Cosmopolitanism's sleights: obviating the social logics of identities

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Skirting the subject

On a recent return visit to Ganye[1] (capital of the chiefdom of the same name in Adamawa, the eastern-most middle-belt state of Nigeria), one of the main topics of daily conversation among Chamba, the majority population, was the precise date that their reigning traditional chief (the *Gangwari* of Ganye) would receive his First Class Staff of Office from the Lamido of Adamawa, a Fulani.[2] Along with two other non-Fulani[3] chiefs, the Bachama *Hama* of Numan, and the Bata *Hama* of Demsa, the *Gangwari* of Ganye had been seen his chiefdom elevated from second-class to first-class status by the Governor of Adamawa in December 2004. His was the last of the three ratification ceremonies to be held. An installation ceremony is a complex and expensive undertaking: requiring invitations to be sent out, accommodation and food to be prepared, ceremonial spaces to be upgraded, and a variety of traditional performances to be arranged for the entertainment of the distinguished visitors, who would be seated – the most important at the front – in rows under an awning sheltered from the sun, on one side of a large plaza (Gangwari Square in Ganye), the other three sides of which would be lined by the throng of standing spectators. A 'traditional chief' having his promotion celebrated publicly to the accompaniment of 'traditional performances'; doubtless you can feel another 'invention of tradition' paper impending, explaining for the umpteenth time how such traditions are both recent and part and parcel of current politics. The modernity of tradition is, indeed, part of what I mean to inflict on you. But not, I suggest, my whole story.

One of the reasons given by the chief for his delay in seeking a date for the installation ceremony concerned the poor quality of mobile telephone service in his capital. Ganye was served by Mtel, the mobile telephone subsidiary of the Nigerian statal provider Nitel, but intermittently and with an unreliability that could be relied upon. For instance, Mtel never seemed to work after dark, something local opinion, with what technical insight I don't know, attributed to the evening boosting from a nearby relay station of the signal of the Adamawa Broadcasting Corporation, the only TV channel available locally without satellite subscription. In a few days during my visit, Glo, by consensus Nigeria's most dynamic provider of Global Systems of Mobile Communications (GSMC), had their mast up and running: there was a brisk business for SIM card salesmen as people either switched, or added, this more expensive but also

[1] I carried out research in this area regularly between 1976 and 1990 but had not returned between then and a month-long visit in January 2006. I am grateful for small grants from the Central Research Fund of the University of London and the School of Oriental and African Studies which assisted my passage.
[2] In the event this happened on 18 February 2006, a couple of weeks after I had returned home.
[3] I use Fulani rather than Fulbe in this paper since all my references are to Fulani in Nigeria where this version of the ethnic term is in use.

more reliable provider, and the Chief of Ganye immediately sought a date for his installation ceremony, confident that his visitors would not be rendered incommunicado from their pressing concerns elsewhere in Nigeria, which is also to say, confident that his own capital would not strike these visitors as a 'bush' place. So, I sense you thinking, a paper about the necessity of technological modernity to the contemporary invention of tradition. In part, guilty as charged, but I hope to give this well-worn argument some new inflexions in the light of debates about cosmopolitanism.

While I am on the subject of mobile telephone technology, I ought to report that: Nigeria is touted as home to the world's fastest growing mobile communications industry. Since the onset of deregulation in 2001, when Nigeria apparently had 450,000 functioning land lines (and quite what, or when, functioning means in this context is open to debate), mobile telephone ownership has risen to 16 million. Glo alone claims to have attracted 5 million subscribers in the two years to January 2006, and Ganye was among 30 towns connected to the Glo network during just two weeks early in the year.[4] As any visitor to West Africa pre- and post-GSMC will attest, the difference this technology has made to people's notions of accessibility, punctuality and communicability has been extraordinary, as if a lot of the population had been simply awaiting the technology that would make it worth their while getting off what Anglophone West Africans call 'African time' (to a degree at least). For those who did not need to meet to transact their business, virtual presence became possible, and my impression is that this was used more for relatively local meetings than for national or international communications. What all this has to do with cosmopolitanism will become obvious, if it is not already.

There was a second reason for the *Gangwari*'s delay in asking that a date be fixed for his installation. Despite its remoteness from Nigerian centres of power, Ganye chiefdom happens to include the homes of two of Nigeria's most powerful men: Vice-President Abubakar Atiku, and the influential politician and business magnate, Bamanga Tukur, who is the son of a Fulani who presided over Chamba administration from the mid-1930s to mid-1950s. Neither of these men is Chamba, but both have been given titles on *Gangwari*'s traditional council. It would have been unthinkable to fix the date of the installation before ensuring the presence of the Nigerian Vice-President as guest of honour, and the Vice-President's diary was filled well ahead of time, not least thanks to the wrangle over the constitution, and the limitation of any presidency to two terms of office, between himself and President Obasanjo which had preoccupied Nigerian news media. High politics and Global Satellite Mobile Communications both impinged on the timing of a 'traditional' performance. My task will be ask whether the interlacing of these, only superficially, very different kinds of concerns is illuminated if we think about them in terms of cosmopolitanism, or cosmopolitanization.

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[4] These figures are from www.mobileafrica.net and need to be treated with some caution: all Nigerian mobile telephone services are 'pre-pay' or 'pay as you go' and telephone numbers for which no credit is received have their right to receive calls blocked after a period that varies between providers. Where service is patchy, phone users reliant on remaining connected may have more than one handset, or a handset adapted to take multiple SIM cards. This reasoning suggests there are likely to be fewer telephone users than there are telephone numbers. Against this, individuals' phones are rarely denied to needful kin or friends who have no phone of their own.

