Sociological reading of the impact of nepotistic tribalism on political and socio-economic sustainable development in Africa

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ABSTRACT: *This study examines the portrayal of the manifestation and impact of nepotistic tribalism on political and socio-economic sustainable development in Africa. It is argued that tribal affiliation is an enriching cultural identity when it does not infringe on rights and liberties. However, colonial powers historically exploited tribal divisions to maintain control, resulting in weakened institutions in post-independent African nations. This exploitation fostered favouritism, corruption, and lack of accountability. In contexts of scarce resources, tribalism drives nepotistic solidarity through political allegiances based on tribal identities. The resulting divisive politics undermine equal access limited opportunities. Through a sociological reading of social structures and power, aligned with postcolonial theory, anthropological theories of identity and culture, political economy and development theories, and critical discourse analysis, the study analyses the complex portrayal of tribalism in Francophone African narratives. It concludes that nepotistic tribalism is a major hindrance to the sustainable development and requires a reimagining.*

KEYWORDS: Anthropological theories, critical discourse analysis, nepotistic tribalism, postcolonial theory, sociological theory, sustainable development

INTRODUCTION

Tribal affiliation is a legitimate identity that must be anthropologically recognised. When it does not impede on anyone's rights and liberties, it must be celebrated as a cultural feature whose distinctiveness can enrich the diversity of the social fabric. This notion aligns with the anthropological understanding of identity as a dynamic and contextually situated phenomenon (Rouch, 1956). In his structuralist approach, Claude Lévi-Strauss (Lévi-Strauss, 1963) emphasises the importance of understanding the inherent value of cultural diversity and the unique contributions of different tribal identities to the broader human experience.

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In Africa, tribes inform the richness of multiculturalism, often encompassing specific rituals, languages, and traditions that contribute to the continent's vibrant cultural mosaic. In this regard, Thomas Spear (Spear, 1993) argues that the Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania are known for their distinctive customs and dress, which not only serve as markers of identity but also attract global interest, hence contributing to cultural tourism. However, the colonial legacy has profoundly shaped the socio-political landscape of African nations. Colonial powers strategically used tribal distinctions to implement divide and rule tactics, thereby consolidating their authority and disrupting pre-existing social orders (Mamdani, 1996). This manipulation of tribal identities by colonial rulers has left enduring legacies in post-independence African states, where governance structures are often still influenced by these colonial-induced divisions.

Post-independent African nations have consequently suffered from social structures of governance underpinned by tribal affiliations that have weakened institutions (Munyangeyo. T. (2022). The pervasive nature of tribal identities has opened doors to favouritism, corruption, and a lack of accountability. The entrenchment of tribalism in political systems has led to what some scholars (Chabal and Daloz, 1999) term neopatrimonialism, where personal relationships and loyalties, often based on kinship and tribal ties, override formal institutional rules. In socio-economic contexts where resources are scarce, access to limited opportunities is driven by kinship, and tribalism leads the way to nepotistic solidarity. This phenomenon exacerbates inequality and stifles meritocratic advancement, leading to inefficient allocation of resources and underdevelopment.

Political allegiances based on tribal identities turn politics into a catalyst for division, aiming to mobilise support through ethnic loyalty rather than policy platforms or ideological commitments. Such dynamics are evident in numerous African countries, where political leaders exploit tribal affiliations to garner votes, often leading to electoral violence and instability. Using Zambian ethnicity landscape, Daniel N. Posner (Posner, 2010) argues that the instrumentalisation of tribalism in African politics undermines national cohesion and hinders the establishment of inclusive and robust democratic institutions.

This study employs a multidisciplinary approach to analyse the representation and impact of nepotistic tribalism on political and socio-economic sustainable development in Francophone Africa. Three novels will provide literary texts for the analysis of the representation of the manifestation and impact of nepotistic tribalism on political and socio-economic sustainable development in Francophone Africa. These novels are *Par décret présidentiel…* (Décret) by Stanislas Ouoham Tchidjo (1993), *La salve des innocents* (Salve) by Dominique M'Fouilou (1997), and *Le prostitué politique* (Prostitué) by Jean-Marie Mbailao (2021).

These novels offer rich narratives that depict the intricate ways in which tribal affiliations shape political and socio-economic landscapes. *Par décret présidentiel…* illustrates the manipulation of tribal loyalties for political gain, highlighting how leaders exploit ethnic divisions to maintain power. This scope aligns with the concept of ethnic entrepreneurs, as discussed by Fearon and Laitin (2000), who mobilise ethnic identities for political purposes. *La salve des*

innocents delves into the political and socio-economic ramifications of tribalism, portraying how nepotism and favouritism undermine democracy, social justice, and equitable development. This reflects the broader political and socio-economic theories that link corruption and underdevelopment to the erosion of institutional integrity that Robert Klitgaard (Klitgaard, 1991) has examined. *Le prostitué politique* examines the moral and ethical dimensions of tribalism, depicting characters who navigate complex allegiances and personal ambitions in political contexts where an opposition to the ruler is considered as a treason against the state, and a danger to the national unity. This resonates with the anthropological focus on the moral economy and the ways in which cultural norms shape economic behaviours (Scott, 1976).

By examining the tribal affiliation and the impact of nepotistic tribalism on political and socio-economic sustainable development in Africa, this aims to analyse how or whether the persistence of tribal loyalties in political, social, and economic systems undermines institutional effectiveness, democratic practices, which can exacerbate inequality and fuel social divisions and tensions. To examine the portray of nepotistic tribalism, and its impact on political and socio-economic structures in Francophone Africa, a multidisciplinary analysis has been used to unravel the extent of its hindrance to the sustainable development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nepotistic tribalism, which relates to the preferential treatment of one's kin and community, plays a significant role in shaping the political and socio-economic landscape of Francophone Africa. This review examines the portrayal of tribalism in Francophone African literature, emphasising how writers portray its manipulation for political and socio-economic gains. By analysing the works of some Francophone African writers, one can gain insight into the pervasive impact of tribalism on the sustainable development in the region.

From historical context and perspective, tribalism in Africa is often synonymous with ethnic favouritism. The colonial legacy exacerbated tribal divisions by creating artificial borders and favouring certain ethnic groups over others. The decolonial perspectives on tribalism often intersect with discussions on postcolonialism, as highlighted by Frantz Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre* (1961). Fanon's work, although not a novel, might have influenced postcolonial novelists by providing a crucial theoretical underpinning for understanding the colonial manipulation of tribal identities and its lasting impact on post-independence governance.

In *L'Aventure ambiguë* (1961) Cheikh Hamidou Kane explores the cultural and educational dichotomies faced by the protagonist, Samba Diallo. Set against the backdrop of Senegal's transition from colonial rule to independence, the novel delves into the tensions between traditional values and modernity. Kane highlights the role of tribal elders and their influence in political and social spheres. The manipulation of tribal loyalties by colonial and postcolonial authorities is a recurring theme, reflecting the challenges in achieving cohesive national development.

Ahmadou Kourouma's *Les Soleils des Indépendances* (1968) is also one of the early works of post-independent Francophone Africa that explores the disillusionment of independence in West Africa under the tribal affiliation lines. The protagonist, Fama, a prince from the Malinké ethnic group, loses his royal status and experiences the marginalisation of his people after independence. The ruling elite, primarily from different ethnic backgrounds, manipulate tribal affiliations to consolidate power and resources. Kourouma's narrative highlights how tribalism is leveraged by political leaders to maintain control, undermining national unity and sustainable development.

