapports à l'empereur, les difficultés et la réalité de la modernisation entreprise mais, riche en détails et en annotations piquantes, l'ouvrage éclaire une période souvent peu privilégiée dans l'histoire de l'Éthiopie moderne.

Roland Marchal


Shivji's latest publication may not stir the African scene as did his Class Struggles in Tanzania1 although being a history of the country and imparting its author's
encyclopaedic knowledge, it is likely to become a major reference. Shivji's approach remains broadly the same, and his conceptualization is informed by a Marxist perspective. Assuming that 'to understand the movement and development of law we have to locate it within the general movement of the material conditions of life, that is, within social history', he now adds to his past work a very detailed account of African labour, the labour movement, and the emergence of a working class (direct producers of surplus value, one assumes). In short, he gives us a history of labour from colonial times to the present, divided into three distinct phases: an early period up to 1939, a second phase from 1940-50, and the final period more or less to the present.

In the first period colonial policy was designed to prevent any possible political and economic demands by workers, a semi-proletarianized circulatory labour force. Shivji suggests that there was little evidence of class struggle, working-class organization and manifest consciousness. Yet colonial administrators imposing restrictions evidently feared a collective consciousness incipient and covert. I suspect that this period needs further exploration, perhaps using life and work histories. From 1940-50, a more permanent labour force evolved on the plantations and in transport, leading to an increasingly effective organization of a labour movement which met stiff and repressive opposition such as the crushing of the dockworkers. From 1950 onward the colonial State imposed a non-union consultative machinery and extensive factory legislation. The final phase spanning the latter colonial and post-colonial periods, during which permanent wage labour increased rapidly, reveals active labour consciousness, strikes, and energetic (but 'petty bourgeois') labour leadership and organization—albeit rather bureaucratic and administrative. Dramatic changes of relations with TANU (Tanganyika African National Union), from support for organized labour in the immediate pre-independence period to considerable hostility and repression later on, are documented in great detail. (Indeed, legislation, working and living conditions of workers throughout the periods covered are exposed and analyzed exhaustively.) Within a year after independence the labour movement was brought under tight control. Compulsory arbitration was imposed. An overspill of the army mutiny in 1964 led to the elimination of independent unions. Labour law, viewed as 'an instrument to secure the conditions of its [wage labour] development', was applied with full force. Shivji suggests that the opposition to political unionism emasculated the labour movement driving it into economism, but this met equally strong State resistance.

While in his *Class Struggles in Tanzania* Shivji analyzed the rise of a ruling class, his present study concentrates on Tanzania's proletariat, the development of the State and its legal structure, the hipande ('labour card') system, the move from an exclusive single-male to a family-wage system, and the exploitation of plantation and urban labour. While the detail is massive, theoretically complex issues remain such as the evident assumption of a relatively homogenous pre-capitalist peasantry which is portrayed as passive and static. Shivji's definition of the proletariat's 'permanent divorce from the means of production and lifelong commitment to wage labour' is also questionable. While peasant resistance was not a persistent problem for the colonial administration, it was certainly not absent. Capitalist penetration occurred in subsistence-peasant production long before it created waged labour. But the rural economy has no place in Shivji's analysis draining this otherwise excellent account of an important dynamic. Class and political consciousness have deeper roots in colonial and post-colonial times. The 'articulation of modes of production' model, rather than the narrow and schematic 'true proletarian vanguard' conceptualization applied, might have been more suitable to expose Tanzania's past and present social formation. Labour power can and does reveal itself in many different ways, as does class struggle. Why should semi-proletarianized labour be incapable of concerted political opposition?
Degrees of intensity of labour protest exist, but why tie this exclusively to permanence of waged labour? Surely, the history of 'Third World' peasantry and urban workers reveals a very different situation. Was this not one of the messages driven home by Fanon? What about Vietnam and the Chinese revolutions? More attention should have been given to the relationship between various structures of the labour process, class struggles and working-class formation. Perhaps Shivji is too overwhelmingly concerned with Tanzania, to the exclusion of allowing his account to be informed by labour history elsewhere in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Had he re-read Jeff Crisp's work on Ghanaian gold miners, or the recently published *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa* (edited by Donald Crumme), he might have come to different conclusions about the political and class behaviour of migrant (semi-proletarianized) workers. I would also question the rather didactic assertion that the conditions and response of labour are linked to structures imposed primarily by super-exploitation and the lust for super-profits. Both exist in abundance, that is not contested, but the labour process, labour responses, and labour organization are embedded in a more complex matrix. The dialectic and dynamic could be power rather than class, withdrawal and quiescence rather than militancy.

But these are reservations which do not seriously detract from Shivji's important contributions past and present. He is extremely well-informed and writes with clarity, a sense of direction, integrity and deep convictions. He is a master of his craft and his observations hit home with force. One would wish that his many findings filter down to the grassroots. With some rewriting, in a more popular style, Shivji could do for Tanzania what the late Walter Rodney did with his *A History of Guyanese Working People, 1881-1995*, Tanzania's workers have every right to be proud of their history.

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