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Decolonisation Versus “Balkanisation”: Radical and Diasporic Geographies of PAI (*Parti Africain de l'Indépendance*) in Paris

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the activities of PAI (*Parti Africain de l'Indépendance*) from 1957 to 1963 in Paris and more broadly in France, where PAI was one of the most radical groups fighting for decolonisation, initially taking the form of a transnational and diasporic federation. PAI opposed both the ‘balkanisation’ of colonial territories across national boundaries, and neo-colonialism understood as the persistence of capitalist exploitation. For these reasons, PAI was outlawed in Africa after the 1960 ‘independences’. Based on new archival sources that allow investigating imagined and material geographies of PAI, this paper argues for divorcing anticolonialism from nationalism and other particularisms that hindered decolonial projects, by analysing alternative geographical imaginations proposed by radical groups, which expose the performative roles that diasporic spaces can play. Although radical anticolonial voices were often not heard, they can nourish current debates on how nation-states and exclusionary models of ‘community’, remain instruments to perpetuate coloniality.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article analyse les activités menées par le PAI (*Parti africain de l'indépendance*) à Paris et, plus largement, en France, entre 1957 et 1963. Le PAI, qui prit initialement la forme d'une fédération transnationale et diasporique, comptait alors parmi les organisations les plus radicales engagées dans la lutte pour la décolonisation. Il s'opposait à la fois à la « balkanisation » des territoires coloniaux autour de frontières nationales et au néocolonialisme, entendu comme la persistance de l'exploitation capitaliste. Pour ces raisons, le PAI fut interdit en Afrique après les « indépendances » de 1960. S'appuyant sur de nouvelles sources archivistiques permettant d'étudier les géographies tant imaginées que matérielles du PAI, cet article plaide pour une dissociation entre l'anticolonialisme, d'une part, et le nationalisme ainsi que les autres formes de particularisme ayant entravé les projets décoloniaux, d'autre part. Il analyse pour cela les imaginaires géographiques alternatifs proposés par des groupes radicaux, qui mettent en évidence le rôle performatif que peuvent jouer les espaces diasporiques. Si les voix de l'anticolonialisme radical sont souvent restées inaudibles, elles peuvent aujourd'hui nourrir les débats sur la manière dont les États-nations et des modèles exclusifs de « communauté » demeurent des instruments de perpétuation de la colonialité.

Extending recent scholarship in geographies of decolonisation and global history, this paper addresses diasporic histories

and places of PAI's (*Parti Africain de l'Indépendance*) activists who operated in the Parisian region (and more broadly in

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France) from the foundation of the Party in 1957 to its internal breakup in 1963–1964. Mostly composed by Senegalese people but provided with an initial transnational setup and a Socialist Pan-African inspiration, PAI was outlawed by Léopold Sédar Senghor (1906–2001) on 2 August 1960, in the wake of Senegal's independence, for alleged activities against the security of the new state. Before PAI became again a legal (Senegalese-only) party in 1976, its activists endured political repression under Senghor as they did under French colonial rule, providing a little-studied case in the deception that most radical anticolonial activists felt after independence (Bianchini et al. 2024; Friedman 2021; Murrey 2024; Singaravélou et al. 2010). An abundant literature discusses how, in the 'decolonising Souths', the reproduction of institutions created by the colonisers, such as the nation-state, accompanied by neo-colonial economic dependencies under (liberal or state-led) capitalism, generated and still generates feelings of disappointment (Bancel 2022; Blanchard et al. 2020; Craggs 2014; Mbembe 2000; Mourre 2023; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018; Sousa Santos 2016). Eventually, PAI members suffered imprisonments, tortures and even murders under several 'independent' African governments (Camara 2013; Diop 2007).

Based on original research on primary sources, this paper provides a twofold argument. First, I argue for conceptually divorcing anticolonialism from (Eurocentric notions of) nationalism by rediscovering transnational, multilingual and internationalist ideas and practices of early anticolonial movements that can still inspire 'defiant' scholarship (Al-Bulushi 2023; Daley and Murrey 2022; Ouma 2022) and geographical works seeking to rescue links between radical traditions and current decolonial debates (Daley et al. 2026; Davies 2020; Ferretti 2025; Nott 2026). To this end, key are new analyses of the claims and effective historical practices of anticolonial movements and networks. Historically, anticolonialism is recognised as a transnational phenomenon, even explicitly internationalist in cases, such as Pan-Africanism, global labour solidarity and broader 'connectivity' (Featherstone 2019; Hodder 2016; Sajed and Seidel 2023). Yet, current scholarship still needs to rediscover hundreds of individual trajectories of activists who defined themselves as 'nationalists' while actually being transnational, multilingual and cosmopolitan figures, often operating in the context of Pan-African or Pan-Asian conferences and in diasporic places. Their definitions of nationalism generally applied to areas, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, or to the colonised world—hardly to a single nation-state.

Works and lived contexts of these activists challenge any exclusionary understanding of nationalism or (religious, ethnic or ideological) identity. However, radical and internationalist anticolonialisms have been often minimised by post-independence historiography and political narratives—both in the 'North' and in the 'South'. Since the 1940s, Asian, Caribbean and African student associationism in France (Bianchini 2019; Blum 2014, 2018; Diané 1990; Dieng 2003, 2011a; Gnali 2001; Nkwengue 2006; Traoré 1985) provided significant examples in the affirmation of a new figure of diasporic intellectual/activist that was represented by a considerable number of individuals, all with original stories and transnational trajectories. Many of these anticolonial militants campaigned against what they called the 'balkanisation' of their territories in Africa (Dieng 2003, 2009, 2011b;

Diop 1974, 2007; Ly 1992) in the eve of the independences, as I discuss below.

Second, I argue that diasporic spaces play performative and generative roles that research in decolonisation and historical geography should consider, assuming relational notions of diaspora as part of its methodology. Transnational spaces and places of diaspora were perceived as emancipatory in the concrete lives of numerous individuals who will lead—although with different roles and outcomes—anticolonial mobilisations in French colonies between the 1940s and the 1960s. Moreover, the sources analysed here show that transnational spaces can work as effective protection against political repression and marginalisation, which allows rethinking them as spaces of freedom rather than of constraint, although with all the challenges and contradictions discussed below. Geographical scholarship started stressing the 'creative' roles that diasporic experiences characterised by expatriation and multilingualism can play in the lives of dissident scholars (Ferretti 2018) beyond some pessimistic views of exile and migration as irremediable sadness and loneliness that traditionally characterised postcolonial and cultural studies (Hall 2017; Said 2000).

As for PAI, these spaces and scales of mobilisation were so varied as African and European streets for demonstrations and mobilisations, students' rooms in Dakar, Paris or Bucharest as places for conspiring and organising or Senegal's savannahs during the Party's short-lived guerrilla moment (Camara 2013; Diop 2007). It was within the growing communities of 'colonial' students in Paris and other French cities that most of PAI's 'metropolitan' activities unfolded, particularly within African student union FEANF (*Fédération des Etudiants d'Afrique Noire en France*), active from 1950 to 1981 (Blum 2016a, 2018; Dieng 2011b). Activists' recollections unanimously state that life abroad was emancipatory from a political, intellectual and personal standpoint (Camara 2010; Dieng 2011b; Fall et al. 2001; Gnali 2001; Guimont 1998; Nkwengue 2006; Tevoedjre 2010).