Ousmane Sembène's *Xala* (1973) critiques the postcolonial African bourgeoisie, focusing on Senegal's socio-political context. The protagonist, El Hadji, is a wealthy businessman whose impotence metaphorically represents the moral and ethical decay of the new elite. Sembène exposes how tribal affiliations are exploited for economic gain and political manoeuvring. The novel's portrayal of corruption and nepotism illustrates the detrimental effects of tribalism on equitable economic development and governance.

Mariama Bâ's *Une Si Longue Lettre* (1979) addresses the intersection of tribalism, gender, and socio-economic status in Senegal. Through the protagonist Ramatoulaye's epistolary reflections, Bâ critiques the patriarchal structures that reinforce tribal allegiances and inhibit social mobility. The novel sheds light on how tribalism intersects with other forms of social stratification, complicating efforts towards equitable development. Bâ's portrayal underscores the multifaceted nature of tribalism and its pervasive impact on individual and collective advancement.

In *La Grève des Bàttu* (1979), Aminata Sow Fall examines the plight of beggars in Senegal's urban society. The novel delves into the socio-economic disparities exacerbated by tribalism and nepotism. Sow Fall critiques the political elite's exploitation of tribal affiliations to maintain their status quo, often at the expense of marginalised groups. *Le Temps de Tamango* (1981) by Boubacar Boris Diop explores the socio-political dynamics in a post-independence African country. It presents a nuanced depiction of tribalism, examining how political leaders manipulate ethnic identities to maintain their grip on power. The novel's critical perspective on tribalism highlights its role in perpetuating socio-economic inequalities and obstructing democratic processes.

L'État honteux by Sony Labou Tansi (1981) reflects on the political landscape of a fictional African country, focusing on the endemic corruption and tribalism that plague its leadership. Through a satirical and often harsh narrative, Tansi illustrates how leaders use tribal connections to maintain power and control, often at the expense of national unity and development. In this novel, nepotism contributes to the dysfunction within the state's political and social structures.

In *Les Honneurs perdus*, Calixthe Beyala (1996) addresses issues of corruption, nepotism, and tribalism in a fictitious African country. Through the life of the protagonist, a young woman named Saïda, Beyala explores how nepotistic practices within the government and other

institutions marginalise those not belonging to the dominant tribe. The novel critiques the favouritism based on tribal affiliations, demonstrating how such practices hinder social progress and equality. Similarly, Ahmadou Kourouma (1998) in *En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages* presents a scathing critique of African dictatorships, using a blend of oral tradition and modern narrative techniques. Kourouma portrays the manipulation of tribal loyalties and nepotism by dictatorial regimes to consolidate power. The protagonist Koyaga, modelled after several real African leaders such as Gnassingbé Eyadema of Togo, uses tribal favouritism to maintain control, practices that lead to destructive effects on national cohesion and democratic processes.

Contemporary Francophone African writers continue to grapple with the legacy of tribalism and its impact on socio-economic and political landscapes. The manipulation of tribal identities for personal and political gain remains a recurrent theme, reflecting ongoing challenges in Francophone Africa. Fatou Diome's *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* (2003) portrays the complexities of migration and the socio-economic disparities between Africa and Europe. Although primarily focused on the experiences of Senegalese immigrants in France, the novel delves into the tribal dynamics back home by exploring how tribalism influences socio-economic opportunities and perpetuates inequality. Through the characters' struggles, she highlights the ways in which tribal affiliations can impose limitations on individuals' aspirations, reflecting broader societal impacts, including youth migrating.

Alain Mabanckou's *Verre Cassé* (2005) offers a satirical look at Congolese society, touching on issues of corruption, power, and social fragmentation. While the novel is known for its humour and vivid storytelling, it also subtly critiques the role of tribalism in maintaining socio-political hierarchies. Mabanckou illustrates how tribal affiliations are manipulated by those in power to divert attention from broader issues of governance and development. The portrayal of tribalism in *Verre Cassé* underscores its detrimental effect on social cohesion and progress. Leonora Miano's *Contours du jour qui vient* (2006) addresses the trauma of civil conflict in an unnamed African country, drawing parallels to various Francophone African nations. The novel examines how tribalism fuels violence and hampers reconciliation efforts. Miano's work highlights the socio-economic consequences of tribal conflicts, including displacement, poverty, and underdevelopment.

Given the literary representation of the manifestation and impact on tribalism, academic essays also complement these narratological portrayals, providing a broader context for understanding the impact of tribalism on development. Scholars such as Jean-François Bayart in *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (1994) and Mahmood Mamdani in *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (1996) offer critical insights into the interplay between tribalism, governance, and socio-economic development. These works argue that tribalism, while rooted in pre-colonial social structures, has been manipulated by both colonial and postcolonial regimes to maintain power and control, often at the expense of national unity and progress.

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While the portrayal of tribalism in Francophone African literature normally reveals its profound negative impact on political and socio-economic development through nepotistic lenses, the narratives used in this study suggest several strategies for mitigating its negative impact on development. They call for the promotion of inclusive governance, fostering national identities that transcend ethnic divisions, and implementing equitable socio-economic policies. By merging such literary insights and scholarly analyses, this literature review highlights the need for comprehensive strategies to overcome the challenges posed by nepotistic tribalism and foster a more inclusive and equitable future in Francophone Africa.

METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

This study uses a multifaceted theoretical framework to provide a comprehensive examination of the portrayal and impact of nepotistic tribalism on political and socio-economic sustainable development in Africa. By incorporating postcolonial theory, anthropological theories of identity and culture, sociological theories of social structure and power, political economy and development theories, and critical discourse analysis, this research offers a nuanced understanding of how these various dimensions interact and shape the African context.

Postcolonial theory is pivotal in understanding the lingering impact of colonialism on African tribal identities and their modern-day implications. Frantz Fanon's work, particularly his exploration of the psychological effects of colonisation, elucidates how colonial powers manipulated and reconfigured tribal identities to serve their own interests, creating divisions and fostering a sense of inferiority among the colonised (Fanon, 1963). Fanon's insights into the dynamics of identity and race provide a crucial framework for analysing how these manipulated identities continue to influence contemporary African societies. Edward Said's concept of Orientalism (1978) further aids in understanding how Western narratives have historically constructed and perpetuated stereotypes about African identities. Said's work highlights the power dynamics inherent in these narratives, which continue to influence how African tribal identities are perceived and represented. Homi K. Bhabha's (1994) theories on hybridity and the "third space" offer additional layers of complexity, suggesting that colonial encounters have led to the creation of new, hybrid identities that challenge simplistic notions of purity and authenticity in tribal affiliations. Bhabha's ideas underscore the fluidity and contested nature of identity in postcolonial contexts, providing a deeper understanding of the ongoing impacts of colonial legacies on contemporary power structures and identities in Africa. Similarly, anthropological theories contribute significantly to recognising and celebrating tribal affiliation as a legitimate form of identity. Fredrik Barth's (1969) work on ethnic groups and boundaries offers a framework for understanding how tribal identities are constructed, negotiated, and maintained. Barth's emphasis on the situational and relational aspects of ethnic identities is particularly relevant in analysing the fluid and context-dependent nature of tribal affiliations in Africa. Clifford Geertz's (1973) interpretive approach to culture allows for a nuanced understanding of how cultural practices and beliefs are embedded within broader socio-historical contexts. This approach helps to uncover the ways in which tribal identities are continuously reshaped and redefined through cultural expressions and social interactions.