The organizer of this conference having given me very ample warning that I ought to have something to say about cosmopolitanism, I kept an ear out for the term. Disappointingly, I did not hear it once during a month in Ganye. Very few Chamba from the chiefdom live outside Nigeria; slightly more have either travelled abroad (particularly for pilgrimage to Mecca or Jerusalem) or studied abroad. However, Nigeria is a big and populous place. No-one is too sure about its exact population, estimation of which is made contentious by matters of taxation and election which predictably pull population returns in opposite directions. Another attempt to count the population is imminent but, in the meantime, observers bandy around figures in the region of 135 million people, meaning that Nigerians make up more than half and perhaps as much as two thirds of all West Africans (depending on various assumptions about which you consider to be West African countries and what their populations might be). Chamba try to argue up their own numbers to around a half million, most of whom live within Adamawa State, but including communities mixed and scattered in neighbouring Taraba State (not counting, for now, Chamba in Cameroon). Leaving aside serious quibbles about the basis of ethnicity, in the roughest of terms, Chamba make up between one-third and two-fifths of one percent of the population of Nigeria. Given this status as one of the country's middling-size minorities (in a smaller West African nation they might have been calling the shots), Chamba can move around a good deal and live in lots of large cities among people unlike themselves without ever leaving their country. Unlike international emigration, national emigration is very substantial. Widely displayed proof of this, which literally lines up helpful information for the visiting ethnographer, is to be had from the proliferation of poster-sized annual Almanacs produced in many of the university and commercial cities of Nigeria on which larger photos of Chamba dignitaries, usually located towards the top and centre, preside over thumbnail portraits of chapters of Chamba belonging to student or cultural associations. The enthusiastic uptake of computer software supporting photographs and artwork has encouraged all kinds of organization to produce not just Almanacs, but ornate invitations, announcements and condolences drawing on both national and international ideas of appropriate design. This deserves a paper to itself, but having spoken to users, I am sure that the opportunity to avail themselves of this technology and its products strikes them as modern and, were they to use the term, some of what they mean by modern would also be describable as cosmopolitan, or at least international.

Some of the literature on cosmopolitanism seems to assume that cosmopolitanism is, if not the antithesis, then certainly in tension with the nation. Particularly if you belong to a minority ethnic group nationally, cosmopolitanism, insofar as the term is understood to apply to cultural difference rather than only to the cultural differences of people outside your own nation, is the necessary grounds for your feeling any sense of belonging to a nationalist project. Cosmopolitanism is often presented as transcending nationalism because it involves inter-nationalism or trans-nationalism. But this argument rests uncomfortably on the assumption it claims to refute. Nations do not become diverse only through receiving culturally distinctive immigrants; in a loose sense, all were cosmopolitan at their inception and some did not, or have not yet, undergone the nation-building processes which effaced some of the differences within older states for a time. Even discounting immigration from other countries, Nigeria is in this sense a

cosmopolitan nation. The proliferation of Almanacs strikes me as a slight, but interesting, imaginative representation of Chamba in the enormous nation to which they belong: successful or aspirational in these distant places, but claiming ethnic loyalty and pride. *Pen leuka be nokin Samba*, or 'I am proud to be Chamba', as the bumper sticker of the Chamba Progressive Union, Jos Chapter, proclaims bilingually.

As I have mentioned already, I had been hoping to hear local uses of the term cosmopolitanism in Africa. The word, of course, is not the same as the concept, but it is still ethnographically interesting to hear it in someone else's mouth. I had more luck in Bali Nyonga, a kingdom founded by emigrants of putatively Chamba origin around the mid-nineteenth century in the high Grassfields of what is now Cameroon.[5] Though even here I heard 'cosmopolitans' used only once: by the town's elected mayor of the substantial numbers of emigrant Bali Chamba whose fundraising, particularly in the USA, underwrote projects of civic improvement back home.[6] For various reasons there is not space to delve into here, a high proportion of Bali Chamba have emigrated from Cameroon to take up, predominantly middle-class, occupations. Home ties remain strong, and there is keen identification with the uplifting of the town. The mayor was eager to acknowledge their financial contribution, but he added that 'cosmopolitans' had to be advised carefully since they tended to believe they knew best what local people needed. His usage echoed an older sense of cosmopolitanism as dislocation. Despite there being far more Bali Nyonga Chamba overseas than there are Ganye Chamba, albeit the latter place is much the larger, Bali Nyonga does not strike the visitor as being the more cosmopolitan of the two in terms of its make-up, facilities, or curiosity about the wider world. Though culturally diverse in the extreme, Cameroon is both less populous and less extensive than Nigeria.

These two slight ethnographic vignettes help me meander towards aspects of ethnographic unease I would feel with a disciplinary embrace of cosmopolitanism as a trope directing our interests (as Nigel Rapport suggested in a pre-conference contribution, 2006). In part this is personal: while I try, with uneven results, to do something about linguistic and intellectual shortcomings that hinder my being a cosmopolitan anthropologist, I don't aspire to be a cosmopolitan ethnographer. Like many, though not by any means all, ethnographers of my generation I have invested time and effort throughout my career in a very few places, making me at best bilocal, to some extent multi-local, but not cosmopolitan. If there was a weekly *Ganye Journal* or *Bali Nyonga Times* – sadly there isn't – I would be a devoted subscriber. My ethnographic multilocalism might be dismissed as an informed interest in parish-pump politics in more than one place, and I would be hard put to come up with a defence, or indeed want to do so. On any, even slightly, taxing grounds of cultural cosmopolitanism, I don't qualify; nor, for different reasons, do most of most Chamba I know in Ganye chiefdom. I am better travelled and better read than most of them; they beat me hands down on

[5] My brief visit during December 2004 and January 2005 occurred twenty years since I was last in Bali. It was supposed to coincide with the Lela ceremony which, as it turned out, was not held that year (Fardon 2006 forthcoming). (Missed ceremonies seem to constitute a sub-text here.)