To develop these arguments, it is necessary to study not only works and lives of famous leaders, but also less-known figures, which implies the sake for new archives, in the best anticolonial and internationalist traditions (Coquery-Vidrovitch 2021; Hodder et al. 2021). Eventually, the archives of anticolonial activism are replete with stories of nonconformist individuals who refused 'any form of regimentation' (Gnali 2001, 96),¹ unorthodox people whose voices were not listened to, sometimes by their same comrades, and still deserve reconsideration. From a methodological standpoint, I stress the need to use these archives to investigate places and contexts other than those of mainstream summits and official politics to rediscover lives and materialities of dissident agents from below, beyond 'pure' theory, ideology or generalising paradigms (Pham and Shilliam 2016; Stolte 2019). For this paper, which is only a step in a wider project, I first analyse recollections of PAI activists and materials produced by PAI, FEANF and allies, such as pamphlets, periodical press and grey literature. Then, in the absence of proper PAI archives (Diop 2007), I address police sources, quite abundant in institutions, such as *Paris Archives de la Préfecture de Police* (APP).

On the one hand, one must be aware of the limitations of highly biased sources, such as police reports, which often speak more

about the opinions of the powers in place on contestation movements rather than about these very movements (Sacchetti 2002). On the other hand, these sources have been recently analysed in histories of radical geography (Ferretti and Ribeiro 2026) stressing how their folders contain documentation, such as materials seized from activists and detailed factual information—of varying accuracy and reliability, which remain privileged instruments to appreciate the activities of obscure militants on whose biographies other sources are scarce. The interest of addressing trajectories of people who were based in France for a period stands also in the fact that there, especially in FEANF networks gathering activists from numerous French colonies,² the transnational and internationalist nature of early PAI emerges very clearly.

In the first part, I discuss the insertion of this research in global histories and geographies rethinking places and agents of worldwide decolonisation. In the second part, I discuss the contexts of diasporic and transnational anticolonial mobilising in the context of the late French empire. In the third part, I address PAI's geographies on plural scales, highlighting (a) the role played by places of student sociability in Paris, namely its 'triangle' of African students' houses, in fostering experiences of emancipatory conscientisation; (b) the performance of these diasporic places of sociability in favouring the so-called 'PAI moment' in France, far from the harsh repression that took place in Africa before and after the independences; and (c) the Pan-African and federal inspiration that informed the other side of PAI's geographies, that is its attempts to perform internationalism in its own organisation in Africa. In the fourth part, I discuss the limits and contradictions of these transnational openings in the context of broader failures to push decolonisation towards radical ends and of Cold War constraints. Alongside growing ideologisation, colonial and postcolonial repression hindered this experience, which did not fulfil its internationalist promises.

1 | Scholarship: Anticolonialism Beyond Frontiers

Historical geographies of decolonisation increasingly address transnational spaces of anticolonial activities, focusing both on the role of geographers in these processes and on broader understandings of these spaces. Although the role of urban spaces as transnational hubs of anticolonial mobilisation can be already considered a classical theme (Ferretti 2024), studies on anticolonial geographies in African contexts like those carried out by Ruth Craggs and Hannah Neate have recently stressed how 'constitutional decolonisation brought only independence with a question mark' (Craggs and Neate 2024, 4). This implies reflecting on both the insufficiency of independence under the form of nation-states for full decolonisation and on the methodologic need to address geographies of transnational circulations of knowledge and people. Dan Clayton stresses the importance of mutual transits of knowledge among intellectuals combining 'Western and African and Asian knowledge, theory, and methods' (Clayton 2020, 11). It can be argued that, also in the field of anticolonial socialism, diasporic groups, such as PAI tried (with different levels of success), to take advantage of cultural transfers between European socialistic traditions and African specificities.

These efforts of geographical scholarship in understanding spaces, circulations and transits of anticolonial movements during the decades that preceded the independences, when all prefigurative imaginations were still possible, parallel a rich literature in global history addressing internationalist visions of decolonisation. Pan-African traditions are namely deemed inspirations for worldmakings (Getachew 2019) beyond mere national independences, which resulted disappointing in relation to most activists' expectations—not only in political terms but also for their failure to decolonise thought (Thiong'o 1986). Furthermore, recent scholarship argues for 'decolonising internationalism' by reading its manifestations in the 'decolonising South' (Lewis 2024, 345), such as Afro-Asian and Tricontinental conferencing, without addressing only 'nationalist elites' (Lewis 2024, 349) temporarily based in the 'North'. Yet, I would contend that studying diasporic transnational networks occasionally centred in imperial cities from the standpoint of less famous (or completely obscure) activists whose stories can be retrieved in the archives has the potentiality to exactly 'expand our thinking about the mechanisms and mentalities of internationalism' (Lewis 2024, 346). Rescuing these forgotten voices also problematises current conversations on the 'Socialist South'. On the one hand, 'other' socialisms from outside Europe and North America have been insufficiently addressed so far (Lewis and Osei-Opare 2024). On the other hand, socialism took often oppressive forms. In French-speaking Africa, this was well exemplified by the repression that 'radical' leaders like Sékou Touré in Guinea and Modibo Keita in Mali exerted against their former allies of PAI (Diop 2007). As I discuss below, this resulted even clearer with leaders, such as Senghor, whom radical activists already considered as 'collaborationists' of the French before the independences (Dieng 2011a). Additionally, despite the support that some countries of the 'Eastern Bloc' gave to anticolonial movements, racial and civilisational prejudices were far from absent in the socialist world (Crow 2024; Unfried and Martínez Hernández 2024).

The popularity of internationalist and Pan-African ideas inspired by figures, such as DuBois, Padmore and Nkrumah did not impede that: 'Many continued to view nationalism and the nation-state form as means to the ultimate goal' (Matera 2024, 55). Conversely, since the mid-1950s, French-speaking African activists lucidly denounced the Paris-driven 'balkanisation' that prefigured new nation-states in their country and proposed instead federal and Pan-African solutions. Beyond rejecting nationalisms, the other big aim of anticolonial radicals was to avoid reproducing mechanisms of economic domination, adopting forms of socialism that were often more pragmatic than ideological, as scholars stress: 'The ability of African activists and intellectuals to embrace, create and adapt revolutionary doctrines for their own sake. The idea that [they] simply imported readymade doctrines from a Marxist-Leninist blueprint is at best a narrow point of view, at worst a deeply patronising and colonial idea' (Bianchini et al. 2024, 2). Yet, in Africa as elsewhere, most of these doctrines remained in the field of socialism, proposed by: 'Socialists in the Marxist and anarchist sense, meaning those committed to working-class control of the economy' (Young 2024, 257). This paper stresses the need to reconsider the unheard advice of activists and intellectuals devoid of institutional roles, which still appears more far-sighted than most decisions that were indeed made.