Sociological theories of social structure and power are crucial for analysing how tribal affiliations influence governance and socio-economic structures in Africa. Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) concepts of habitus, capital, and field elucidate how social hierarchies and power relations are reproduced through everyday practices and institutional arrangements. Bourdieu's theory helps to understand how tribal affiliations can serve as forms of social and cultural capital, influencing individuals' access to resources and opportunities. Anthony Giddens' (1986) theory of structuration, which emphasises the duality of structure and agency, offers a complementary perspective. Giddens' framework highlights how individuals' actions are both constrained by and constitutive of social structures. This perspective is valuable for analysing how tribal affiliations and networks shape and are shaped by broader political and economic structures in African societies.

Furthermore, political economy and development theories provide insights into the interplay between economic policies and practices, political institutions, and developmental outcomes in the context of tribalism. Amartya Sen's (1999) capability approach, which focuses on enhancing individuals' capabilities and freedoms, offers a perspective on how tribalism can affect human development and social justice. Sen's emphasis on expanding individuals' opportunities and choices is particularly relevant for understanding the socio-economic impact of tribal affiliations and nepotism. Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson's (2013) theory of institutions, as articulated in their book *Why Nations Fail*, examines how inclusive and extractive institutions influence economic development. Their framework helps to analyse how tribalism, through its impact on political institutions and governance, can either hinder or promote sustainable development. Paul Collier's (2007) work on the political economy of conflict and development in Africa further elucidates the economic implications of tribalism, particularly in contexts of conflict and state fragility.

Finally, Critical discourse analysis (CDA) provides tools for examining how discourses shape and reflect social realities, including the ways in which tribalism is articulated and contested in political narratives. Norman Fairclough's (1995) approach to CDA emphasises the role of language and discourse in constructing social identities and power relations. Fairclough's framework is useful for analysing how tribalism is represented in francophone literature, and how these representations influence public perceptions and policy discourses. Additionally, Michel Foucault's (1972) analysis of discourse and power relations offers additional insights into the ways in which knowledge and power are intertwined in the construction of social realities. Foucault's concept of the power/knowledge nexus is particularly relevant for deconstructing how tribalism is framed and understood within different discursive contexts. For James Paul Gee (1999), a critical approach to discourse analysis focuses on the social functions of language. It can also be applied to understand how narratives about tribalism shape perceptions, identities, and power dynamics.

By integrating these theoretical frameworks and insights from these theorists, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of the portrayal of nepotistic tribalism in francophone narratives and its political and socio-economic impact on sustainable development in Africa. This multidisciplinary approach allows for a nuanced understanding of the complex and

interrelated factors that shape the manifestations and consequences of nepotistic tribalism, offering valuable insights for understanding political and socio-economic factors that either promoting or hinder sustainable development for an effective social justice in Francophone Africa.

Reading the manifestation and impact of nepotistic tribalism in Africa.

The sociological reading of the representation of tribalism manifestations and their effects in Francophone Africa allows to identify the foundations on which its impact is based, namely social, economic, and political dimensions. This multi-faceted approach offers a comprehensive understanding of how deeply nepotistic tribalism is embedded within various aspects of society and highlights the complex ways in which it shapes and is shaped by different societal forces.

The study of the texts from the novels reveals the role of literature acting as a mirror of social, economic, and political aspects in Francophone Africa. As literature provides a crucial lens through which the complexities of tribalism can be explored and understood, the novels referred to capture the experiences of characters and their communities, reflecting the multifaceted nature of tribalism and its impact on society. Francophone African literature does not only document these realities but, it also critiques them, offering insights and perspectives that can inform more effective reading approaches to understand the challenges posed by tribalism. Such insights from literary analysis

Portrayal of nepotistic tribalism and its social impact.

Tribalism, often regarded as a relic of the past, continues to play a significant role in shaping modern social interactions and community structures. This phenomenon is deeply embedded in everyday life, influencing social behaviours and expectations in various communities. Tribal affiliations can either enhance social cohesion or contribute to fragmentation, depending on how they are perceived and acted upon. This section examines the dual nature of tribalism, exploring both its positive and negative impacts on social dynamics. Additionally, it analyses how African francophone novels critique and reflect on tribalism, particularly in the context of colonialism and postcolonialism.

On a social level, tribalism manifests in myriad ways. It can foster a strong sense of belonging and mutual support, reinforcing social bonds and cultural heritage. In many communities, tribal loyalty is synonymous with community cohesion, providing individuals with a network of support that enhances social stability. This positive aspect of tribalism helps maintain cultural traditions and creates a sense of identity among community members. However, the flip side of tribalism can be detrimental. When tribal identities are politicised or become the basis for preferential treatment, they can lead to social exclusion, discrimination, and intra-community conflicts. This negative aspect of tribalism is particularly pronounced when it intersects with political agendas, where tribal affiliations are manipulated to serve specific interests. Such scenarios often result in the marginalisation of certain groups, fostering divisions and undermining social harmony. These literary works trace the roots of the instrumentalisation of tribal identities back to colonial times. *Par décret présidentiel…* (1993) by Ouoham Tchidjo

provides a rich context for understanding the historical and contemporary implications of tribalism:

> Pendant la période coloniale, l'envahisseur organisait périodiquement des pogroms contre les Kalas à travers la Vilanie, après avoir pendant longtemps essayé en vain de les contenir dans leurs royaumes (*Décret*, p. 53).

[During the colonial era, invaders constantly organised pogroms against the Kala tribe throughout Vilanie, after vainly trying for a long time to contain them within their kingdoms]. Colonial powers used divisive tactics, including the manipulation of tribal affiliations, to weaken African societies, create internal divisions, and consolidate their control. Before colonisation, African societies were organised into well-structured kingdoms, each with its own traditions and customs. These kingdoms often coexisted peacefully, engaging in cultural exchanges and accommodating diverse ethnic, tribal, and linguistic identities. Speaking of his childhood's friends and their daily activities, Bahi says:

> Ce travail se faisait aisément, car ils étaient tout un groupe de gamins de même âge, même s'ils n'étaient pas forcément de la même ethnie. Ils se comprenaient. Les uns apprenaient les bribes des langues des autres (*Prostitué*, p.29).

[This task was easily accomplished, because they were just a group of kids of the same age, even if they were not necessarily from the same ethnicity. They nevertheless understood each other. They learned the basics of each other's languages]
However, the colonial enterprise viewed this tribal unity as a threat. To counter this, colonisers used strategies of favouritism, granting leadership positions and privileges to tribes that supported their agenda while excluding those that resisted:

> En arrivant dans ce pays, le Colon avait trouvé une organisation politique atomisée. On pouvait y trouver toute la gamme d'organisations sociales, depuis le nomadisme sylvicole jusqu'aux royaumes très organisés et structurés. Les Kalas appartenaient à ce dernier groupe et avaient, avant l'arrivée du Colon, une civilisation à certaines égards plus avancées que celles que le Colon voulait leur imposer. Ils n'avaient d'ailleurs jamais accepté ce diktat. Même sortis de leur milieu naturel, ils n'en conservaient pas moins leurs habitudes, coutumes et organisations socio-économiques (*Décret*, p. 53).

[Upon arriving in the country, the Colonisers found a political organisation in communities. There was a full range of social organisations, from sylvan nomadism to highly organised and structured kingdoms. The Kalas belonged to the latter group and had, before the colonisers' arrival, a civilisation in some respects more advanced than what the colonisers wanted to impose on them. They had never accepted this diktat. Even when removed from their natural environment, they maintained their practices, customs, and socio-economic organisations].