[6] The Bali Cultural Association of the USA maintains a website www.bca-usa.org and has several national chapters, as well as overseas branches, for instance in UK.

multilingual competence, and those living outside Ganye chiefdom within Nigeria encounter cultural and language differences more substantial than would be easy to find by moving within the United Kingdom. When I first visited Ganye in 1976, only a fraction of the elite, who were all older than me, spoke some English, and my Chamba was the more serviceable medium of communication for many of our relations. Now lots of people younger than me, including women, very few of whom spoke English in 1976, speak English well, having learnt it at school from an early age, and employed that language learning to get educated, listen to the radio, read Nigerian newspapers, communicate with travellers (including some Nigerians, like Igbo, who may not learn Hausa, the northern Nigerian lingua franca) and so on. One could argue that these people are cosmopolitan in cultural terms, but don't really have the opportunity or occasion to be cosmopolitans in political terms, for reasons I come to shortly. I might be cosmopolitan in terms of certain cultural tastes, but I am not effortlessly multilingual and any cultural variety of my family antecedents would probably be comprehensible only to other English. The relation between political and cultural cosmopolitanism is potentially fascinating, but the conflation of these aspects threatens creating a very incoherent category of both inclusion and exclusion. Reading around the subject of cosmopolitanism I found myself confused by two tendencies in the literature: the first is to separate cultural cosmopolitanism from cosmopolitics; the second, having separated them, is to conflate culture and politics. I think both moves are wrong analytically, although they are comprehensible, even laudable, as interventions in the political process. Contrasts drawn intermittently between cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitics and nationalism (or other identities) sometimes seem to make sense only of nations with some centuries of policy-driven homogenization behind them. Picking up themes in the political ether as research programmes is understandable but needs to be approached with particular caution.

Cosmopolitanism's sleights

I want to make clear at the outset of this section that I don't intend to pursue an argument that reduces an interest in talking about cosmopolitanism to the interests of cosmopolitans; this is no more interesting than an argument relating resistance to such conversation to the interests of those who feel uncosmopolitan. In part it would rely upon making free with different senses of the word 'interest' and, even allowing some loose usage, it would simply point to an inevitability: most of our interests/self-interests are predictable from who we are, which is fine so long as we don't force them on others; some of our interests/curiosities don't correspond to our interests/obvious advantages, and this makes us a tad more interesting/worth knowing or thinking about. Nevertheless, thinking through the concerns of minority peoples in heterogeneous nations does predispose one to be attentive to the effects that majorities and their interests (in these several senses) can cause, even, perhaps especially, unwittingly. I chose my title with this in mind. 'Sleight', according to the dictionary definitions, can have relatively approving senses of skilfulness or cleverness, but these worthy characteristics shade into a knack or trick, and this adroitness in turn spills into morally ambiguous areas of artifice, ruse or cunning. The homophonous verb to 'slight', meaning to take at little value, or betray indifference towards, has no etymological connexion with 'sleight', but I cannot help but hear the potential for 'slight' lurking in 'sleight'. What, I wonder, is the effect of an

increasing interest in cosmopolitanism on (those rendered thereby) the un-cosmopolitan? Are the mechanics of other people's un-cosmopolitan character similar to the better known mechanics of un-civilized predispositions seen through the eyes of those who thought themselves civilized? The sleights or ambiguities of uses of the term cosmopolitanism make one worry more intensively about its potential capacity to slight, or artfully abuse, in practice.

The definitional difficulties are admitted by the editors of two recent collections of papers who resort, respectively, to multiple accounts and non-accounts of what may be involved. Stephen Vertovec and Robin Cohen (2002) helpfully disentangle six 'perspectives' on cosmopolitanism, without committing themselves either to the argument that these are perspectives on the same object seen from different vantages, or to the proposition that every aspect of the object thus envisioned might not be called something else chosen from the ample vocabulary of escape from hypertrophied identity categories (transnationalism, globalization, diaspora, creolization, hybridity, transculturation …). While the literature review is a boon to the newcomer, this reader is left unsure whether what is being proposed is a polythetic delineation of cosmopolitanism, or a listing of rather different concerns that simply happen to be included in some uses of the term.

Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, Carol A. Breckenridge, and Dipesh Chakrabarty devote the first paragraph of their editorial introduction, to explaining why, because cosmopolitanism is yet to come, we do not know what it currently is, and cannot therefore say where it came from. Moreover, it must 'always escape positive and definite specification, precisely because specifying cosmopolitanism positively and definitely is an uncosmopolitan thing to do' (2002: 1). While wanting to sympathize with a project that is so resolutely non-exclusive, arcane non-definition does threaten to defeat its own inclusive intentions by excluding those who simply have no prior knowledge to allow them to begin to understand what this undefinable project might be. To be on board the cosmopolitan project, to put it crudely, you have to have been on board already.[7]

Kwame Anthony Appiah's urbane and witty account of cosmopolitan ethics in a 'world of strangers' clearly addresses those already on board. I agree with most that he says, but then my personal profile closely fits his intended audience. I ought to be part of his 'we'. Appiah argues that cosmopolitanism requires a conversation, interpreted in broad terms, between those who hold differing values, not so they come to agree on those values, but so they can achieve ways of practical coexistence. Extreme cultural relativism is no help here, since it precludes conversation (2006: 14, 57, 70-1, 85). His definition of cosmopolitanism varies from a minimal commitment to mutual obligation and respect for difference between humans (2006: xv), to a more elaborated commitment to fallibilism (recognizing the limits to one's certainties) and pluralism (2006: 144) Throughout he emphasizes practices and the facts of a shrinking and culturally interpenetrating world in which being a non-cosmopolitan relies unrelenting vigilance. Cosmopolitanism is a