Another problem to consider was the relative marginalisation of Africa, even worse as for its non-Anglophone parts, in international anticolonial conferencing and later scholarship. Authors such as Gerard McCann contend that Africans were ‘staged but not often heard in this Bandung moment’ (McCann 2019, 93) of Afro-Asian solidarities (Stolte and Lewis 2022), stressing the need to rediscover stories of obscure actors in the ‘corridors of celebrated anti-colonial institutions’ (McCann 2019, 96). Less studied African and Afro-Asian meetings took place in cities such as Accra, Tunis, Cairo and Conakry since the late 1950s, being attended by a number of African activists based in France and documented by FEANF’s journal *L’Etudiant d’Afrique Noire* (hereafter EAN).³ These ‘diverse internationalist projects’ (McCann 2019, 113) still need to be fully rediscovered. It is especially the case with the generation of African activists who ‘travelled to hubs of anticolonial activity—Delhi, London, Cairo, Accra, Dar es Salaam [and] navigated Cold War internationalisms as students, exiles and political representatives’ (Milford 2023, 2), of which anticolonial fighters from the Portuguese colonies in Africa are an emblematic case (Lopes and Telepneva 2024; Oliveira et al. 2025).

Scholars studying the history of the African Lefts lament that ‘most of the existing literature consists of memoirs from former activists’ (Bianchini et al. 2024, 2) and other primary sources are scarce due to repression and to the diasporic conditions of most groups. The non-numerous existing studies on PAI confirm how repression had been the biggest obstacle to its early consolidation. In Senegal, PAI’s ‘slogan *Moom sa réew* (national independence) resonated ... during the 1958 referendum period, when the PAI conducted a strong “No” campaign. [Yet] PAI ... was forced to go underground ... after barely three years of existence’ (Wane 2024, 24) and few months of formal independence. Endeavours such as ‘the translation of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* into Wolof by PAI historical leader Majhemout Diop [hereafter Majhemout—1922–2007] and Madiké Wade during their imprisonment in Saint-Louis’ (Wane 2024, 24) seemed not to have immediate effects. In neighbouring Mali (then *Soudan*), the ‘Soudanese section of the PAI’ served as ‘a matrix for ... the militants and forces of the Left’ (N’Diaye 2024, 42). Mali hosted Majhemout and friends after their proscription from Senegal until Senghor’s pressures on Modibo Keita led to their expulsion. Yet, the corpus of ideas and practices that these often-obscure activists left behind them can still speak to contemporary debates on anticolonialism (Murrey and Daley 2023) and decoloniality understood as a challenge to the coloniality of power still at work after independences (Mignolo and Walsh 2018), through their internationalist, radical and anti-racist elaborations.

2 | Places of Parisian Diasporas: Pan-African and Anti-Racist Radicals

2.1 | An End-of-Empire Context and the Role of Majhemout Diop

After the end of World War II, the French Constituent Assembly, elected ‘with a socialist and communist majority’ (Suret-Canale 1994, 20), approved a draft that abolished forced labour in the colonies, granted citizenship rights for people living there and admitted in principle the possibility of future independence. These

proposals found the harsh opposition of conservative forces supported by African-based settlers (*colons*), who obtained to reinstate ‘the colonial principle of French sovereignty’ (Suret-Canale 1994, 22) in the definitive text. Yet, the worldwide questionings of colonialism ongoing since 1945 contributed to raise consciousness and foster anticolonial unrest in all French colonies, including in Sub-Saharan Africa. There, the 1946 Bamako Congress decided the foundation of transnational party *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* (RDA), which became the main political representation of Black people from French-dominated Sub-Saharan Africa, counting a bunch of Members of Parliament in Paris (Lisette 1983). Initially allied with the French Communist Party (PCF), since the late 1940s RDA took distances from radical leftist tendencies. This produced tensions within African activist milieus, especially among French-based students, increasingly radicalised, who harshly attacked RDA leaders such as Ivorian Félix Houphouët-Boigny, considering them as accomplices of French colonialism, and later neo-colonialism (Dieng 2011b). In the 1950s, increasing repression in Africa and colonial war crimes in Algeria and Cameroon (Deltombe et al. 2011) pushed these activists to further radicalisation (Dieng 2009).

It was in this decade that PAI and FEANF activists shared what Dieng defined their *Grands Combats* (Great Fights), first carried out against the results of *loi cadre* (Framework Law) Gaston Defferre (1956), establishing territorial assemblies in the areas of AOF (Western French Africa) and AEF (Equatorial French Africa) to subdivide French-African colonies in units prefiguring current nation-states. African radicals argued that this law targeted the ‘balkanisation of African countries, wanted and organised by colonial authorities’ (Dieng 2009, 3), which shows how the idea of the nation-state, whose premises were created by the colonisers, was far from the sensitivities of these anticolonial activists. In 1958, these activists strongly protested against the reinstallation in power of Charles de Gaulle, expected to ‘resolve’ the Algerian crisis amidst worries over ‘the instauration of a fascist regime in France’.⁴ FEANF’s journal reproduced a statement of PAI’s Central Committee that denounced the ‘betrayal’ of those RDA members who voted for de Gaulle in the French Parliament.⁵

In the same year, FEANF and PAI vocally protested against the referendum through which de Gaulle sought the consent of African territories to become part of a ‘French [or French-African] Community’, to maintain the colonial regime by prompting Africans to vote their adhesion under economic blackmail. FEANF was quite aligned with PAI’s intransigent line and convoked an ‘extraordinary congress’ (Camara 2010, 49) in June 1958 to claim for a: ‘Sole watchword: immediate independence and institution of the United States of Africa’ (Camara 2010, 50). During this often-troubled electoral campaign, PAI’s ‘reglementary broadcast’ (Dieng 2009, 33) was forbidden in Senegal. ‘Not at all free’ (Dieng 2009, 33), the polls saw the almost complete victory of de Gaulle’s proposal in September 1958. Only Guinea, led by controversial union man Sékou Touré whose regime will soon become repressive towards dissidents (Andrade 1997; Traoré 1985), voted in majority ‘No’, gaining independence 2 years before the others.

It was in this political scenario that the French-based activities of PAI and of its leader Majhemout Diop unfolded. Indeed,

although its diasporic setup did not favour centralisation, PAI availed (and also suffered) of a charismatic leadership, that of Majhemout, who is also one of the few figures on which we dispose of relatively abundant biographic materials thanks to his own recollections centred on PAI. Conversely, for many other activists we must rely on synthetic profiles in police reports or recollections that often pass quickly on the authors' respective involvement with PAI. Born in the old colonial city of Saint-Louis in 1922 to a family of modest functionaries, Majhemout experienced since his youth as a student in Medicine the discriminations that the French system imposed to Black people seeking some social advancement. Yet, like other African exponents of his generation, Majhemout recollected the subversive roles that even conventional teaching exerted on their early anti-colonial inspiration, which he eventually owed to Jean Racine's tragedy *Mithridate*: 'The combat of this king of the Pontus against Roman imperialism had for me the effect of a lightning' (Diop 2007, 31).