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This colonial legacy of division has had lasting impacts on postcolonial African societies. The novels under study depict how these divisive tactics have entrenched a form of tribalism that serves nepotistic interests, undermining the potential for a cohesive national identity. The colonial manipulation of tribal identities transformed what was once a symbol of plurality and cultural richness into a tool for division and conflict.

In the postcolonial context, African francophone novels continue to challenge the negative conceptualisation of tribalism. These literary works argue against the stigmatisation of tribal affiliations, emphasizing their social and cultural merits. They highlight the complexity and richness of African identities, which encompass a mosaic of cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and tribal elements:

> La construction du pays doit être assumée dans sa complexité et dans sa singularité. Nous venons de régions différentes, nul ne peut le démentir. Nous sommes les produits de populations et de coutumes différentes. C'est pourquoi, afin de surmonter nos contradictions, nous devrions, non seulement garder notre patrimoine, mais surtout reconnaître et respecter cette différence qui constitue une richesse pour notre pays. Nous devrions rechercher, non la fusion le nivellement, l'uniformisation, mais la symbiose des spécificités avec le souhait partagé de bâtir ensemble une communauté dans laquelle chaque membre trouvera sa place, jouera le rôle qui est le sien… (*Salve*, p.225).

[The construction of a country must be embraced in both its complexity and singularity. We come from different regions, no one can deny that. We are the products of diverse populations and customs. Therefore, to overcome our contradictions, we should not only preserve our heritage but also recognise and respect this difference, which constitutes a richness for our country. We should not seek fusion, levelling, or uniformity, but rather the symbiosis of specificities encompassing the shared desire to build together a community in which each member finds their place and plays their role...].

The novels reject the monolithic conception of identity that often underlies hegemonic ideologies. Instead, they advocate for a celebration of tribal diversity as a source of strength and resilience. This perspective counters the colonial legacy that portrayed tribalism as inherently divisive. By embracing tribal diversity, these literary works call for the recognition of the positive aspects of tribal affiliations, such as cultural preservation and social solidarity. These novels challenge the simplistic and reductionist view of identity that colonial powers imposed on African societies. Colonial regimes often sought to homogenise diverse populations, disregarding the rich fabric of tribal and ethnic identities that constituted these societies. The literary works in question reject this notion, emphasising that identity should not be viewed through a singular lens but rather as a mosaic of interconnected and multifaceted elements. This nuanced understanding of identity is crucial in appreciating the diverse cultural heritage that exists within African nations.

Furthermore, the novels critique the notion of nepotistic tribalism that has persisted since colonial times. They argue that the construction of African nations should reflect the diverse identities of their populations, rather than succumbing to divisive tactics. Nepotistic tribalism, wherein certain tribes are favoured over others for access to opportunities and resources, perpetuates inequality and hampers national unity. The literature suggests that while tribal divisions have historically served nepotistic interests, this practice remains an old and despicable weapon.

Nepotistic tribalism undermines the principles of equality, creating a hierarchical society where one's opportunities are determined not by their abilities or efforts but by their tribal affiliations. The novels highlight the detrimental effects of such practices, illustrating how they breed injustices, resentment, fuel conflicts, and hinder the progress of the nation:

> La vérité comme la justice sont écrasées sous la botte de quelques galonnés, appuyées par une certaine presse immonde, défendus par toute la fripouille du pays, soutenus par l'odieux tribalisme (*Salve*, p.178).

[Truth as well as justice are crushed under the boot of a few high-ranking officers, supported by a vile press, defended by all the scoundrels of the country, and upheld by odious tribalism]. The authors argue that the divisive nature of tribalism, which was exacerbated by colonial policies, can be dismantled by fostering an inclusive national identity that celebrates cultural diversity. This approach requires a shift in perspective, from viewing tribal diversity as a threat to seeing it as an asset. By recognising and valuing the unique contributions of each tribe, a more cohesive and harmonious society can be built.

Social solidarity is another positive aspect of tribal affiliations emphasised in the literature. Tribal communities often operate on principles of mutual support and cooperation, providing a social safety net for their members. This sense of solidarity can be harnessed to promote national unity, as individuals who feel supported and valued within their communities are more likely to contribute positively to the broader society.

One of the key messages in these novels is the importance of diversity preservation. Tribal affiliations often come with a wealth of traditions, languages, and customs that enrich the cultural fabric of a nation. Preserving tribal diversity is vital not only for maintaining a connection to the past but also for fostering a sense of pride and identity among individuals. The novels argue that the preservation of tribal identities should be seen as a collective responsibility and a genuine cornerstone of national identity.

Portrayal of nepotistic tribalism and its economic impact.
Economically, the impact of tribalistic leadership and governance in Francophone Africa can be seen in the allocation of resources, employment opportunities, and access to economic activities. Tribal affiliations often play a critical role in determining who gets what, when, and

how. There are many cases where economic benefits are distributed along tribal lines, leading to significant disparities between different groups.

Francophone African literature portrays the distribution of resources as a practice that is heavily influenced by tribal considerations. Government contracts, development projects, and public investments are often allocated to regions dominated by the ruling tribe or their allies. This skewed allocation not only marginalises other tribes but also fosters regional imbalances, where some areas experience rapid development while others lag behind. The unequal distribution of resources exacerbates poverty and hinders the overall economic growth of the country.

This tribal-based economic distribution can perpetuate inequality and hinder broader economic development. It can foster a climate of nepotism and corruption, where economic decisions are influenced more by tribal loyalty than by merit or efficiency. Francophone literature portrays a nepotistic tribalism where members of the same tribe have full control of the country's wealth, and extravagant spending becomes common practices:

> En Vilanie, une réception digne suppose toujours du champagne, non pas une bouteille comme chez les radins Blancs, mais des cartons ! Car boire le champagne ici signifie en avaler tout son saoul. Personne ne veut boire dans une coupe à champagne, mais plutôt dans de grands verres. C'est à peine si l'on ne boit pas à même le goulot (Décret, p. 8).

[In Vilanie, a proper reception always requires champagne, not just one bottle like the stingy white people, but boxes! Drinking champagne here means drinking until you get drunk. No one wants to drink from a champagne flute, but rather from large glasses. It would be unusual if they did not even drink directly from the bottle].

Public funds are diverted for personal gain, and government officials engage in corrupt dealings to enrich themselves and their tribal affiliates. Such practices have devastating effects on the national economy. They undermine public trust in institutions, reduce the effectiveness of government policies, and distort economic priorities. Cases of corruption are recorded in every sector, reflecting a systemic issue that permeates various facets of governance and public administration. This entrenched system of tribal favouritism creates an environment where embezzlement and influence peddling become an aspiration to get rich:

> Le détournement par les hauts responsables de l'Etat et des Administrations Publiques et Privées ne peut conduire qu'à la ruine. La situation est d'autant plus grave que les sommes détournées ne restent pas dans le pays ; elles sont sorties et gardées à l'Etranger de peur qu'un changement politique ne vienne les saisir et arrêter les voleurs (*Décret*, p. 211)

[Embezzlement by high-ranking officials of the State and Public and Private Administrations can only lead to ruin. The situation is even more serious because the embezzled funds do not

stay in the country; they are taken out and kept abroad for fear that a political change might seize them and arrest the thieves].