[7] I moderate my own enthusiasm for polythetic definitions in this context: polythetic definition illuminates the use of complex terms in an ethnographic sense, but this may be less insightful for those who are not users and hence cannot perform the auto-ethnography required.

normal condition. We are less different from one another than some like to suggest. A philosopher appealing to practice is, as Appiah himself recognizes, in danger of putting himself out of business. His conclusion is called 'kindness to strangers' which echoes Kant. But with a change of preposition might also echo Tennessee Williams' tragic Blanche DuBois who, in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, claimed always to have relied on the kindness 'of' strangers. (Blanche, we may also recall, traded favours to strangers for their help, and the devaluation of her favours with age is a large part of the plot of the play.) We may become better cosmopolitans, Appiah concludes, by giving up a sum of money small enough not to trouble most westerners which will nonetheless be large enough to alleviate basic poverty globally. It sounds like a win-win situation, but what does it make of the world's Blanche DuBois, those who receive strangers' beneficence? Do they become more cosmopolitan in receiving our handouts? Or, will they be cosmopolitans only once they too give? And, are their problems simply a matter of our wealth? In part they certainly are, but wealth transfer and a regard for both cultural pluralism and every culture's plurality, misses the connexions between economy, practice and that variable degree of extension in the world we tend to recognize as being cosmopolitan or not. Appealing to practice in this fashion actually avoids most practical conundrums, because it is devoid of curiosity about the social circumstances under which conversation occurs. When is it reasonable to anticipate people to embrace fallibilism and pluralism? When, at the most basic, can they afford to do so? Anthropologists/ethnographers cannot leave the question of practice in quite such abstract terms as philosophers. We need to reinstate some of the sociologics between the philosophical-cum-cultural and political-cum-policy poles towards which much of the debate on cosmopolitanism tends to gravitate, and which are only apparently reconciled when conclusions about the one (say, policy) are drawn directly from the other (say, partial cultural relativism of some stripe).

What would be the potential effects of anthropologists framing their interests in terms of cosmopolitanism? Such a shift would certainly be in the spirit of anthropological *bouleversement*: anthropologists were once predominantly interested in exotic places, now they also work at home; once they worked in few field sites over a career, now some undertake multi-sited fieldwork to triangulate extensive social processes from the outset of their research careers; that is, supposing they do privilege fieldwork, for anthropologists now use all kinds of materials not just to supplement fieldwork but as the primary focus of study. Why not complete the process of uprooting ethnography by studying cosmopolitans or cosmopolitanism? I have overstated the case intentionally, and I would separately endorse the arguments behind each of these changes while worrying about their aggregate effects. Writing for a meeting of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth, and speaking to the UK scene (and I am confident, at least some parts of the Commonwealth) my main practical worry is that the funding of anthropological research and staff positions makes anthropology more or less a zero-sum game. By doing one thing, we choose not to do others; and, in an intellectual landscape that we are told is increasingly inter- and post-disciplinary (a single intellectual market place in which barriers to trade have been dismantled, one is provoked to gloss), it appears that we on occasions choose to do what other (usually bigger) disciplines do, but few non-anthropologists evince interest in doing what used to be our hallmark. The

analogy between neo-liberalism in political economy and in intellectual life strikes me as being more than accidental here.

The 'freedoms' of neo-liberalism are offering individuals (and corporations masquerading as juridical individuals, Hart 2005) opportunities for relatively unfettered and unaccountable accumulation, and this produces new and more polarized class relations, partly through the transfer of public assets into private hands (Harvey 2005). One of the major moves in this process is the diminishing extent to which production accounts for accumulation, the 'financialization' of everything means that the making of money by means of money has become the major instrument of accumulation: the medium has become the material of accumulation. Something similar, I feel, sets in with a neo-liberalized academic community in which accumulation can have as much to do with the exchange of the medium of knowledge as it does with the production of knowledge. Some terms of contemporary discussion serve as rallying cries to divert the direction of our attention, and they do this rightly and constructively. I have no wish for an anthropology that lives in a bubble. My worry about 'cosmopolitanism', coming when it does in the neo-liberalization of our knowledge economy, is that it will make uncosmopolitan enquiry unattractive to prospective researchers. It adds to a plethora of terms we have already to describe processes that transcend or challenge or fudge ethnic and national terms: diaspora, transnationalism, creolization, transculturation, globalization and so forth, but how much does it supplement them? To put the same question slightly different: would researching into cosmopolitanism itself be a cosmopolitan gesture, or, alternatively, is normalizing cosmopolitanism – while refusing to specify it – a cosmopolitan sleight?

For Ulrich Beck, 'Identity denies ambivalence, pins things down and attempts to draw boundaries in a process of cosmopolitanization that suspends and blurs boundaries. There is a corresponding nostalgia on the part of social scientists (not forgetting anthropologists) for an ordered world of clear boundaries and the associated social categories' (2002: 81). The scholarship here is careless for one so eminent, but also indicative in its assumption that evidence would be unnecessary: who are these anthropologists nostalgic for clear boundaries and social categories? The guilty go unnamed, as well they might. Throughout my time, most anthropologists – particularly those who have been read widely – have been busily deconstructing their inherited mental furniture in an effort to interrogate the instructions previous generations used to assemble it from the flat-pack.[8] Anthropologists have studied how other people essentialize their identities and naturalize their social classifications, but to study such processes is neither to endorse them, nor to bemoan their loss where they have been undermined. Rather than berating forebears, I prefer to take seriously the contrapuntal sense of cosmopolitanism and its antonyms to which Beck also points when he writes that identity 'pin[s] things down' – indeed, how could it be identity if it did not? Even the identity of 'cosmopolitan' has the effect of trying, however evasively, to pin down something that otherwise very different people or practices share. If the idea

