

Tokyo International Symposium - *Présence Africaine*

Dates: 23-24 August 2017

Place: The Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa (“ILCAA”), Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS, Japan)

Présence Africaine : Towards New Political and Cultural Perspectives

Identities, memories and resistances between Africa, Europe and the Americas from colonization to post-colony

1. Background

Outline of the Project

Our research project deals with the black literary and cultural journal *Présence Africaine*, which was founded by Senegalese Alioune Diop in 1947 and continues to be published till date. As a major black intellectual press, the journal played a particularly important political and cultural role in the decolonization period of the 1950s. By re-examining the selected issues from the 1950s, the project attempts to shed new light on the black thought and movement of the mid-twentieth century as represented by the *négritude* movement, and thereby, attempts to explore the changing relations between politics and culture in an increasingly globalized world of the post-Cold War era. This joint research enables us to combine different areas of studies such as anthropology and literature, Africa and the Caribbean, francophone and anglophone worlds.

Aim of the Project

The primary aim of our research project is to illustrate the role played by *Présence Africaine* in Africa's decolonization era of the 1950s, focusing on the journal's second period from 1955, and in particular on the proceedings of the first and second Congresses of Black Writers and Artists. The second aim of the project is to examine how the discussions by the journal contributors were expanded or frustrated (or disrupted). For instance, the question of language for writers from the colonial world, which was scrutinized in the well-known 1950s debate on the *poésie nationale*, still has its validity; when the cause and ideal of independence came to be questioned, black cultural architects engaged in serious discussions on the future of Africa, which in itself continues to have relevance today. Drawing on the black colonial intellectual thought, in which culture and politics were necessarily entangled, our research project attempts to explore what should be inherited from this intellectual achievement in our globalized world of the post-Cold War era.

Significance of the Project

Présence Africaine is an invaluable resource for examining intellectual discourse on Africa from 1947 till date. The journal has offered a wide range and a vast number of articles on humanities and social sciences. The study of the diverse topics of the journal required the collaboration of researchers from different disciplines and the facilitation of their collaborative work. Therefore, the project group consists of diverse researchers from the fields of anthropology and literature, who aim to work on topics relevant to each's expertise. By examining *Présence Africaine* as a site for collective discussion on the (post-) colonial issues, this research project attempts to achieve an analysis of a turbulent contemporary world and to gain multiple perspectives on the intersection of politics and culture, opening up an arena for new scholarship. The final goal of the project is to organize and participate in various domestic and international conferences and to publish a collection of academic essays, including translations.

The outcome of the project is expected to have a strong impact on not only the

area studies of Africa but also the fields of cultural research in general, such as studies of anthropology and literature.

2. Call for papers

From a multidisciplinary perspective (literature, anthropology, ethnology, psychology, philosophy, history, political science, philosophy, legal sciences, educational sciences, etc.), this symposium will deal with African historiography, diverse perspectives on slavery, the question of colonialism, decolonization in the second half of the twentieth century (part of the dynamics of the non-aligned movement).

This symposium will explore the issue of memory and history, memories and histories between Africa, America and Europe. As Pierre Nora stresses, “memory is life, it is always carried by living groups, and as such, it is in a constant evolution, opened to the dialectic of memory and amnesia, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to all uses and manipulations, capable of long latencies and sudden revitalization. History is an incomplete and a problematic reconstruction of what does no longer exist. Memory is an ever-present phenomenon, a link lived with the eternal present; History is a representation of the past.”¹

Every history is subject to the context in which it is situated. What was the role of the *Présence Africaine* journal in the “awakening” of the consciences of the oppressed? What are the new forms of writing the history of African societies? To what extent can *Présence Africaine* help fight against alienation? What is the place of Negritude? According to Marc-Vincent Howlett and Romuald Fonkoua, how can *Présence Africaine* be part of the history of Afro-American literary movements and “at the same time, emancipate itself by creating a space of specific discourse. *Présence Africaine* is both an inheritance and a birth”². How is the journal perceived outside of Africa,

¹ Pierre Nora, *Lieux de mémoire, tome 1*, Paris, Gallimard, Collection Quarto, 1997.

² Marc-Vincent Howlett et Romuald Fonkoua, « La maison Présence Africaine », *Gradhiva* [En ligne], 10 | 2009, mis en ligne le 04 novembre 2012, consulté le 26 décembre 2016. URL : <http://gradhiva.revues.org/1537> ; DOI : 10.4000/gradhiva.1537

America or Europe?