In such environments, qualified individuals often find themselves sidelined in favour of those with tribal connections. This misallocation of human resources means that competent and skilled professionals are left jobless or underemployed, while less qualified individuals occupy key positions. This not only undermines the efficiency and effectiveness of public institutions but also stifles innovation and productivity. When people with integrity and competence do manage to secure senior positions, they frequently face opposition and sabotage from those within rival tribes who are determined to maintain their hold on power and resources. Solam convincingly tells the prefect:

> Si l'intention de ceux qui m'empêchent de travailler est de ne pas permettre à un Kala de réussir là où les autres Vilaniens ont échoué, ils ne manqueront pas de trouver d'autres alibis; ils ne cesseront de s'agiter tant que mo, le Kala, je serais à la tête de la DECO (Décret, p. 125).

[If the intention of those who prevent me from working is to not allow a Kala to succeed where other Vilanians have failed, they will always find other excuses; they will continue to sulk as long as I, the Kala, am the director the DECO].

The challenge is that when such practices underpin the national economic health, they can stifle innovation, reduce productivity, undermine accountability, and ultimately weaken the overall economic aspirations and frameworks of the affected countries. For instance, public projects may be poorly executed or abandoned due to mismanagement and corruption. Essential services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure suffer from underfunding and neglect, as resources are siphoned off by corrupt officials.

Furthermore, the lack of accountability and transparency in government operations creates an environment where economic activities are conducted in an opaque manner. This discourages both domestic and foreign investment, as investors are wary of the risks associated with corruption and nepotism. The overall business climate becomes less conducive to entrepreneurship and economic growth, leading to stagnation and increased poverty:

> Lorsque j'ai pris le service à la Direction Régionale de l'Économie, la gabegie, le trafic d'influences et la corruption y régnaient en maîtres. Plus grave encore, lorsque les agents, tout comme le Chef de Service, avaient suffisamment d'argent, ils allaient d'abord le dépenser et ne revenaient au travail que lorsqu'ils avaient les poches vides ! (*Décret*, p. 12)

[When I started working at the Regional Directorate of Economy, mismanagement, influence peddling, and corruption reigned supreme. Even worse, when the employees, including the

Head of Services, had enough money, they would go spend it and only return to work when their pockets were empty!].

The pervasive influence of tribalism in economic governance also has social implications. It fosters resentment and animosity between different tribal groups, as those who are excluded from economic benefits feel marginalised and disenfranchised. This social division can lead to conflicts and instability, further undermining economic development.

The novels conclude that addressing the economic impact of tribalistic leadership requires comprehensive reforms aimed at promoting meritocracy, transparency, and accountability. Governments need to implement policies that ensure fair and equitable distribution of resources, based on need and potential for development rather than tribal affiliations. Anti-corruption measures must be strengthened, with robust mechanisms for monitoring and enforcement.

Additionally, the novels argue that efforts should be made to promote inclusive economic growth by investing in education and skills development for all citizens, regardless of their tribal background. Creating an enabling environment for entrepreneurship and innovation is crucial for driving economic progress and reducing dependency on tribal connections. Promoting national unity and fostering a sense of common identity can also help mitigate the divisive effects of nepotistic tribalism. This can be achieved through inclusive governance practices, and policies that celebrate and respect the diversity of all tribal groups.

Portrayal of nepotistic tribalism and its political impact.
Politically, tribalism has a profound impact on governance and state stability. The manipulation of tribal identities for political and partisan purposes is a common strategy used by politicians seeking to consolidate power. This study delves into the complex interplay between tribalism, governance, politics, and sustainable development, drawing on insights from novels that explore these themes. These literary works invite readers to examine the fragility of institutions where the judiciary and the military are constructed along tribal lines to maintain political control. This section explores the multifaceted impact of tribalism on governance, institutional integrity, social justice, and sustainable development, as a call for inclusive and meritocratic systems.

In francophone African literature, tribalism is frequently utilised as a tool by politicians to rally support and votes. This tactic involves appealing to tribal loyalties, which can exacerbate divisions and heighten tensions between different groups:

> Le processus de construction nationale a été fondé sur l'évacuation des différences, le nivellement et l'uniformisation culturelle. Ce qui attise les rancœurs, approfondit les divisions entre les peuples. Le tribalisme, tel qu'il est stigmatisé aujourd'hui par la démagogie du discours politique de nos leaders, ne peut être qu'une idéologie hégémonique. Il nie la diversité, recherche la suprématie (*Salve*, p.225).

[The process of nation-building was based on the elimination of differences, levelling, and cultural standardisation, which fuels resentments and deepens divisions between peoples. Tribalism, as stigmatised today by the demagoguery of our leaders' political discourse, can only be perceived as a hegemonic ideology. It denies diversity's essence and seeks supremacy]. This manipulation of tribal identities undermines the legitimacy and effectiveness of political systems, making it difficult to foster national unity and inclusive development. The novels under analysis assert that when political leaders prioritise tribal interests over national interests, it can lead to a cycle of political instability and conflict, impeding efforts toward democratic governance and sustainable development.

The novels highlight how the construction of the judiciary and military along tribal lines is not merely symbolic but serves the purpose of maintaining political control. In such environments, justice is often administered unevenly, with individuals from opposing tribes facing harsher penalties. The arrest and execution of opinion leaders from different tribes on mere suspicions reflect the extreme measures taken to suppress democratic aspirations:

> Des cadres, médecins, commissaires de police, responsables des industries, hauts cadres sportifs, mais aussi de simples paysans ont été arrêtés et ont disparu pour toujours. Ces gens-là sont tués, c'est ce qui s'est passé en réalité. Ils ont eu pour seul péché d'avoir appartenu aux ethnies des deux premiers présidents qu'a connus le Tador. C'était une façon à ces nouveaux chefs de se venger pour, semble-t-il, les mauvais traitements appliqués pendant presque deux décennies aux ressortissants du nord (*Prostitué*, p.149).

[Executives, doctors, police commissioners, company managers, top sports officials, but also simple peasants, were arrested and disappeared forever. These people were killed, that is what really happened. Their only crime was to share their ethnicity with the first two presidents that Tador had known. It was a way for the new leaders to take revenge for the alleged mistreatment endured by people from the north for nearly two decades].

In the novels analysed, the fragility of the judiciary undermines the rule of law and the credibility of state institutions, making them tools for oppression rather than justice. The judiciary and the military are depicted as instruments of tribal control rather than pillars of impartial justice. For instance, characters from minority tribes are often portrayed as victims of arbitrary arrests and summary executions. These actions are justified under the guise of national security but are, in reality, attempts to stifle dissent and consolidate power. The resulting atmosphere of fear and mistrust further erodes the legitimacy of these institutions, leading to a vicious cycle of instability and repression.

The novels argue that tribalistic governance leads to nepotism, where individuals from a particular tribe or region are favoured for strategic positions within the government and other critical sectors. The novels depict how this favouritism undermines meritocracy, as unqualified individuals from **privileged tribes occupy key positions**. This practice not only limits

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opportunities for competent individuals from other tribes but also hinders the overall efficiency and effectiveness of governance. The entrenchment of nepotism prevents the fair distribution of resources and opportunities, contributing to social and economic disparities.

Par décret présidentiel… portrays the infiltration of tribal favouritism into public administration as particularly damaging. Key government positions are often awarded based on tribal affiliations rather than qualifications, leading to inefficiency and corruption. The novels describe scenarios where public services suffer because of unqualified personnel being placed in positions of authority:

> En effet, la DECO était truffé d'employés dont la seule présence contribuait à sa mauvaise performance. Certains s'étaient donné des titres n'ayant rien à voir avec leur formation. D'autres, en plus de leur formation douteuse, s'étaient spécialisés dans le détournement des fonds et n'étaient pas disposés à y renoncer. D'autres encore, bien qu'ayant une formation certaine, avaient perdu le sens du travail bien fait, suivi et sérieux, habitués qu'ils étaient au dilettantisme, à trainer l les pieds (*Décret*, p. 86).