[8] I don't want to leave myself open to the charge I just leveled at the eminent professor, but neither do I want to clutter this article with references to an elderly literature some of which I surveyed twenty years ago (Fardon 1987).

cosmopolitanism had no intention to pin anything down, why would commentators worry whether defining cosmopolitanism was itself uncosmopolitan? In reality, pinning down most identities is not so easy; it calls for vigilant and unrelenting work, and this is because the social worlds in which most of us live – not being total institutions – are criss-crossed by currents that both call forth and repudiate essentialized identities. Hence, a primary cosmopolitan identity is not realistic for most people who are neither so privileged they do not need the entitlements that come with national and ethnic identities nor so destitute that they have nothing to gain from such identities in either material or moral terms. But, *pace* Beck, identities have as much to do with the creation of ambivalence as its denial: if there were no identities then what would people be ambivalent about?

Peripheral citizens of cosmopolitan worlds

I want now to return to those concerns of Chamba in Ganye Chiefdom that I outlined in opening – their ethnic identity within Adamawa State and the Federal Republic of Nigeria, traditional office and ceremony, modernity and technology as both practically purposeful and symbolically powerful – in order to treat them as an example of peripheral, national cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism necessarily means something different depending how you engage with it; this is a matter of social conjuncture and not simply perspective. One kind of elite cosmopolitan discourse (hardly relevant to my case study), I would argue, reaches beyond the nation because its proponents are either too wealthy and well-connected to care much about the nation, or because (or additionally) they come from a stratum that has a settled and secure relation to the national state. I am in the latter category: so far as I know, there are no plans to remove my UK citizenship: on the basis of that citizenship most countries in the world allow me to visit and my own authorities allow me to come home; through taxation I contribute towards public goods and I have rights in respect of these shared goods. These remain substantial because our government still spends almost two-fifths of the Gross National Product on our behalf. Not all of this is spent in ways I can justify. Military expenditure aside, I have my gripes in the course of which it is easy to forget that most of the world would envy my material security. Recalling this also brings to mind something else obvious: that political cosmopolitanism corresponds to self-interest for people (like me) who are well provided materially, because the continuation of their well-being is as, or even more, dependent upon what happens outside their national state as it is upon domestic events.

It would be premature, not to speak of dangerous, for Chamba of the Ganye paramountcy to start relying too much on the kindness of the strangers who make up their huge and diverse national state. Their historic experience has been of marginality in terms of rights grants, and peripherality in terms of access to them. Several writers have suggested phases in globalization as the extension and overall connectivity of its technologies have deepened (e.g. Magnolo 2002: 157 – 'a set of designs to manage the world'). They write about this, as it were, from the world's point of view. More often than not, the ethnographer's contribution to this debate can be made distinctive by reversing the optic to ask how the wider world seems to those becoming caught up increasingly within it. Although I do not pursue it here, this approach would be just as

germane in looking at the 'packaging' of the world for the information-rich (Calhoun 2003: 107). I want, very briefly, to provide a context to local gobalization in the last quarter millennium for the Chamba case, and to ask how this might be related to the extension of their projects for 'conviviality' (Magnolo, *ibid*). [9]

In the mid-eighteenth century most Chamba[10] would have lived in sizeable chiefdoms stretching between the Shebshi Mountains, now in Nigeria, and the major river system around the Faro and Deo confluence, now in Cameroon. Their immediate neighbours were a lot like themselves, and the suppositions about the world they shared allowed a lively trade in cults and cult performances between them, as well as a variety of ties based on co-residence, clan- and ethnic-based relations of privileged insult, intermarriage and so forth. Chamba were usually self-sufficient in guinea corn, although there are indications of droughts in the second half of the eighteenth century. Apart from such small stock as chickens, goats and sheep, Chamba may have kept humpless dwarf cattle and ponies. In these respects, their communities were probably self-sufficient too. Their cosmology, a grand term I use because it resonates with the likely limits of their cosmopolitanism at that time, predicated more or less active powers such as a distant creator god, an underworld from which the dead affected the lives of the living, forces of the wild including malevolent animals, witches and shapechangers. Technologies of offering, ordeal, and cultic performance allied to the expulsion or killing of people who posed supernatural dangers to the community (whether or not they intended to do so) provided a degree of control over these super-human powers, and there were also means of reparation for human damage (by theft, killing, adultery and so forth). Chamba were probably aware of various types of people unlike themselves: to the north they presumably knew of the powerful Muslim empire of Bornu, and they would have been familiar with predominantly Hausa traders whose routes crossed Chambaland. Fulani graziers with their herds of zebu cattle and smallstock also traversed Chambaland on seasonal migrations and, in all probability, some settled in small villages. To the south, Chamba may have heard of European traders far away at the coast who brought trade goods and collected slaves. The epicentre of the European slave trade had been moving towards the area due south of Chamba. However, Chamba probably sensed the power of both the Europeans and the Kanuri only indirectly, while the Fulani herders were vulnerable and so acted as clients. In short, Chamba would have been the centre of their communities and their communities the centre of their world.

The nineteenth century saw this situation change entirely. Chambaland was largely overrun by the easternmost emirate of the Sokoto Caliphate, the most populous political entity in Africa. Numerous Chamba chiefdoms disappeared as their members set off south and south-west to escape Fulani domination and to profit from the disruptions of Fulani state-building. Other Chamba retreated into the hills and mountains that

[9] Although ideally it would be even-handed to do so, it is impossible, in the current state of our knowledge, to characterize a Chamba half millennium corresponding to the creation of the northern circum-Atlantic part of the world system.