During his studies, Majhemout met future anticolonial activists coming to Senegal from other African colonies devoid of higher education institutions such as Albert Franklin from Togo, 'future FEANF's President' (Diop 2007, 22) and Cameroonian Félix Roland Moumié, confirming the importance of diasporic places of training to establish networks of anticolonial sociability (Cragg et al. 2025). As his 'indiscipline' (Diop 2007, 25) prevented him from having a regular career in the colonies, Majhemout went to Paris in the early 1950s to continue his studies. Like in the case of other imperial centres such as London (Matera 2015), the French capital was a key hub in the organisation of anticolonial and Pan-African diasporic movements. There, Majhemout got acquainted with the networks of African students who animated associations such as GAREP (*Groupement Africain de Recherches Economiques et Politiques*), AERDA (*Association des Etudiants du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain*) and *Groupes de Langues* (Foreigners' Sections of the PCF) in the late 1940s and early 1950s. According to PAI and FEANF member Amady Aly Dieng (1932–2015), author of precious recollections on African student activism in France, these groups 'partially dissolved themselves into PAI' (Dieng 2009, 6) in the following years. In this context, Majhemout and future Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade founded one 'ephemeral association of nationalist students that, for the first time in French colonies, claimed for independence, which was forbidden by the French penal code' (Dieng 2003, 138) being the first embryo of future PAI.

2.2 | Early PAI Pan-Africanism and Matters With (Communist) Allyship

Diop and Wade presented their programme in the special issue *Les étudiants noirs parlent* (Black Students Speak) published in 1953 by transnational Negritude journal *Présence Africaine*, founded in Paris by another Senegalese, Alioune Diop (1910–1980) (Reza 2024). Majhemout's paper was titled 'The only solution: Total independence', and did not refrain from explicitly denouncing 'the colonial crime' (Diop 1953, 145), contending that 'colonisation cannot be humanitarian' (Diop 1953, 146). Joining the postwar debates on what kind of autonomy 'French Africa' should gain, Majhemout challenged

notions of assimilation, which aimed at transforming Africans in mere 'Black French people' (Diop 1953, 147). His political programme was first pragmatic, as: 'Today, it is impossible to win all Africans to Communism ... A wide anti-imperialist union is the formula that we should consider now' (Diop 1953, 150).

Majhemout's anti-imperialism took explicit distances from nationalism, as 'it is absurd to speak of nationalism in the outdated sense that it had in 1848 Europe ... luckily, the attitude of the Blacks is neither sectarian nor aggressive' (Diop 1953, 150). Although phrased in terms that may be considered essentialist today, Diop's idea was that African cultures could favour the construction of new political models different from European and colonial blueprints—including taking distances from Eurocentric notions of nationalism. He namely drew upon works by Cheikh Anta Diop (1923–1986) discussing the ancient roots of a Black civilisation and its influences on global history through Egypt and the early Mediterranean, which had a great importance to foster Black pride and conscientisation in these decades. 'So far one goes back in pre-history and history, one finds Black people everywhere ... Even Oceania was inhabited by Blacks' (Diop 1953, 153). According to these authors, the presence of early Black political formations proved Africans' ability to self-govern, something still inconceivable for (mostly racist) European public opinions.

After criticising the colonisers' invention of African 'nations' separated by artificial borders, Majhemout wished 'that independence materialises and frontiers fall' (Diop 1953, 166) as 'no nationalism can be conceived as chauvinism' (Diop 1953, 176). Majhemout called for enriching historical Pan-Africanism, represented by figures like Garvey and the 'Black American volunteers in the Ethiopian war' (Diop 1953, 182), with what he called 'Pan-Negroism', that is the feeling, paralleling concurrent elaborations by Frantz Fanon, to overtake inferiority 'complexes', for which 'every Black person will be proud of being Black' (Diop 1953, 181).⁶ This notion, that Majhemout wanted 'to be canalised in a sense opposed to racism' (Diop 1953, 183), can be arguably included in the genealogy of Black Radical Traditions (Rabaka 2009; Robinson 2000). Wade confirmed Majhemout's critiques to assimilationism, stressing the need to 'make simultaneously' (Wade 1953, 140) a national and a social revolution and further exposing the influence of Anta Diop's theories and of Negritude understood as cultural resistance. Indeed, police sources noticed Wade's attendance at the first *Congrès des Ecrivains et Artistes Noirs* that took place at the Sorbonne in September 1956.⁷

In this fight, Majhemout defined anti-fascists and international Communists as 'natural allies' considering that, in colonised countries, 'social revolution may happen at the same time as national revolution' (Diop 1953, 177). Yet, for Majhemout, alliances should not be blind: although coming from a Muslim background, he was especially wary of Pan-Islamism, given the history of oppression that came to his land from North Africa. 'Arab feudalities should not bring us a new imperialism under form of Pan-Islamism ... We are the allies of all colonised people but this alliance should never tend to servitude' (Diop 1953, 181). Thus, notions such as race and religion were mobilised in inclusive and pluralist sense.

Beyond these writings, matters with alliances were clarified by Majhemout's transnational trajectory. Lacking a job in France,

Majhemout lived some years in socialist Romania after attending the 1953 international youth festival in Bucharest. There, he recollected that: 'My Romanian friends offered me classes of Marxism' (Diop 2007, 29) and Romanian. After these studies, he decided to come back to Senegal to put his knowledge at the service of the African cause. Calling to France, he joined PCF 'for gratitude' (Diop 2007, 30). However, Dieng recollected how, in 1956, Majhemout and most African activists were disappointed when Communist members of parliament, alongside some African representatives, voted for granting special powers to the French government in the colonial war in Algeria (Ruscio 2019). For Dieng, the PCF: 'Defended the French Union and was in practice little supportive of total independence for French colonies in Black Africa'⁸ (Dieng 2003, 255).

In this vein, Dieng told an anecdote in which, together with future Senegalese judge Ousmane Camara, likewise PAI member, he refused to serve as newsy to 'sell (PCF organ) *Humanité Dimanche* at the *Cité Universitaire*', as they understood that PCF was 'nationalist' (Dieng 2010, 11) but not in the sense that they wished. Ironically, even police reports, always interested in finding or inventing Soviet plots funded with Moscow's gold, noted the discomfort of African activists in relation to French parties in an almost empathetic way, writing in 1964 that: 'Africans are too proud and too aware of their personality to fall into step with a foreign party, even if it were the PCF'.⁹ Furthermore, French historian Pascal Bianchini questions oft-released Cold War commonplaces on PAI as a 'branch' of USSR and a Marxist-Leninist 'sect', stressing its deep African roots, showed for instance by its foundation in a peripheral place, such as the proletarian Senegalese city of Thies (Bianchini 2019). Although Majhemout was a controversial figure, accused of being 'dogmatic' (Camara 2010, 67) and of fostering 'centralism over democracy' (Dieng 2011b, 133) by some of his comrades, Dieng contended that PAI was not 'monolithic, as it comprised nationalist elements who did not embrace Marxism' (Dieng 2009, 20). More broadly, it would be impossible to understand African students' associations, such as FEANF only following Cold War binaries.

According to Bianchini, in Senegal: 'PAI exerted a determining underground influence as a federator of counter-hegemonic aspirations ... against the orientation of Senghor's regime towards a formal independence without a veritable breakup with the former colonial powers—like other forces that played a parallel role such as PRA [*Parti du Regroupement Africain*] dominated by the figure of Abdoulaye Ly [1919–2013], or even that of Cheikh Anta Diop' (Bianchini 2019). It was arguably around 1963 that it lost its initial transnational setup to become PAI-Senegal. Indeed, activists from several 'territories' of both AOF (*Afrique Occidentale Française*) and AEF (*Afrique Equatoriale Française*) took part in that project before repression and the very 'independences' came to disarticulate it. According to Dieng: 'PAI recruited activists in all the countries of Western and Equatorial Africa under French rule except from Togo and Cameroon' (Dieng 2009, 12), where specific organisations existed. Although most PAI activists were Senegalese or Malian, its founding Manifesto was signed among others by Niger activist Abdou Moumouni (Diop 2007, 59).

