

## **Cultural Consequences of Colonization**

CDI Course proposal submitted by:

Salikoko S. Mufwene, *Department of Linguistics, Chicago*

&

Dain Borges, *Department of History, Chicago*

### Rationale:

- Colonization has interested many scholars in various research areas, including:
- economic and political history (investigating economic causes of colonization and the legacy of colonial rules in today's societies);
  - cultural and social anthropology (dealing generally with the destructive impact of colonization on indigenous cultures and with the cultural identity of descendants of the colonists and former slaves in former settlement colonies of especially the New World and Indian Ocean);
  - literature and culture studies (with particular interest today in postcolonial productions and also with phenomena such as the "créolité" movement in French overseas departments); and
  - linguistics (focusing on the emergence of new language varieties, particularly creoles, pidgins, and indigenized varieties of colonial European languages in Africa and Asia, as well as on language loss in former colonies, chiefly the Americas and Australia).

Generally, the relevant scholars have focused on the colonization of the world by Europe since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, with colonization too often dealt with as a uniform enterprise from one colony to another. Except in history, rare are studies that have discussed the causes of colonization and why there are so many differences in the resultant socio-economic structures and cultures of former European colonies. For instance, why is it that the former colonies that have had the hardest difficulties to take off economically are in Black Africa, which, like Asian colonies, exhibit the fewest traces of Europeanization even in their patterns of urbanization? Why are Latin American and Caribbean nations culturally so different from their North American counterparts when arguably they had comparable levels of economic development before the 19<sup>th</sup> century? This seminar course will provide a platform to two professors in Linguistics and History to exchange different perspectives on colonization and learn along with their graduate students, while stimulating the latter to learn from cross-disciplinary scholarship. Regarding cultural phenomena that are particularly colonial, including language, it will be informative to find out the extent to which the restructuring processes and "ecological" factors bearing on these new developments are comparable across former European colonies.

### Goals of the course:

One of the goals of this course is to re-examine the history of the world over the past 5,000 years or so from the perspective of colonization qua settlement of a new territory by a particular population, regardless of whether or not the enterprise resulted in the domination of the Natives by the colonists or colonizers. The causes have varied from

trade (as in the case of the Phoenicians in the Mediterranean, Southern Chinese in Southeast Asia, and the Arabs in Monsoon Asia), to economic exploitation (as in the case of the Hellenic and Roman Empires), and irreversible settlement of new territories and assimilation of the Natives (as in the case of Chinese expansion in Asia, the Bantu dispersal in sub-Saharan Africa, the colonization of England by the Germanics as one of the successive phases of the Indo-European expansion, and the Arab expansion in North Africa). This historical and comparative approach will enable us not only to situate in a broader perspective the differential colonization of the world by Europeans since the 15<sup>th</sup> century but also to develop a more accurate typology of colonization styles. It will also enable us to examine the adequacy of interpreting colonization migrations as involving isolated national trajectories, especially in those cases where one European nation created a huge colonial empire, as in Latin America, in opposition to which the British Empire emerged. Worth investigating is also the extent to which the European colonial enterprise(s) reflected pan-European economic cultures at different times, although there are obvious differences in the ways that different nations implemented what may be claimed to be the same master plans.

From the point of view of resultant cultures, we can use the typology emerging from the approach proposed above to better understand both similarities and differences in the consequences of colonization in human history. We can compare the process of Americanization in North America with that of Creolization in the Caribbean and Latin America as processes similar to the Sinicization of much of East Asia, the Bantuization of sub-Saharan Africa, the Romanization of especially Western Europe, the Germanization of England, and the Arabization of North Africa. On the other hand, while this exercise helps us understand why Black Africa, where colonization proceeded in the exploitation rather than the settlement style, has not Europeanized to the same extent as North America and Australia, it also helps us ask why Gaul did not Germanize (at least not to the same extent as England). Likewise, we can ask productively why the former Eastern Roman Empire did not Romanize (to the same extent as Western Europe), why the impact of the Hellenic Empire on the colonies is not so similar to the Romanization of Western Europe (other than the legacy of democracy), and why, among other things, Iberia did not Arabize (or did the Inquisition reverse the cultural impact of Moor domination?). And what are the cultural consequences of trade colonization since the Babylonian and Phoenician Empires other than the development of particular arithmetic and graphic traditions needed originally in book-keeping?

Taking language as a cultural exemplar, how does the spread of English today compare with the earlier geographic and demographic expansions of, say, Latin, Greek, and Arabic as world languages? Does the current wave of globalization entail a new colonization style and is the world at all in danger of Americanizing (totally) and using English as a vernacular, as has been predicted by some futurologists? Is the rest of the world slavishly adopting American culture?