[10] I ask the reader to hear, because it would be unreadable if I noted it on each occurrence that, given the recent crystallization of current ethnic identities, by 'Chamba' I mean the people who would be Chamba by the time of twentieth-century written records.

nullified the advantages of Fulani cavalry. Those left in the plains had to find some kind of, doubtless changing, *modus vivendi* with the ascendant Fulani powers in whose eyes they were, more often than not, pagans and slaves and racially inferior. In the course of a century, those Chamba who did not emigrate entirely found their status changed – in very crude terms – from being the centre of their own universe to living on the margins of a Muslim and, in terms of its dominant stratum, ethnically Fulani state to which they were significant only as a resource. A further century has done little to dissipate the rancour and distrust between Chamba and Fulani as categories, though not, it needs to be added, always as individuals.

Conquest of the Sokoto Caliphate by the European imperial powers did not immediately make a substantial change to relations between Chamba and Fulani. Whatever their principled views on the topic, all three European powers involved (Britain and Germany, and later France) had little option other than to resort to indirect rule through Fulani chiefs. The Europeans found Chamba in the state to which the Fulani consigned them and this, allied to Europeans' own perceptions of relative superiority among Africans, meant that early colonial rule was experienced by Chamba as at best a rearrangement, at worst a reinforcement, of Fulani dominance. It was not until the inter-war period that the British seriously addressed dismantling of the system that used Fulani intermediaries to deal with Chamba communities, and began to replace it with territorially- and ethnically-based administrative local administrative units with headmen drawn from the majority ethnic group. (The French never really did so.) The development of an ethnically-based administration, drawing in small-scale on those same assumptions (of language, culture, shared history, and collective identity, as arguments for autonomy) that underlay nationalist arguments, coincided with intensification of two other globalizing influences.

Most of Chambaland was missionized relatively late, the Protestants arriving from the mid-1920s and the Roman Catholics a couple of decades later. Simultaneously, conversion to Islam (which had scarcely occurred during the nineteenth-century jihads) increased. Traditional religion remained predominant for the first half of the twentieth century but declined thereafter, its performances becoming largely folkloristic by the end of the century (albeit some of its presuppositions, notably concerning witchcraft, did not cease to be entertained). Chamba religious affiliations were set upon a path that is still obvious: whether Chamba Christians are Protestant or Catholics may be predicted with a high degree of accuracy on the basis of their present or historic family residence: western Chamba tend to be Lutheran Protestants, and eastern and southern Chamba are predominantly Roman Catholic, a distribution that follows from the division of Chambaland between missionary interests on the Nigerian side of the border. Muslims are found all over Chambaland, but they especially predominate where no Christian mission was established. So far, other churches have remained very minor players and, according to local testimony, are confined to Ganye town where their congregations are predominantly non-Chamba.

The late colonial period[11] thus introduced Chamba to a set of assumptions concerning identity, autonomy and self-government, shared by both colonial and national regimes, as well as to the two major religious currents of Nigeria. The combination did not sit all that easily. Nigeria's religious geography is complex looked at in all its details, but a fundamental tension between a North that looks across the Sahara desert to the Muslim world, and a South which looks across the Atlantic to the Christian world, has centuries of precedent behind it. The activities of religious fundamentalists in both camps, and the contest between the Nigerian Constitution and Sharia Law have served to exacerbate tensions (Paden 2005; Ostien, Nasir and Kogelmann 2205). Chamba in Ganye hold strongly, though it is difficult to know how anyone might check their statement, that they are evenly split between Muslims and Christians. The predominance of either religion would upset a delicate balance because, over and above these religious differences, which are common within families, there is a general insistence that where politics is concerned they are all Chamba and have to stick together. This would be a less sweeping commitment were it not also remarked frequently that in Nigeria everything is politics.

It was not until the British were close to leaving the Trust Territory that a concerted effort was made to address the problems of Chamba administration. During the 1930s a Subordinate Native Authority had been stitched together that consisted of a few Chamba chiefdoms which had survived the nineteenth century, and a swathe of smaller communities in the plains between the two major mountain ranges that border what is now the Ganye chiefdom to the west and east. Chamba and Fulani had become more mixed in this central plain than elsewhere, and the entire area was constituted as a single district headed by a Fulani who also acted as Wakilin Chamba (he was the father to the prominent businessman and politician mentioned earlier), effectively presiding over the Chamba Native Authority as a whole. By the mid-1950s discontent against what they portrayed as Fulani domination was given voice by young Chamba Protestants. Largely as a result of their having raised the profile of the problem, the British moved the administrative centre of the Chamba Native Authority from Jada, a place founded by Fulani incomers, south to Ganye, which is said to have been the site of a small market but was otherwise hardly populated. In 1961, the Northern Trust Territory joined Nigeria, which had gained independence the previous year, and a block of offices was built in Ganye (dedicated as a gift from the British people). Control over local administration there would become a focus of a Chamba/Fulani rivalry that took a variety of forms: writing petitions, seeking offices of the different kinds that local administration seemed to have an inexhaustible capacity to generate, and occasional violence. In 1967, the Fulani scored a symbolic victory when they petitioned successfully for the Chamba Native Authority to be renamed Ganye Native Authority. A rotational presidency of the Native Authority Council was brought in at the same time, so that the District Heads, Chamba and Fulani, took turns to preside over meetings. However, an eruption of violence in 1971, precipitated by disputed successions in two districts, revealed the inadequacy of this arrangement. In response to what became known as the 'Leko riots', named after the Chamba of one administrative area (Leko District) taking direct action

[11] Itself a retarded affair because Ganye Chamba were in the Mandated and later Trust Territories created from German Kamerun, hence outside the main thrust of colonial development.

against the installation of a Fulani District Head on the retirement of his Chamba predecessor, the State Governor set up a Commission of Enquiry. It was the recommendation of the enquiry that a paramount chiefship be created in Ganye. A complex election process was set in train, and a forty-year-old, Catholic-educated Muslim, ex-teacher and veterinary officer was approved as Chief of Ganye in 1972, formally receiving his Third Class Staff of Office two years later. This was upgraded to a Second Class Staff in 1982, ceremonially bestowed the following year. On his death, his son was elected his successor and, although the position remains officially elective, it will become increasingly difficult to disentangle the resources of the chiefship from those of the family that has now held that office for more than thirty years.

