

NARRATIVES OF THE FUTURE IN MODERN AFRICAN HISTORY: THE MULTIPLE FUTURES OF LIBERATION AND RECONSTRUCTION IN AFRICA

This proposal seeks to contribute to the wider theme Multiple Futures through Time, but more specifically to the sub-project, Narratives of the Future in Modern African History. It situates itself in two narratives of 'future'; that is liberation and reconstruction in Africa. It seeks to interrogate how the ideas and representations of liberation and reconstruction have changed in the African context over time and in specific periods.

Eminent Scholars of religion and theology around the world have collaborated to contribute about twenty chapters that reflect on Liberation and reconstruction in Africa. These scholars provide us with plausible perspectives on articulating a vision of a world moving towards healing and justice (Mwase, Kamaara, 2012). This vision of the future for Africa suggests a shift from the paradigm of liberation to that of reconstruction. Primarily, the preoccupation of independence leaders in the African context in the 1960's and the 1970's was liberation. This was the representation and practice of 'future' that was envisaged by those who fought for independence. Clearly, liberation both as a concept and as a historical struggle in Africa today takes on different emphasis in different parts of Africa.

Africa has seen three horrendous systems of oppression; namely racism, brutal colonialism and the cold war tutelage. Consequently this idea of the 'future' being liberation over time has been said to shift to a new 'future' understood as reconstruction. In the 1970s African leaders were at the helm of the struggles for liberation in Africa. But after two decades it has become essential to move beyond the paradigm of liberation.

Primarily, reconstruction may be recognized as the new precedence for African nations in the 1990's and beyond. Nations, churches and individuals in Africa need to respond to this main concern, to facilitate this process of reconstruction. Hence, scholars agree that reconstruction focuses on the problems that nations and cultures must deal with after foreign oppression has taken a back seat. Certainly, this process requires considerable efforts of reconciliation and confidence-building. It also requires re-orientation and retraining.

In his post-Cold-War discourses, Jesse Mugambi suggests that the Africa of the 21st century will have to pre-occupy itself with the agenda of reconstruction as the new priority for Africa (Mugambi, 1998). The 'future' of reconstruction may be said to focus on the constructive future rather than on a destructive past. Some scholars insist that the goal of reconstruction ought to be pursued in order to re-capture Africa's self-esteem, dignity and integrity (Ukachukwu, 2003). In sum, African discourses in the 21st century should motivate the people of Africa to rebuild their continent from all sorts of ruins and create something suitable for the future of its people.

This work on the sub-project narratives of the future in Modern African History shall make attempts at addressing the first two stated topical questions. In order to contribute to the theme of the working group, I will seek to find out the following:

1. How has the idea and representation of liberation as a paradigm changed in the African context over time and in specific periods
2. How has the idea and representation of the vision of reconstruction taken shape in Africa
3. How do these narratives of future, that is liberation and reconstruction offer diversity and changeability
4. What elements of re-orientation, reconciliation and retraining are needed in these multiple visions of the future



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