No less important as a consequence of colonization is the emergence of ethnic Diasporas, the most important of which being those of populations of European descent which are now demographic majorities in North America and Australia. Why have they diverged culturally from their metropolitan ancestors, while they have also displaced or modified indigenous cultures? To what extent have other recent Diasporas preserved their ancestral traditions? To what extent is the distinctiveness non-European Diasporas a

colonial legacy? What kinds of research questions do our findings about recent Diasporas raise about the emergence and cultural characteristics of earlier Diasporas before the 15<sup>th</sup> century?

This is obviously an ambitious but very research-oriented cross-disciplinary course. Realistically, it can and will cover only part of the above topical outline in one quarter. However, since this is a seminar that should attract students who are eager to learn as much as they can about particular topics and from readings that interest them, a great deal can also be accomplished within 10 weeks of course. The topics to be covered over these weeks include but are not limited to the following:

- What is colonization? What kinds of migration ventures are they? Need they be considered as national enterprises? How many styles of colonization are there? What particular colonial enterprises in human history can be identified as of one rather than another style? What particular socio-economic and administrative regimes are typical of them? Are the types clearly distinct from each other, or are there intermediate categories?
- Discussions of particular colonial regimes before the 15<sup>th</sup> century and their cultural consequences, including political regimes, social customs, languages.
  - The Sinitic expansion
  - The Roman and Hellenic Empires
  - The differential Germanic expansion into England and Gaul
  - The differential Arab expansion west, east, and south of the Arabian Peninsula
- The European colonization of the world since the 15<sup>th</sup> century and its differing cultural consequences
  - The European expanding trade colonies
  - The colonization of Latin America and the Caribbean
    - Americanization vs Creolization of Europeans and their cultures
    - The Creolization of African populations
  - The colonization of Africa and Asia
    - The indigenization of European languages
    - The emergence of a new indigenous elite
  - From the British Empire to the British Commonwealth
    - Any noteworthy cultural fallouts beyond the economic advantages?
  - The myth of Francophonie and Lusophonie
    - Are the members of these groups really united by the same cultures?
  - The emergence of non-European Diasporas
- In retrospect, how can we interpret the earlier Indo-European and Bantu expansions from the point of view of colonization? Is there any justification for claiming that these expansions are still in process?
- Globalization and colonization: How different are these phenomena? Is today's world really becoming more and more homogeneous culturally? Are we really evolving toward an English-only world? Does world-wide economic globalization entail world-wide cultural globalization and/or Americanization?

Possible case studies include the following topics:

- Religious conversion, evangelization, and language. Christianization of Natives and indigenization of Christianity. Any similarities with the appropriation of European languages and their indigenization to local cultures? How do different ex-colonies compare with each other?
- The emergence of new musical styles: sorting out the origins of particular elements in specific music styles like the Blues, Jazz, Reggae, Calypso, Salsa, Samba, Zouk, and Sega. Is there really a common African thread in these musics? Is there any justification in the claims that they are African creations but they retain (important) European elements? Is there any particular colonial determinism that makes them comparable to the fact that, for instance, creole vernaculars differ among themselves largely also according to the particular structures of the European nonstandard dialects from which they evolved?
- How widespread is the phenomenon of post-colonial literature in the former colonies? Is there any correlation with the distinction between settlement and exploitation colonies? How does the “*éloge de la créolité*” movement fit in this? Or is race a factor in the emergence of post-colonial literatures? Isn't there a counterpart of this in settlement colonies where populations of European descent have emerged as demographic majorities? Is there any particular literary contrast in the Americas that can be correlated with colonial identity distinction between “Americanization” and “Creolization”?
- The autonomization of European languages in the colonies and the emergence of separate norms from the metropolitan standards: How and when did the trends start in different colonies? How does the emergence of creole vernaculars fit in the larger picture? Why did the exploitation colonies start such trends only after Independence, except for where pidgins emerged? How do features identified as “Hispanicisms” compare with those marked as “Americanism”? Is there a general creolization process for languages or other cultural productions/artifacts?

At present, the instructors have not yet decided what particular literature is the most appropriate to use, as some serious research will be involved in the selection process. Needless to say we will talk a lot with each other before deciding on this aspect of the course. It is also difficult to propose the usual kind syllabus where the topics to be covered in a quarter are more specifically identified. The above is intended to give the committee an idea of the rich contents and the extensive cross-disciplinary conversation and cross-pollination the course is expected to produce.