According to Majhemout, defined as: 'Sincere Pan-Africanist, committed Pan-Negroist and ... inveterate internationalist' (Wade 2007, 13), a transnational history of PAI in Africa would

imply retrieving recollections by: 'In Mali, the group of Amadou Traoré ... and journal *Ambayereta*. In Guinea, one should take information on the territorial section around M. Fofana. In Central Africa, around comrade [André] Zanifé. In Chad, one should investigate among the comrades of Outel Bono. In Burkina Faso, in Mauritania and elsewhere one should have a look at what happened with old comrades' (Diop 2007, 9). In 1957, styling itself as a 'Federal Party' (Dieng 2009, 20), PAI opened its Manifesto with a reference to 'the historical time of Bandung, with the disintegration of the colonial system' (Diop 2007, 40) and committed to international networking with other organisations based in France, in the Eastern Bloc and in the Afro-Asian solidarity conferences that took place 'after Bandung' (Dieng 2009, 18). The appeal that PAI launched to all Africa in 1957 can be synthesised as: 'National independence and socialist transformation of our economy' (Diop 2007, 40).

3 | PAI's Diasporic and Transnational Geographies

3.1 | Spaces of Anticolonialism: PAI in Paris

As noted above, imagined and material geographies of PAI were articulated over multiple scales. According to French historian Françoise Blum, the networks of African students in Paris found real '*hauts-lieux*' (symbolic places) (Blum 2016a, 310) of youth and political sociability in three students' houses. In his recollections, Ousmane Camara defined these as the: 'Triangle that one may call Little Senegal' (Camara 2013, 44). Yet, the student buildings of *Maison de l'AOF* in 69 Boulevard Poniatowski (familiarily known as *Ponia*, no longer working as such), *Maison de la France d'Outremer* (FOM) in 47 Boulevard Jourdan at the *Cité Universitaire* (now Foundation Lucien Paye) and the student residence 'Jean Zay' in Antony (Southern *banlieue*, opened in 1956 and considered a stronghold of leftist activism) were far from being only populated by Senegalese people. Located in the radius of six miles in Paris's southern neighbourhoods and southern *banlieue*, these three places sheltered students with official university registration alongside what Camara defined 'an army of clandestine people with more or less admissible occupations' (Camara 2010, 44). Claims over the autonomous management of these buildings and on matters such as canteens and rents were among the earliest fights of African students in France (Blum 2025; Diané 1990; Dieng 2003). Importantly, the possibility to have some autonomy within these buildings as for distribution of rooms and services allowed African students' associations to count on a social basis by placing friends and comrades in shared places (Guimont 1998; Nkwengue 2006). Spatial proximity within student buildings, material solidarity and availability of spaces for political and cultural sociability enabled them establishing a sort of counter-power in relation to local and academic authorities.

The experience of living in these residences really changed the lives of many African people. Congolese activist Aimée Mambou Gnali, a quite 'exceptional' (Blum 2016b) case of FEANF female leader and emancipated woman in what remained a male-dominated field, recollected how in these buildings, one 'lived African unity' (Gnali 2001, 26). By sharing life, thoughts and activism with people from all Africa and beyond, many students acquired levels of consciousness that they would not have reached

in their respective countries under colonial repression or traditional control by what Gnali called the 'class-tribe' (Gnali 2001, 28). FEANF activists interviewed by Blum confirmed that, in these diasporic places, they developed 'a strong feeling of belonging to the African continent and an almost-ignorance of national, or ethnical feelings' (Blum 2016a, 44). An anecdote told by Camara exemplified how living together allowed unmasking the 'divide and rule' strategies that the colonisers put in place overseas. Eventually, a Madagascan student vocally refused to have a Senegalese roommate, claiming that the anticolonial riots in his country had been bloodily repressed by colonial troops called '*Tirailleurs sénégalais*' (Camara 2013, 43). In his ingenuity, this young person believed that all Senegalese people were guilty of the crimes that his land had suffered from French imperialism, while these troops were recruited in several French colonies: In Paris, personal acquaintance with politicised people from all Africa made disappear these misunderstandings.

This case extends recent scholarship in postcolonial diplomats' training showing how spaces can bring with them prefigurative ideas of transnationalism. According to Craggs, Jonathan Harris and Fiona McConnell, who studied three cases in post-independence Africa, these places were: 'Radical and inspiring: they were sites for African resistance to the ongoing coloniality of international relations, and for agency and solidarity in making different worlds after empire' (Craggs et al. 2025, 863). Bringing together people from dozens of African countries, they became 'international and especially pan-African spaces' (Craggs et al. 2025, 876) generating broader transnational solidarity networks. The fact that these outcomes started from (also) banal aspects of daily sociability confirms the potential performances of places in shaping political and scholarly agendas. In Paris, *Ponia* was a key place for this radicalisation: according to police reports, this student house served as PAI headquarters and hideout of the most radical activists.

As discussed above, police sources should be taken very cautiously, but they can nevertheless reveal the attitude of powers in place towards social movements, and sometimes provide factual information shedding some light on less-known figures. Much of the materials held at Paris APP are individual information folders—short non-authorised biographies of a multitude of obscure activists. Several individual files are included also in the bigger folders dedicated to organisations. The PAI folder was inaugurated in December 1957, few weeks after PAI's creation in Senegal,¹⁰ which shows how careful were French authorities in watching anticolonial groups during the troubled years of the Algerian war. One of the first elements that informants gathered was Majhemout's interest in rallying FEANF, which the police deemed: 'A group favourable to the creation of a PAI section in Paris'.¹¹ Eventually, Majhemout's movements in Paris were carefully watched, and his presence at the first meeting of the Paris section of PAI which took place at *Ponia* in February 1958 promptly noticed.¹²

Arguably based on the work of internal confidants, the police had very detailed information on PAI activities in Paris although 'no declaration'¹³ of its constitution had been made to French authorities. Among its Parisian addresses, in addition to *Ponia*, the police also suspected PAI of using FEANF's headquarters in *Cité Rougemont*.¹⁴ Informants minuted a PAI meeting held

at *Ponia* in April 1958, identifying people such as Tidiane Ly and Majhemout as 'extremists' of 'Communist inspiration' who pleaded to 'unite all Africans in love with independence and socialism'.¹⁵ At the very beginning, they assessed that the 'French section include[d] 250 students, of which 50 in Paris'.¹⁶ In this Parisian cluster, policemen identified other leading figures such as Malian Abdoul Ba, student in Physical Sciences and then Veterinary, based at FOM since 1957, responsible of 'international relations and Pan-African affairs' for FEANF¹⁷ and close to Togo activist Tete-Godwin, likewise considered as an 'enthusiastic PAI supporter'¹⁸ while in France. Reports repeatedly noted that students previously unknown to 'police services', such as Senegalese fellows Niane Daouda and Kader Sene, were seen 'collecting subscriptions in favour of the Party at the *Quartier Latin*'.¹⁹ In *Ponia* and Antony, the same activities were attributed to former secretary of the Association of Senegalese Students in Paris Ibrahima Ba and to Malian student Seydou Tall.²⁰