Since its creation, the chiefship has been one of the few constants of Chamba organization, though it also has not gone uncontested, notably by Fulani petitioners variously demanding: the removal of the incumbent, the division of the chiefdom, or for the chief to be prevented from titling himself *Gangwari* on the basis that use of a Chamba term is discriminatory against future Fulani candidates. All of these petitions, according to Chamba in Ganye, have needed to be refuted actively because Fulani are better connected than Chamba at statal and federal levels of government, and who knows what might come to pass otherwise: for everything, recall, is politics.

While the chiefship has been a constant for a large part of the forty-five years since the Chamba joined an independent Nigeria, other administrative and electoral arrangements have changed with a frequency that precludes summary here. The country has lurched between civilian and military regimes, often accompanied by creation of state: their number currently stands at 36 (Chamba have successively belonged to Sardauna Province, North-Eastern State, Gongola State, and Adamawa State). Native Authorities have become Local Government Authorities, and these have been created and dissolved, sub-divided and redrawn with little respite. This volatility has been more than matched by the creation and suppression of political parties that have managed both to be new and to have recognizable antecedents in past parties. And every time the political game has been redefined, Chamba have had no choice but to participate, both to protect their position vis à vis the Fulani, and because political office has been the most common route to personal wealth. Each change has required a refashioning of networks of influence, an undertaking demands a lot of time, as well as the raising and expenditure of financial resources.

Hence Chamba have been both citizens and subjects for much of the past forty-five years, at least when military governments have not held electoral processes entirely in abeyance. Because the Christians predominated among the first Chamba to be educated, there was a tendency for them also to predominate among those elected to offices. All occupants of ‘traditional’ offices are expected to be Muslims, and there are well-known cases of Christians having converted to Islam shortly before being appointed to some rung of the chiefdom’s administration. Christian and Muslim interests have to be kept in some kind of balance in the interests of Chamba retaining ethnic solidarity. Seen from this perspective, there are not two systems of government but only one that happens to operate through two related branches with slightly different protocols, and the more

durable of these is called 'traditional' although it is actually a post-colonial introduction in an invented, syncretized traditional idiom. Moreover, it is not clear that one part of the system is more responsive or representative than the other. The Paramount Chief has to emerge from an electoral process, and he surrounds himself with a Council drawn representatively from those considered successful and influential in the chiefdom. In appointing District Heads, he has to gauge what will be acceptable to those they govern, and he knows that the precedents are plentiful for unpopular appointees to destabilize their own communities. It is a moot point whether the elected officials are really more accountable than the Paramount Chief. Quite how particular candidates emerge as such is often obscure to those invited to vote for them. When one political party is ascendant, which is the present case, the candidate for that party inevitably emerges with a popular mandate. Federal and statal representatives are likely to spend much of their time respectively in the federal and statal capitals (Yola and Abuja); even local councillors may not always be accessible to their electorates, particularly if they combine elected office with a job elsewhere in the country. When there is a crisis, it is to the Chief that people turn for leadership and reconciliation.[12]

Back to cosmopolitanism

What has all this to do with cosmopolitanism? If cosmopolitanism involves efforts at conviviality made in the face of cultural differences and the contexts of globalization, then more than it may seem at first. First, the processes of conviviality and the creation of ethnic and religious differences have been concurrent: people were thrown upon ethnic identity and traditional offices which crystallized in course of the creation of a colonial and national state that came to act as quartermaster to ethnic interests. It is impossible to argue that any part of this reinforcing cycle had precedence over the rest of it. How wide a project of conviviality might be anticipated of peripheral citizens under these social circumstances? Cosmopolitans, whether in outlook or in practice, need to have resolved their national role in one way or another: either secured their share of the national cake, or given it up as a bad job and invested in the outside (which is the route some Bali Chamba seem to have taken). Those who have given up on the nation states may be economic migrants (from the fabulously rich to the indigent), or refugees and illegal aliens, respectively the flotsam and jetsom of globalization. There is a lot that could be said about social and economic circumstances, and these circumstances would only ever be necessary rather than sufficient in accounting for the development of forms of cosmopolitanism in either its rooted or rootless form. But Chamba in Ganye are obliged rather to be constantly vigilant about their national position. Chamba neo-traditionalism in ethnicity and chiefship sits in a world of ethnic fundamentalisms, and Chamba anticipate that other should have similar identities to underpin their rights. The assertion of ethnicity is simultaneously a claim to statal and federal resources; in this sense, ethnicity involves a commitment to the national state as quartermaster. 'Traditional' chiefship must both participates in this agonistic jousting and stand slightly to one side of it, rising above sectional struggles and persisting beyond the party interests that are their vehicle. Ethnicity, most fundamentally for Chamba, and at least for the present, trumps

[12] This was very evident during protests against police brutality that occurred during my visit in January 2006 and eventuated in a contingent of Nigeria's unloved Mobile Police being sent into Ganye.

religion: the more polarized confessional identities have become (and this process has been accelerated by the globalizing projects of both Christians and Muslims), the more Chamba have been inclined to play down religious differences. Quite how resilient this ethnicizing response to religious polarization will be is difficult to predict. There is ambivalence among some Chamba about an ethnic project that subordinates religious differences – particularly if one confessional identity seems regularly disadvantaged by it. By no means, however, is this fragile play circumstances reducible to the kind of antinomian contest between cosmopolitanization and the essentialization of identities that Ulrich Beck suggests as a master process. Indeed, such a formulation would entirely fail to recognize the difficulties of constructing ethnic conviviality in a cosmopolitan and religiously riven nation. It would consign those struggling to contain religious polarization and contest historic marginality as obstacles to cosmopolitanization.