[Indeed, DECO was full of employees whose presence only contributed to its poor performance. Some had given themselves titles unrelated to their training. Others, in addition to their dubious training, were enslaved by embezzlement and were not willing to give it up. Others still, albeit some trainings, had lost the sense of doing a good job, carrying out auditing and serious work, and were accustomed to dilettantism and dragging their feet].

This favouritism is portrayed as resulting in poor service delivery, exacerbating public dissatisfaction, and eroding trust in government institutions. Additionally, tribalism is often coupled with regionalism, especially in contexts where tribes are associated with specific regions. The novels illustrate how political figures from certain regions, by default sharing the same ethnicity, benefit disproportionately from their positions. This situation creates conditions that undermine social justice, as resources and opportunities are distributed based on tribal and regional affiliations rather than merit. The resulting disparities contribute to tensions and conflicts between different groups, further destabilising the political landscape and sustainable development:

> Par ailleurs, la division de la population se décomposait dans le tribalisme aveugle. Elle se en une foule amorphe. L'armée ainsi que les différents services transformait de la sécurité de l'Etat soutenait l'exploitation, l'oppression du pays par le système dictatorial du Bureau politique. En même temps, le népotisme progressif et la corruption formaient un enchaînement indissoluble traumatisant, paralysant (*Salve*, p.177).

[Moreover, people were evaluated through the lenses of blind tribalism, resulting in a social lethargy. The army and the various state security services supported the exploitation and oppression of the country by the dictatorial system of the Political Bureau. At the same time, progressive nepotism and corruption formed an indissoluble chain that was traumatising and paralysing the country].

This alignment of tribal and regional interests often leads to uneven development across the country. Regions favoured by the ruling political party under the tribe lines receive more investment in infrastructure and services, while marginalised regions languish in poverty. The novels provide vivid descriptions of the stark contrast between affluent regions and neglected areas, highlighting the deep-seated inequities that fuel political resentment. These novels argue that tribalistic governance, which seeks political rally through tribal affiliations, undermines democratic governance. Leaders who prioritise tribal interests compromise the principles of democracy, which require equal representation and participation of all citizens. The manipulation of tribal identities for political gain entrenches divisions and creates an environment that is not conducive to the development of democratic institutions and processes. In *Le prostitué politique*, the main character Jean-Jaques Bahi wonders why leaders prioritise tribal interests over national interests when such an approach can only lead to the erosion of democratic values such as fairness, accountability, and transparency:

> Comment peut-on construire une nation avec des conceptions pareilles? Si chacun doit constamment voir en l'autre un ennemi potentiel et chercher à tout moment à prendre sa revanche sur lui, on n'aura que des régions et des ethnies juxtaposées par le hasard de l'histoire (*Prostitué*, pp.137-138).

[How can a nation be built with such conceptions? If everyone must constantly see the other as a potential enemy and seek revenge at any moment, we will only see people through regional and ethnic identities, which are a creation of historical chances].

The novels conclude that nepotistic tribalism has a profound negative impact on political and sustainable development by preventing social justice and democratic aspirations. Sustainable development requires cohesive and inclusive policies, irrespective of people's tribal affiliations. However, when tribalism influences policy-making, it results in fragmented and short-sighted approaches that favour certain groups at the expense of others. The novels emphasise that building inclusive institutions is essential for overcoming the negative impacts of tribalistic politics. They advocate for the establishment of merit-based systems where individuals are selected for positions based on their qualifications and competencies rather than their tribal affiliations.

The novels underscore the need for comprehensive policy reforms to dismantle tribalistic structures. These reforms should ensure transparency in public appointments, enhance accountability in governance, and foster equal representation of all groups in decision-making

processes. By implementing such reforms, governments can build institutions that serve the interests of all citizens rather than a select few.

To achieve these inclusive goals, the novels suggest that cultural integration and mutual respect among different tribes are key to promoting national unity. Initiatives that celebrate diversity and encourage intercultural dialogue can help build trust. It is only by embracing cultural pluralism that societies can harness the strengths of their diverse populations and create a more cohesive national identity.

Portrayal of nepotistic tribalism and its impact on sustainable development.
The negative impact of nepotistic tribalism on sustainable development is another critical area of concern portrayed by francophone African literature. Sustainable development requires cohesive and inclusive policies that consider the long-term welfare of all citizens, irrespective of their tribal affiliations. However, when tribalistic interests influence policy-making, it can result in fragmented and short-sighted approaches that favour certain groups at the expense of others. This can hinder efforts to address pressing issues such as equitable professional integration, social mobility, and equal access to education and healthcare.

An in-depth analysis of the literary representation of nepotistic tribalism and its impact allows us to highlight the challenges faced by African societies, specifically the manipulation of tribal identities for partisan purposes, as well as their negative impact on sustainable development. In *Le prostitué politique*, Mbailao (2021) portrays this issue through the narrative of DECO, a company struggling with internal inefficiencies. The story unfolds when the managing director, Solam, realises that employees, including foreign workers, are not delivering in accordance with the key performance indicators he had set up. He decides to scrutinise the credentials of employees occupying strategic positions within the leadership hierarchy. To his shock, Solam discovers that many of the individuals on whom the company relied for strategising to meet targets lacked the qualifications and skills required to perform even basic leadership and management tasks. When Solam attempts to address the underperformance by replacing incompetent individuals with skilled professionals, he faces fierce opposition. His efforts are misinterpreted as tribal favouritism, triggering a rebellion against him and his approach:

> Solam fut offusqué par cette situation et fit savoir à ses supérieurs. Le bruit courut qu'il avait l'intention de licencier tous les Cadres de la Société, étrangers comme nationaux, pour les remplacer par les Kalas, ses frères de Tribu. Sur l'initiative des coopérants, une vigoureuse campagne fut menée auprès des autres ethnies Villaniennes pour conjurer le péril Kala à la DECO. Toutes les ethnies doivent, disait-on, comprendre qu'on ne peut en aucune façon permettre à un Kala de réussir là où tous les Vilaniens ont échoué : vieille arme d'une nouvelle colonisation, déjà maintes fois utilisée pour diviser le peuple de Vilanie (*Décret*, p. 53).

[Solam was outraged by this situation and informed his superiors. Rumour had it that he intended to fire all Company Cadres, both foreign and national, and replace them with the

Kalas, his tribe brothers. Foreign workers launched a vigorous campaign among the other Villanian ethnic groups to ward off the alleged Kala peril at DECO. All ethnic groups, it was said, must understand that under no circumstances can a Kala succeed where all Villanians have failed, which is an old weapon of new colonisation, already used many times to divide the people of Vilanie].

On one hand, this surprising discovery underscores a significant issue: the placement of individuals in key positions based on tribal affiliations rather than merit and competence. The resulting inefficiency and incompetence severely hamper the company's ability to achieve its goals, reflecting a broader societal problem where nepotistic tribalism undermines institutional integrity and effectiveness. On the other hand, the reaction to Solam's approaches highlights a critical dilemma: efforts to enforce meritocracy are often viewed through the lens of tribal politics, creating resistance and further entrenching divisions.