Alongside figures such as Nigerien intellectual Abdou Moumouni, who had been 'one of the main leaders of African nationalism in France from 1948 to 1953',²¹ Paris police sources paid special attention to the aforementioned Amady Aly Dieng. A 'critical Marxist', in France since 1955 and residing successively in all the '*hauts lieux* of student militancy' in Antony, FOM and *Ponia*, Dieng is defined by Blum as the incarnation of 'the eternal dissident ... the one who never recanted his youth's ideals and did not make any compromise' (Blum 2015a), unlike many of his student fellows who made bright careers once back to Africa after forgetting their past radical ideas. Police reports on Dieng stated the long list of international gatherings to which he participated, especially in socialist countries.²² International activities such as journeys to Eastern Bloc countries were carefully watched, including the suspect that money from independent Ghana arrived to PAI through: 'One Mr. Padmore, political advisor of Mr. Kwame Nkrumah'.²³ Although it is impossible to verify the accuracy of this information, and the suspect that radical groups were directly paid by foreign powers (preferably Soviet) was a classical feature of the construction of the enemy during the Cold War, it is significant that key names of Pan-African traditions such as George Padmore (who deceased in that same year 1959) circulated in those crucial years at the end of the French Empire.

3.2 | PAI in France: Spaces and Performances of Diasporic Places

This body of sources strengthens what I have defined the centrality of diasporic places such as Paris on radical anticolonialism and on the organisational overlaps between PAI and FEANF in those years, also exposing their common Pan-African and internationalist inspiration. Although the actual number of 'card-carrying' PAI activists in all France arguably remained limited to some hundred people, FEANF came to count around 8000 members in the late 1950s (Dieng 2009, 17), providing PAI with a more massive social basis on which PAI exerted a strong and direct influence also through its student section, the MEPAI.²⁴ The national French scale further shows the performance of diasporic spaces in terms of mobilisation. Sources are unanimous in stating that PAI's attempts to have some hegemony

on FEANF were initially successful at the national level, as many FEANF members 'sympathised, and for a certain number even actively militated in PAI' (Diané 1990, 121). PAI members wished to 'control the Federation ... sending its members in its Executive Committee' (Dieng 2009, 15). According to Dieng: 'Since 1959, FEANF presidents were Senegalese and PAI members: Hamat Ba ... (1959), Moustapha Diallo ... (1960), Amady Aly Dieng ... (1961, 1962)' (Dieng 2009, 15). One should add to this list of PAI members Magatte Thiam, FEANF President in 1963 (Blum 2015b)²⁵ and Malian student in Medicine Ibrahima Ly, President in 1964.²⁶

Between 1958 and 1960, French surveillance authorities witnessed a real 'PAI moment' in African students' milieus of several French cities, expressing growing concern at the progressive FEANF's radicalisation and rallying of PAI's politics. In 1958, they wrote that: 'Currently, FEANF invites students to join PAI, which is a new political group of the Extreme Left'.²⁷ In places of public sociability attended by members of the FEANF's local section of Aix-Marseille: 'Most of them do not hide their sympathies for PAI'.²⁸ In Montpellier, the local FEANF secretary Elimana Kane from Mauritania: 'Seems completely convinced by PAI's ideas and we know for certain that he was entrusted to create a militant cluster of this Party in Montpellier'.²⁹ While 'active PAI militants' were identified in Strasbourg, Grenoble and several other university centres, 'a PAI cluster was formed'³⁰ in Toulouse, a quite central city for FEANF activities outside Paris. The person in charge with that was identified as Joseph Van Den Reysen from Congo-Brazzaville, a FEANF's national leader, responsible for the monthly publication of EAN.³¹

Among PAI journals, *Momsarev* targeted diffusion in Africa, whereas *La Lutte* targeted international spreading and came to be printed 'in 5,000 copies' (Dieng 2009, 133). Directed by Babacar Niang,³² the latter circulated in France 'daily, from hand to hand, being read with interest by African students',³³ and 'within the African milieus of the capital'³⁴ as police officers noted since 1959. Therefore, a quite vibrant student press (Bancel and Devisse 1993), places of sociability and all kinds of social gatherings served to reinforce political propaganda. In all France, according to police sources, PAI was present in the different 'national' associations of African students. For instance, leaders of Dahomeyan students were 'embedded in FEANF and PAI',³⁵ a tendency that also involved the traditionally moderate Ivorian milieus, where a leading figure such as Abdoulaye Fadika was defined as a 'PAI activist'.³⁶

In that period, African students in France were also strongly committed to campaign in favour of fighters for Algerian independence, vocally protesting against the utilisation of African troops by the French Army.³⁷ In its public events, PAI claimed for: 'Immediate liberation of all imprisoned African patriots. Retreat of African troops located in Algeria and Cameroon and eviction of French military bases from our soil. For a free and united Africa'.³⁸ Interestingly, police sources noted the distribution of PAI membership cards in meetings taking place in France when the Party was already forbidden in Senegal. In 1961, they stressed FEANF's 'adhesion to PAI' and consequent 'influence on the majority of students from Black Africa in the metropole'.³⁹ Dieng's recollections also reveal that, between 1960 and 1965, PAI/MEPAI's 'Section on French soil' could afford the

luxury of organising courses targeting the 'ideologic formation of militants' (Dieng 2011b, 120). It still included 'national groups of study' representing a number of different African countries whose members were anyway warned 'against chauvinism' (Dieng 2011b, 122).

Again, this suggests that places matter, as diasporic sites and transnational networks can allow keeping alive activities that are forbidden elsewhere, exposing the generative aspects of transnational activism.

3.3 | Back to Africa: Prefigurative Pan-African Geographies Beyond the Nation-State

On the ideological plan, scholars stress how 'the spirit of the time was African unity' (Craggs et al. 2025, 877), which is even truer if we consider that leaders of the diasporic groups mentioned above, such as Abdoulaye Ly (GAREP) or Anta Diop (AERDA) heterogeneously pleaded for 'United States of Africa' in the 1950s (Ly 1992). Even groups considered as politically more 'moderate', such as *Mouvement de Libération Nationale* (MLN) led by Joseph Ki-Zerbo explicitly claimed in 1958 for: 'United States of Black Africa-African Socialism' (MLN 1958). The very fact that this idea was in the spirit of the time exposes how internationalist drives to alternative anticolonial worldmakings have been hitherto underplayed by most scholarship.

Similar concepts were expressed by Majhemout in *La Lutte*, reproducing his intervention to the 1958 Conference of African Peoples in Accra, titled 'Panaficanisme et socialisme', requesting: 'The constitution of the United States of Africa, or more precisely an African Socialist Multinational State leaving large autonomy to each territory', so that the old dilemma: 'Socialism or Pan-Africanism will no longer exist. Pan-Africanism can be socialism if everybody wants it'.⁴⁰ At least officially, PAI's programmes wished the defence of 'all democratic freedoms' and, in the same Pan-African vein, 'the suppression of the arbitrary frontiers traced by the colonialists'.⁴¹ The very statutes of PAI, surviving in police folders as well as in the archives of French 'allies' such as anticolonial geographer Jean Suret-Canale (Ferretti 2025) amazingly account for internationalist geographical imaginations in which the very organisation of the Party was articulated around all possible scales but did not even mention the nation-state.