Considering some salient points of “colonial fracture”, using the expression of Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard and Sandrine Lemaire, beyond the questions of perceptions and representations of the colonial past, how is the later anchored in the present time? And how should this history be written in present times in Africa? This also gives way to a reflexion on social representations as regards to the image of "Black", prejudices and stereotypes: in arts, literature, poetry, music, dance, etc. How does *Présence Africaine* evoke these themes? How does the journal influence intellectual movements? Through the reflexion on the colonial past, it is essential to envisage a “meeting of civilizations”. In that respect, the colloquium invites us to revisit the major concepts of “negritude” through their founding fathers, (Césaire, Senghor), “creolisation” (E. Glissant), “consciencism” (Nkrumah), “Westernization” of Africa, globalization, Eurafica, pan-Africanism, colonial mentality, colonized complex, Afrocentrism, and so on. How has *Présence Africaine* assisted the cultural dynamics of the African continent and its different Diasporas (the Americas, the West Indies and Europe) for the past 70 years. It will involve, from the Caribbean to the Mediterranean, through the Atlantic and the Pacific, crossings and dissent trajectories, battles and conquests in favour of dignity, to waive "system-thinking". What place has *Présence Africaine*, as far as political movements are concerned? With the era of “independence”, after the Second World War, and since the 1950s, what are the markers of reconquest of the identities of the African and diasporic populations? How can new relationships with former metropolises be established?

The symposium will also examine the evolutions of the black Diasporas in the Americas, the Caribbean, Europe, Asia ..., through the study of slavery and its aftermath, taking into account the phenomena of migration, exile or “Maroon literature”.

On the basis of an in-depth examination of the true evolution of *Présence Africaine*, we will also inquire about its place in the media space or its reception by a non-African public (particularly in Europe or the Americas).

Without being limiting, here are some areas/topics to be considered for

proposals:

- ✓ Politics
- ✓ Social and societies
- ✓ Economy
- ✓ Education
- ✓ Arts and culture, cinema, dance
- ✓ Literature, poetry, fiction, theater, news, etc.
- ✓ Biographies and prominent writers: Alioune Diop, Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Glissant, Cheikh Anta Diop, Léon Damas, Kwame Nkrumah, Edouard Glissant, Christiane Yandé Diop, Frantz Fanon, Jacques Rabemananjara, Chinua Achebe, Françoise Balogun, Roger Bastide, John Henrik Clarke, Maryse Condé, René Depestre, Pathé Diagne, Griaule, Ibrahima Baba Kake, Wole Soyinka, Paulin Vieyra Soumanou, Richard Wright, Jean Suret-Canale, etc.
- ✓ Congress of Black Writers, Associative Movement
- ✓ Festival of Negro Arts
- ✓ Diasporas, Migrations, Eurafrika, Pan-Africanism, etc.
- ✓ Non-Aligned Movement
- ✓ Geopolitics, Cold War
- ✓ Women and Social Cadets
- ✓ Sports, leisure
- ✓ Colonization, decolonization, post-colony
- ✓ Place of *Présence Africaine* in the space of the magazines: the reception of *Présence Africaine*
- ✓ From Founders to Continuers: The Evolution of *Présence Africaine*
- ✓ Globalization and societies
- ✓ Brain drain
- ✓ Body, Health, Vulnerabilities, Disability and Illness
- ✓ War and Peace

Proposals for papers and organization of the symposium

All persons wishing to present a paper are requested to send an abstract of not more than 5000 characters (title, issue, methodology, field, theoretical approach, results (deliverables) and five keywords). The following elements should also be included: first name and surname of the author, function, institution of affiliation and full contact details (email, phone number and postal address).

Proposals may be submitted to in English, French or Japanese in Microsoft word (.doc) or rtf format.

Proposals should be addressed to:

sakumayutaka@aa.tufs.ac.jp with a copy to: nakamuu1975@hotmail.co.jp and lomo@unistra.fr

Deadline for submission of proposals for papers: 15th March 2017

Dates and location:

25th March 2017: announcement of the selected proposals

30th March 2017: diffusion of the provisional program of the symposium

20th April, 2017: deadline for confirmation of participants

30th April 2017: publication of final program and registrations

15th June 2017: submission of papers by the authors (25,000 to 30,000 characters)

23rd and 24 August 2017: International Symposium *Présence Africaine* in The Research Institute for the Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa (ILCAA), Tokyo University of Foreign Languages (Japan)

For more information on the symposium, you will soon find complementary details on the following website:

[Http://www.aa.tufs.ac.jp/en](http://www.aa.tufs.ac.jp/en)

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