The narrative in *Le prostitué politique* serves as a microcosm of the broader challenges posed by nepotistic tribalism in African societies. It illustrates how tribal affiliations can overshadow merit and qualifications, leading to the appointment of unqualified individuals in critical positions. This practice not only undermines the effectiveness of institutions but also perpetuates cycles of inefficiency and underperformance.

In the context of sustainable development, such tribalistic practices can have far-reaching consequences. Sustainable development requires cohesive and inclusive policies that consider the long-term welfare of all citizens, regardless of their tribal affiliations. However, tribalistic interests lead to fragmented and short-sighted approaches to the sustainable development.

Mbailao's portrayal of nepotistic tribalism also underscores the psychological and social toll it takes on individuals and communities. The sense of exclusion and injustice experienced by those marginalised due to their tribal identity can lead to a loss of trust in public institutions and the government.

Furthermore, Mbailao's novel invites readers to reflect on scenarios where revolutions were a common cause galvanising the entire nation. However, when the transfer of power to the hands of revolutionary forces materialised, tribalistic considerations started to drive policies and practices. Meritocracy was relegated to the back of employment and leadership opportunities:

> Pendant la lutte, ils ont partagé les mêmes repas. Ils ont dormi sous les mêmes couvertures, dans ces nuits glaciales. Ils se sont secourus les uns et les autres, partageant une conviction commune d'avoir été traités par les tenants du pouvoir d'antan comme des parias, des sous-hommes. Ils ont versé les mêmes larmes lorsque les hommes de leurs différentes ethnies sont tombés. Mais voilà qu'une fois arrivés, des points de vue différents ont pris naissance. Tel appartenant à tel clan ou à telle ethnie est jugé indigne d'occuper tel ou tel poste. Tel officier, malgré son courage et ses faits d'armes, est jugé incapable d'occuper

tel ou tel poste de commandement, simplement parce qu'il est d'une autre ethnie ou d'un clan autre que celui de l'omnipotent Hassal (*Prostitué*, p.144).

[During the struggle, they shared the same meals. They slept under the same blankets on those freezing nights. They helped each other, sharing a common conviction of having been treated as pariahs and sub-humans by power holders from the previous political regime. They shed the same tears when men from their different ethnic groups fell. But once in power, different points of view emerged: such and such a person belonging to a certain clan or ethnicity was deemed unfit to hold such and such a position. Such and such an officer, despite their courage and military achievements, was judged incapable of holding such and such a command post, simply because of coming from another ethnicity or clan other than that of the omnipotent Hassal].

The novel argues that the fragility of institutions becomes apparent when tribal allegiances overshadow merit and efficiency, leading to weakened governance structures. The manipulation of tribal identities for political gain further entrenches divisions, making it difficult to foster national unity and inclusive development. Francophone African literature depicts the complexities of nepotistic tribalism, exploring how it undermines societal cohesion and sustainable growth. The portrayal of nepotistic tribalism in literature serves as a mirror reflecting the societal realities of many African countries. It reveals how leaders, in their quest to consolidate power, exploit tribal affiliations, thereby compromising the principles of justice, equality, and fairness. This practice not only alienates significant segments of the population but also perpetuates cycles of poverty and underdevelopment.

The novels conclude that in societies where tribal connections are paramount, individuals are often appointed to positions of power and responsibility based on their tribal affiliations rather than their qualifications and abilities. This practice undermines the efficiency and effectiveness of institutions, as unqualified individuals are placed in roles they are ill-equipped to handle. Consequently, public services deteriorate, corruption flourishes, and developmental projects falter, impeding the overall progress of the nation.

Furthermore, nepotistic tribalism exacerbates social inequalities by restricting access to opportunities for those outside the favoured tribal group. These narratives present a call to action, urging to recognise and address the pervasive issue of nepotistic tribalism. By highlighting the negative consequences of this practice, authors advocate for a shift towards more inclusive and merit-based governance. In the broader context of sustainable development, the negative impact of nepotistic tribalism is portrayed as multifaceted. Sustainable development aims to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This requires a holistic approach that integrates economic and social dimensions. However, economically, nepotistic tribalism can lead to inefficient allocation of resources and a lack of investment in critical sectors. When development projects are initiated based on tribal interests rather than strategic needs, this inefficiency stifles economic growth and hinders efforts to reduce poverty and inequality.

Reimagining and rebranding tribal identities as social and political synergies that contribute to sustainable development.

Tribal identities in Africa have often been stigmatised, viewed as obstacles to inclusive policies and practices. This perspective, however, is challenged by the novels referenced in this study, which, to some extent, adopt a more positive stance rejecting the status quo. These novels recognise indeed the different tragedies caused by human cruelty, acknowledging the impact of tribalism on perpetuating hegemonic thoughts and actions rooted in exclusionary strategies. They also paint a grim picture of how nepotistic tribalism undermines sustainable development. Nonetheless, they assert that maintaining the status quo is no longer viable in modern Africa. It must be acknowledged that tribal identities are an inextricable part of African society. Eliminating them is neither practical nor desirable. Instead, tribes are destined to coexist, and thus, violence perpetrated in the name of tribal affiliations must be eradicated. Colonel Isidore Dacoby discusses this issue with Jean-Jacques Bahi, Minister of Information and government spokesperson:

> On ne peut jamais exterminer toute une ethnie. Il en restera toujours
> pour vous demander des comptes, le moment venu (*Prostitué*, p.157).

[No one can ever exterminate an entire ethnic group. Some of them will always be there to hold you accountable when the time comes].

National solidarity necessitates recognising tribal affiliation as the bedrock of cultural diversity, which should be celebrated and cherished. Tribes ought to be perceived as reservoirs of energy and synergy, which, when liberated and harnessed, can drive development rather than act as impediments:

> Nous devrions nous placer au-dessus des haines tribales. Sentiments
> stupides qui est un frein au développement, empêchent la libération des
> énergies, déshonorent notre pays, empoisonnent notre vie à tous et nous
> conduisent tout droit à la déchirure (*Salve*, p.226).

[We should rise above tribal hatreds. These stupid feelings are a hindrance to development, prevent the release of energies, dishonour our country, poison our lives, and lead us straight to tearing ourselves apart].

To move forward, the novels underscore how essential is to abandon strategies crafted by national and local leaders to exploit tribal divisions for political gain. Responsibility and accountability in social, professional, and political contexts must transcend tribal boundaries. This shift requires a reimagining of tribal identities, not as barriers but as integral elements of a rich, diverse cultural tapestry that contributes to the strength and unity of the nation.

By highlighting the tragedies born of human cruelty and the adverse impacts of tribalism on society, the novels in this study underscore how hegemonic thoughts and actions, reinforced by exclusionary strategies, have perpetuated cycles of violence and hindered progress. The novels' authors argue for a future where the status quo is no longer acceptable, emphasising the

need for a paradigm shift in how tribal identities are perceived and integrated into the broader societal framework:

> Ce tribalisme nous a précipité dans une tragédie dont tout le monde fait les frais. Ne pourrions-nous pas, devant tant de souffrances endurées depuis des années, devant la cruauté et le mensonge répandu dans le peuple devenu innocent parce qu'il n'arrive pas à comprendre, cesser de tuer au nom de ce même peuple, cesser de détruire, de vivre dans le désordre, de semer la discorde ? (*Salve*, pp.225-226).

[This tribalism has suddenly led us into a tragedy that everyone is suffering from. Couldn't we, in the face of so much suffering endured for years, in the face of the cruelty and lies spread among the innocent people in complete ignorance, stop killing in their name, stop the destruction, living in disorder, sowing discord?].