Each structure of the Party corresponded to a spatial arrangement defined as: '1. The nucleus, for the factory, the office, the street, the place ...; 2. The sector, for the company, the administrative unity, the neighbourhood or village; 3. The section, for the town or group of villages; 4. The region, for a region to be delimited; 5. The territory, for a group of regions to define; 6. The federation, for a group of territories to define'.⁴² Organisationally, this broadly reflected the transnational setup of other political forces, such as the aforementioned RDA, constituted on what Majhemout defined 'federal bases' (Diop 2007, 53). Yet, one of the specificities of the early PAI was that this organisation did not target electoral constituencies, as PAI even boycotted the 1959 elections in Africa considering them as only functional to France's colonial interests.⁴³ Thus, the very organisation of the Party suggested the prefiguration of a new world,

that is an anticolonial worldmaking, starting from material activist practices.

PAI's aforementioned Manifesto explicitly lambasted 'chauvinism', first understood as the colonisers' way to achieve a 'psychological balkanisation of the African masses' (Diop 2007, 48) also fostering rivalries between African leaders. In Senegal, *Momsarev* confirmed this principle by inviting Senegalese people to avoid hostile attitudes towards migrants from other colonised African countries: 'Senegalese people will not follow the dividers. Dahomeyan people are at home in Senegal'.⁴⁴ This meant struggling 'against micro-nationalism, being it territorial or even federal' (Diop 2007, 55). That is, as *Momsarev* clarified, liberating 'all Africa' meant fighting against 'the chauvinism of the nation', understood as the refusal of national bourgeoisies 'to recognise worldwide class-struggle', and the 'micro-nationalist or tribalist chauvinism' based on ethnicities and regional belongings, which in some cases led to 'bloody clashes' among oppressed people—all 'degenerations of the national question'.⁴⁵ Thus, PAI's kind of Pan-Africanist internationalism was strongly anchored in class consciousness which explains why, on the occasion of May Day 1960, *Momsarev* saluted both the 'African and International working-class' and the Second Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference that took place in Conakry in the same year to discuss 'a common front of Afro-Asian solidarity'.⁴⁶

PAI's prefigurative geographies implied the wish to keep 'hands free' for future independences to prefigure and remake administrative and territorial setups, as both the 'region' and the 'territory', this latter the definition that the French administration gave to future African nation-states, had to be fully redesigned. Indeed, all this discussion appeared to be very far from exclusionary views of nation, ethnicity or religion. Yet, as I discuss below, Cold War dynamics played hindering roles over anticolonial activism on the international level: repression in Africa, in France and elsewhere were far from disjoined.

4 | Peaking and Ending of a Movement: From Daily Surveillance to Post-Independence Repression

According to another intriguing figure of African dissident, Abdoulaye Ly, whose work will be the object of a new paper, also in Senegal there was a short-lived 'PAI moment', as this Party well represented the popular disappointment with colonial politics. There, Majhemout's arrestation in 1958 raised the indignation of other anticolonial groups 'in the common fight against imperialism' (Ly 1992, 152). Immediately after independence, several PAI leaders were again imprisoned including Majhemout, 'Madické Wade, Babacar Niang, Khalilou Sall, Amath Ba among others' (Bianchini 2019) in a climate in which a caricature of Senghor could be worthy of 'two years in prison' (Diop 2007, 63). According to Majhemout, 'repression peaked everywhere in Africa' (Diop 2007, 70) after independences due to the concerns of both new ruling classes and old colonial powers. Once out of jail, PAI leaders found sanctuary in Mali, but when they attempted to organise guerrilla, Modibo Keita, summoned by Senghor, gave them: '48 hours to quit Mali' (Diop 2007). The Party would remain illegal in Senegal until 1976, and any attempt to reconstitute it could cost a prison term, as it happened to Central African Zanié in 1961.⁴⁷

In Paris, PAI's outlawing by Senghor immediately raised concerns among French authorities, preoccupied for the possible radicalisation of African activists, as FEANF had preannounced 'a strong protest'.⁴⁸ In the early 1960s, the pitfalls of new 'independent' powers were already denounced by French-based PAI activists who continued to distribute leaflets, bulletins and journals denouncing how 'Senegal's government, in collaboration with French bosses, is enforcing a labour code that is more reactionary than the one inherited from French administration', whereas 'certain governmental functionaries enact the same practices used by the colonial administration'.⁴⁹ Yet, despite the vitality that the organisation demonstrated in diasporic networks, it was not only repression, but also ideological struggle (and arguably the dogmatism of some leaders) that undermined the early transnational PAI project, likewise leading to the 'nationalisation' of the Party.

According to Bianchini, it was in 1963 that started 'the internal crises that will follow during the years of clandestinity', which included the expulsion of some of the Party's founders who appeared as 'the rivals of Majhemout Diop, towards whom some ... cult of personality unfolded' (Bianchini 2019). French authorities carefully observed these processes, reporting the results of a PAI's Central Committee meeting on 8 December 1963, where: 'A purge was decided, whose victims are: Khalilou Sall, definitively expelled; Babacar Niang; Baidy Tidiane Ly; Justin Carrere, suspended till satisfactory autocritique; Seydou Sarr, to whom a blame has been inflicted', for 'deviationism and plotting against the Party'.⁵⁰ This came with a certain surprise for police officers, who noted that: 'The past of these activists accused of deviationism and plot against the Party is eloquent'.⁵¹ That is, they were all known by French authorities for their longstanding activism and leadership. Eventually, Sall and Ly had been in charge of several international missions for the Party,⁵² whereas Niang was a long-serving FEANF activist, national Secretary in 1953.⁵³

French policemen perceived the seriousness of this split and reproduced an internal newsletter of the 'dissidents', who contested Majhemout's 'immobilism' and reportedly sent a mission to Paris to discuss the matter with PCF people. Indeed, from that letter one infers that the Sino-Soviet split, which also affected Western Communist Parties (Blum et al. 2021; Siracusano 2022), was not extraneous to that 'purge', as the dissidents reproached to PAI's direction a deterioration in their relations with the Chinese Communist Party, while they claimed the need to have a friendly approach to everybody in the socialist world.⁵⁴ This dispute also impacted FEANF, where pro-Chinese sympathies grew (Blum 2016a), especially after the 1965 Congress 'dominated by the Maoists' (Dieng 2011b, 84). This may also explain why, from that moment, PAI's presence in FEANF circuits was less and less apparent.

However, although French-based activists increasingly dealt with (often self-referential) ideological disputes, postcolonial repression constantly worsened in Africa. According to Blum, activists who did not abide by the new powers in place once back in their countries after independence faced: 'Exile, prison or violent death' (Blum 2016a, 183). Among others, Ibrahima Ly was imprisoned and tortured in Mali under Moussa Traoré, and never recovered from that experience (Ly 1990). In Chad, former PAI leader of Chadian students in France Outel Bono

was imprisoned and sentenced to death under François Tombalbaye. Amnestied twice and exiled again in Paris, Bono was assassinated there in very suspect circumstances in 1973.⁵⁵ In 1966, the same occurred in Cameroon to Osende Afana, former FEANF activist, who followed in this sad destiny his famous fellow citizens Ruben Um Nyobè and Moumié (Deltombe et al. 2011). The nation-state showed again its role in perpetuating coloniality and making the interests of the ruling classes.