Advocates of cosmopolitanism evidently seek to make the world a better place. To argue that humans are a single species, that cultures are not essences, that loyalties may be complex, that responsibilities for one another do not end at national boundaries, and so forth. Who, among those addressed, would argue? But who is addressed? And under what circumstances are those addressed in a position to concur? Ethnographers may be employed better asking how this all looks from the other end of the telescope. Cosmopolitanism could turn out, through sleight not by intention, to be another way of excluding and disparaging others. The traditionalism of ethnic subjects in Nigeria (as has been argued of contemporary hunter-gatherer populations elsewhere) results from processes of globalization as they experienced them and from currents of cosmopolitanization as they are played out nationally in, for instance, divisive religious affiliations just as much as in claims to common citizenship or particular subjecthoods. Cultural relativism is untenable as a presupposition of cosmopolitanism, as Kwame Anthony Appiah argues, not just because extreme relativism would mean they had nothing to say to one another, but because cultured lives are relative to one another in a simpler state: they are already related to one another, both historically and presently (Kahn 2003: 411).

2005 witnessed a series of, what I applaud as having been, genuinely cosmopolitan initiatives. The publication of *Our Common Interest: Report of the Commission for Africa* in March that year was a landmark event, its impact reinforced by Bob Geldof's initiatives as author, television documentary maker and concert master. It in no way diminishes this effort to say that it shares a common dilemma in both wanting to be deferential towards cultural difference while remaining appalled by some of the behaviour carried out by identities for which culture is the vehicle. This shows up in a fretful switching between singular and plural, adding and removing the qualification 'African'.

> Different cultures manifest their ideas of political and economic freedom in very different ways. For this reason the Commission decided to consider the issue of culture before embarking on political and economic analysis. By culture we are talking about far more than literature, music, dance, art, sculpture, theatre, film and sport. All of these, of course, are for any social group part of its shared joy in

> the business of being alive. But culture is more than the arts. It is about shared patterns of identity. It is about how social values are transmitted and individuals are made to be part of a society. Culture is how the past interacts with the future. (Commission 2005: 30)
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> One commonly held fallacy about culture is that it is the expression of unchanging tradition. Those who hold this view usually see African cultures as regressive and tribal and therefore inimical to development. African culture, they often say, is an irrational force that generates inertia and economic backwardness. This is contrary to the evidence. History shows African cultures to have been tremendously adaptive, absorbing a wide range of outside influences, and impositions, as well as finding ways to survive often difficult natural, environmental and social conditions. (Commission 2005: 31)

These summarized thoughts (and their expansion in pp. 121-32 of the Report's main text) are clearly meant well; their respect for cultural difference, and emphasis on the need for dialogue (which I have not quoted) would presumably make them cosmopolitan in Kwame Anthony Appiah's terms. But like many propositions about culture they quickly become perplexing. In the first paragraph, cultures are taken as foundational realities: able to 'manifest their ideas of political and economic freedom'; being 'about shared patterns of identity'; being 'how the past interacts with the future'. But, this version of African cultures does indeed lend itself to being construed in terms of a multiplicity of ethnic possessions, particularly when, out of proper deference to the immense variety of African societies the Report insists on pluralizing 'cultures'. As Sir Bob puts it succinctly in his own book, 'Talking about tribalism makes Africans sound backward.' (Geldof 2005: 235). The second paragraph I quoted tackles this point head on, refuting unnamed critics and arguing that African cultures have simultaneously absorbed outside influences (outside what one wonders?) while finding ways to survive a variety of difficult conditions. Is it not people who survive difficulties? Or is this a variation on the selfish gene: people being the medium through which cultures survive? This begins to sound more essentialist than the notion it was designed to refute.

In terms of the likely impact of the Commission for Africa's Report, I don't believe that the sort of confusions about the notion of culture likely to be picked up by a nit-picking academic matter much. The incoherence is not the authors' fault but symptomatic of the ambivalent role played by the ambitious idea of culture itself.

My ethnographic example has been a variation on well-worn themes: the invention of tradition is a curious mixture of highly self-conscious motivation and the taken-for-granted; the increasing prominence of chiefship in contemporary Africa is explicable in terms of present as well as past politics; the apparent distinction between citizens and subjects in African societies is largely chimerical: where both chiefs and elected representatives are found, it is most likely that their activities will have been interlaced in all manner of complicated ways. Abstracting a little further from the particulars of the case, I also wanted to suggest that it really does not help us envisage a prior state of culture somehow expressing itself through people's values, at least it does

not help us if we wish simultaneously to disavow the naturalization of ethnic or tribal entities. Chamba emphasis on their ethnic identity, the importance they attribute their paramount chiefship, their attempts to play down religious divisions among themselves while living in a country that is increasingly being polarized on religious grounds, developed in a context of political and economic peripherality. Identity is the vehicle of their interest in belonging to the cosmopolitan national state that is contemporary Nigeria. Philosophical and policy arguments about cosmopolitanism *per se*, different though they may seem – and indeed are – in many ways, share a tendency to talk about cultures in ways that dislocate them from their social contexts. That they tend to ignore the social grounds of their own enunciation should, therefore, not come as a surprise. Social anthropologists have a role in identifying the social logics of projects of conviviality of ethnographic subjects, whether these subjects are distinguished philosophers and sociologists or politicians in the 'west', or peripheral citizens and subjects of African states.

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