By exploring the detrimental effect of nepotistic tribalism on sustainable development, the novels illustrate how favouritism based on tribal affiliations leads to the exclusion of capable individuals and stifles innovation and progress. By doing so, they challenge the reader to reconsider the role of tribal identities in contemporary Africa and the importance of moving beyond narrow tribal loyalties.

In advocating for a departure from the status quo, these novels propose that violence in the name of tribal affiliations has no place in a modern, united Africa. They call for a new era of national solidarity where tribal affiliations are acknowledged as the foundation of cultural diversity, contributing to the nation's strength rather than its division. This perspective encourages viewing tribes not as hindrances but as sources of energy and synergies, essential for development.

By critiquing the strategies used by leaders to exploit tribal divisions for political gain, the novels reflect on how such tactics have perpetuated conflict and hindered the development of a cohesive national identity. They hence call for leaders to adopt a more inclusive approach, one that transcends tribal lines and fosters responsibility and accountability in all spheres of life:

> Nous devons assumer loyalement la tâche de combattre, sans complaisance, cette stratégie de l'exclusion, d'hégémonie et créer les conditions d'une véritable fraternisation pour que vive le Congo. Nous sommes tous congolais, soit, j'en suis fier, d'accords. N'avez-vous pas compris que l'avenir de ce pays dépend de la solidarité de tous et de la concorde nationale ? (*Salve*, p.226).

[We must loyally take on the task of fighting this strategy of exclusion and hegemony without complacency and brotherly create meaningful conditions for our Congo to thrive. We are indeed all Congolese, and I am proud of it. Don't you understand that the future of this country depends on the solidarity of all and national harmony?]

A significant point made by these novels is the need for a reimagining of tribal identities. Rather than seeing tribes as barriers to progress, they should be viewed as integral parts of a diverse cultural landscape that enriches the nation. This reimagining involves recognising the potential of tribes to contribute positively to society and leveraging their strengths for the collective good.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the novels providing texts for references in this study present a compelling case for moving beyond the stigmatisation of tribal identities. They argue for a new approach that celebrates tribal affiliations as part of a rich cultural heritage while promoting unity and development. By rejecting the status quo and advocating for inclusive policies and practices, these novels offer a vision of a more harmonious and prosperous Francophone Africa, where tribal identities are not merely tolerated but embraced as vital components of national solidarity.

The reimagining of tribal identities involves key steps. First, it requires a shift in mindset, where tribal affiliations are seen not as divisive but as contributing to the nation's cultural richness. This shift can be facilitated through education and public discourse, emphasising the positive aspects of tribal diversity. Public campaigns and community programmes can further reinforce this message, highlighting stories and examples of how different tribal groups have contributed to the nation's history and social development.

Second, there needs to be a concerted effort to address and dismantle the systems and structures that perpetuate tribal favouritism and exclusion. This involves reforming political and administrative processes to ensure fair representation and equal opportunities for all, regardless of tribal affiliation. Similarly, civil service appointments and promotions should be based on merit rather than tribal connections, with mechanisms put in place to monitor and enforce these standards. Transparency in government appointments and the allocation of resources can help build trust and reduce the perception of tribal bias. When people see that resources are distributed fairly and that all tribes have an equal chance to benefit from government initiatives, it fosters a sense of belonging and national unity.

Third, fostering intertribal dialogue and cooperation is essential. Creating platforms for different tribes to interact, share experiences, and collaborate on common goals can help build mutual understanding and respect. These interactions should be designed not only to address grievances and resolve conflicts but also to celebrate cultural diversity and find ways to harness it for the collective good. Community projects that involve members from various tribes working together can also promote a sense of unity and collective purpose.

Moreover, the media has a crucial role to play in reshaping perceptions of tribal identities. By highlighting positive stories of intertribal cooperation and showcasing the achievements of individuals from diverse tribal backgrounds, the media can help change the narrative from one of division to one of unity and strength. Media outlets should be encouraged to produce content

that reflects the nation's diversity and promotes understanding and cooperation among different tribes.

In the political arena, leaders must lead by example, demonstrating a commitment to national unity over tribal loyalty. Political parties should be structured to reflect the multicultural nature of the nation, with policies and platforms that address the needs and aspirations of all tribal groups.

Economic development initiatives should also be inclusive, ensuring that all regions and tribes benefit from national resources and opportunities. Investing in infrastructure, education, and healthcare in marginalised areas can help bridge the gap between different tribal groups and foster a more equitable society. Economic policies should aim to reduce regional disparities and provide support for underdeveloped areas, ensuring that all citizens have access to the same opportunities for growth and development. Inclusive economic development also means encouraging entrepreneurship and small business development among tribal communities. Providing access to markets can empower individuals from all tribes to participate in the economy, creating jobs and fostering local development. By ensuring that all tribes have a stake in the nation's economic success, these initiatives can reduce resentment and foster a sense of shared purpose and prosperity.

Finally, the vision articulated by the novels in this study is one of an Africa that embraces its tribal diversity as a source of strength rather than division. This vision requires a multifaceted approach, encompassing changes in mindset, political and administrative reforms, intertribal dialogue and cooperation, responsible media practices, inclusive political leadership, and equitable economic development. Each of these steps is crucial in building a nation where tribal identities are celebrated as part of a vibrant cultural mosaic and where every citizen, regardless of tribal affiliation, can contribute to and benefit from the nation's progress.

The path to this vision is undoubtedly challenging, requiring sustained effort and commitment from all sectors of society. However, the potential rewards in a more harmonious, prosperous, and united nation make these initiatives are not only worthwhile but imperative. By drawing on the insights and inspirations provided by literature, and translating them into concrete actions and policies, Francophone African nations can move towards a future where tribal identities are a source of pride and unity, rather than division and conflict. The novels in this study thus serve as both a mirror reflecting current societal challenges and a beacon guiding the way towards a more inclusive and cohesive future in Francophone Africa.

CONTRIBUTION AND IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

The study contributes significantly to the understanding of the impact of nepotistic tribalism on political and socio-economic sustainable development in Francophone Africa by highlighting the detrimental effects of entrenched tribal favouritism and proposing a transformative approach to reimagining tribal identities. By using novels as reference texts, the

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study provides a rich, narrative-based perspective that illuminates the complexities and nuances of tribal interactions and their implications for national unity and development.

The novels used in the study offer a unique narrative-based approach to understanding the lived experiences of tribal communities. These stories provide a human face to the abstract concepts of tribalism and nepotism, making the issues more relatable and comprehensible. They underscore the emotional and psychological toll of tribal favouritism, illustrating how it can lead to social fragmentation, mistrust, and resentment among different tribal groups.

In relation to the implications, the study's emphasis on celebrating tribal identities as part of a nation's cultural richness provides a new lens through which to view tribal affiliations. This reframing can help reduce the stigma associated with tribal identities and promote a more inclusive and respectful national discourse. Inclusive communities' stakeholders involved in policymaking processes can use this perspective to design interventions that celebrate cultural diversity and foster national unity.

In summary, the study provides valuable insights and practical recommendations for addressing the impact of nepotistic tribalism on political and socio-economic sustainable development in Francophone Africa. By celebrating tribal identities, advocating for inclusive policies and practices, and promoting intertribal cooperation, the study offers a vision of a more harmonious and prosperous Africa. Its contributions and implications provide a roadmap for policymakers and community leaders to build a more inclusive and cohesive society where tribal identities are valued as vital components of national solidarity.

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