5 | Conclusion

This article has stressed the need to investigate new archives accounting for cases that have been insufficiently addressed hitherto due to both Anglo-centrism (and arguably monolingualism of several scholars) and lingering commonplaces identifying anticolonialism with quite Eurocentric notions of 'nationalism'. Indeed, what many radical anticolonial activists sometimes called 'nationalism' in the years preceding independences rather applied to Pan-African or broadly colonised worlds than to nation-states, being inserted in networks and daily practices that were transnational, internationalist and multilingual. Geographically, this work has further demonstrated how space and place matter to daily life and sociability of political and intellectual movements, especially if we assume (decolonially) that theory is inseparable from praxes and material contexts.

Both transnational networks allowing to maintain forbidden organisations and the aforementioned emancipatory life experiences of activists contribute to ideas of transnational spaces and places as generative. They favoured radical conscientisation through acquaintance with people from other countries, languages and cultures also thanks to the lesser intensity of political repression (although not in all cases) that characterised diasporic hubs in the 'Norths' such as Paris in relation to the more violent and open repression that characterised colonies and postcolonies. On the micro-scale, one can argue that FEANF and PAI's activists' commitment to manage and organise their collective life-places such as student residences in Paris included political practices that were also based on space, namely on the maintaining of sociability networks favoured by spatial proximity.

PAI's geographical anticolonial imaginations were deployed on a plurality of scales that came to the prefiguration of future Pan-African federal setups suggesting the abolition of frontiers, a key point to be considered for any agenda further investigating geographies of decolonisation. Conversely, among all these spatial scales, it is that of the nation-state that did not appear to fit ideas, places and practices of at least a significant part of these radical movements. These forgotten experiences in anticolonial traditions still nourish discussions on defiant scholarship quoted above by showing early awareness of the need to overtake nationalisms, alongside all forms of exclusionary identitarian politics, for present-day debates on decoloniality. They also provide insights for the growing field of historical geographies of decolonisation by stressing the performative role of diasporic spaces and places in fostering activism and conscientisation.

Conversely, it was in the 'superior' interest of the state that postcolonial governors harshly repressed radicals with whom

they had formerly shared anticolonial struggles, which stresses the need to think new anticolonial and decolonial models that challenge state institutions, nationalisms and exclusionary approaches. Anticolonial fights should intersect across transnational alliances.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

Data sharing not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analysed during the current study.

Endnotes

- ¹ All citations from texts originally in French have been translated by the author.
- ² Paris, Archives de la Préfecture de Police (hereafter APP) FEANF, 77W-4553-500261.
- ³ EAN 19, 1958, Conférence Afro-Asiatique au Caire.
- ⁴ EAN 24, 1958, Appel à tous les étudiants d'Afrique noire, p. 13.
- ⁵ EAN 24, 1958, Déclaration du Comité central, p. 16.
- ⁶ The original word *Nègre* is translated here as 'Black person' to align with current lexicon.
- ⁷ APP, Wade, 77W-5436-617635, 25 September 1956.
- ⁸ Although the expression 'Black Africa' is no longer in use being a colonial definition, in this paper I translate literally the expression *Afrique noire* that anticolonial Black activists proudly used in those years.
- ⁹ APP, PAI 77W-5032-645189, 12 February 1964.
- ¹⁰ APP, PAI 77W-5032-645189, December 1957.
- ¹¹ APP, PAI 77W-5032-645189, 22 February 1958.
- ¹² APP, PAI 77W-5032-645189, 19 February 1958.
- ¹³ APP, PAI 77W-5032-645189.
- ¹⁴ APP, Ba 77W5218-647161, June 1960.
- ¹⁵ APP, PAI 77W-5032-645189, April 1958.
- ¹⁶ APP, PAI 77W-5032-645189, April 1958.
- ¹⁷ APP, Ba, 77W-5218-647161, May 1958.
- ¹⁸ APP, Tete-Godwin, 77W-6451-712234, January 1964.
- ¹⁹ APP, Daouda, 77W-5320-655568, 12 January 1958.
- ²⁰ APP, Tall 77W-63-656186, 5 May 1959.
- ²¹ APP, Moumouni 77W-4562-502402, 18 February 1959.

- ²² APP, Dieng 77W-5322-655788, March 1959.
- ²³ APP, PAI 77W-5032-645189, 12 June 1959.
- ²⁴ APP, MEPAI, 77W-5032-645189.
- ²⁵ APP, Thiam, 77W-6380-705419.
- ²⁶ APP, Ly, 29 January 1964.
- ²⁷ APP, Camara 77W-5124-647156, May 1958.
- ²⁸ APP, FEANF 77W-4553-500261, March 1959.
- ²⁹ APP, FEANF 77W-4553-500261, March 1959.
- ³⁰ APP, FEANF 77W-4553-500261, March 1959.
- ³¹ APP, Van Den Reysen, 77W-5173-645219, 3 March 1959.
- ³² APP, PAI 77W-5032-645189, 25 May 1960.
- ³³ APP FEANF 77W-4553-500261, March 1959.
- ³⁴ APP, PAI 77W-5032-645189, 24 January 1959.
- ³⁵ APP, Etudiants Dahoméens, 77W-2857-457501, 14 May 1962.
- ³⁶ APP, Fadika, 77W5535-668478, 25 May 1961.
- ³⁷ EAN 4, 1956, Les tirailleurs sénégalais alertent l'opinion publique, p. 16.
- ³⁸ APP, PAI 77W-5032-645189, 14 December 1960.
- ³⁹ APP, FEANF, 77W-4553-500261, February 1961.
- ⁴⁰ *La Lutte* 18, 1959, Panafricanisme et socialisme, p. 5.
- ⁴¹ *La Lutte* 18, 1959, Projet de programme, p. 4.
- ⁴² APP, PAI, 77W-5032-645189, 10 December 1957.
- ⁴³ *Momsarev* 4, 1959, Moi, voter? Pour qui voter? p. 1.
- ⁴⁴ *Momsarev* 2, 1959, Editorial.
- ⁴⁵ *Momsarev* 10, 1959, Le chauvinisme, p. 7.
- ⁴⁶ *Momsarev* 31, 1960, p. 4.
- ⁴⁷ APP, PAI 77W-5032-645189, 12 August 1961.
- ⁴⁸ APP, PAI 77W-5032-645189, 8 August 1960.
- ⁴⁹ APP, PAI 77W-5032-645189, 20 July 1961.
- ⁵⁰ APP, PAI 77W-5032-645189, 24 January 1964.
- ⁵¹ APP, PAI 77W-5032-645189, 24 January 1964.
- ⁵² APP, Ly 77W-6386-713628; Sall 77W-6386-713629.
- ⁵³ APP, FEANF, 77W-4553-500261, March 1959.
- ⁵⁴ APP, PAI 77W-5032-645189, 5 March 1964.
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