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**ARTICLE**

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Review

## Dynastic rule in Equatorial Guinea

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**The emergence of hereditary republican dynasties is part of a regional trend, raising concerns about the decline in democracy, government accountability, nepotism, and grand corruption. Second generation dynasts now rule in Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Gabon, and Togo. Often treated as exceptional aberrations, or theorized under other conceptual tools, this article examines Equatorial Guinea as a case study of 'dynastic republicanism.' After a brief theoretical discussion classifying this regime type among other forms of dynastic rule, and after making an historical comparison to Napoléon's attempt at establishing a hereditary dynasty in the wake of the French First Republic, this article will employ qualitative biographical method to explore the Mongomo clan of Equatorial Guinea in order to show how a kin group can establish itself in absolute power in a modern republic, then corruptly promote what is otherwise anachronistic hereditary rule. The conclusion will enumerate comparative advantages of dynastic style, and make predictions concerning the future of hereditary succession in Equatorial Guinea.**

**Key words:** dynastic republic, Nguema clan, petroleum.

### INTRODUCTION

#### Varieties of dynastic rule and the lesson of Bonapartism

Over one quarter of all the states in the international system are headed by family dynasties. They are not, of course, all dynastic republics like Equatorial Guinea. There are many varieties of dynastic rule. Some states have constitutional monarchs, others monarchs absolute. Some are governed by democratic political families who come to office through elections, and others by dynastic heirs who seem to be 'born to rule.' With so many cases, one thing is clear. Dynasty is no archaism, no endangered species on the verge of extinction, no transient passing

phase. Every historical era, every geographical region, every polity, society and culture breeds some form of dynastic rule (Duindam, 2016). So the question for modern thinking people is, why? Why do people accept to be ruled by other people's families? Why even in modern republics, where progressive social norms have swept away other obsolete traditions, do citizens still support dynastic heirs? What kind of atavistic behavior is this? Is it an anachronism doomed to extinction? Or does dynastic style provide some kind of comparative political advantage?

In political science, contemporary 'dynastic systems' must be classified into regime types. A traditional royal

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**Table 1.** Dynastic Heads of State or Government by Region and Regime Type (in 2017).

Continent	Monarchy		Republic	
	Authoritarian regime	Democratic regime	Authoritarian regime	Democratic regime
	'Absolute Monarchy'	'Constitutional Monarchy'	'Dynastic Republic'	'Political Family'
Europe	Liechtenstein	Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, Monaco, Norway, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, UK		Poland
Middle East/ North Africa	Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE	Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco,	Syria	Lebanon
Sub-Saharan Africa	Swaziland	Lesotho	D.R.Congo, Djibouti Equatorial Guinea Gabon, Togo	Botswana, Kenya, Mauritius
Asia	Brunei, Thailand	Bhutan, Cambodia, Japan, Malaysia,	Azerbaijan, North Korea, Singapore	Bangladesh, Japan
Oceania		Australia, New Guinea, New Zealand, Samoa, Solomon Is., Tuvalu, Tonga*		
Americas		Antigua, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Canada, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Lucia, St. Kitts, St. Vincent*	Cuba	Canada

\*Commonwealth Realms (Queen Elizabeth II).

family in a constitutional monarchy is an altogether different species from a modern dictatorship in an authoritarian republic. Confusing Queen Elizabeth II with Bashar Al-Assad is more than a mistake of persona. It is a confusion of regime type. Consider how 'monarchy,' the system of government headed by a single person who is the sovereign, is conventionally classified into two sub-types. In an 'absolute monarchy' the monarch rules as an autocrat and wields effective, often absolute power. In a 'constitutional monarchy' the monarch is a ceremonial figurehead subject to a constitution. While such a constitutional monarch is nominally sovereign, it is the people, through their representatives, who exercise that sovereignty. A constitutional monarch wields limited power or no political power at all: that is 'reigns, but does not rule' (Bagehot, 1867)

Explicitly distinguished from monarchy, the 'republic' is not a form of hereditary rule, not a family patrimony, nor a traditional patrimonial system (Weber, 1968). A republic is a public institution, a system of government where supreme power rests with its citizens: *res publica*, the 'public thing' (Cicero, 2000: p. 64). Like monarchies, republican dynasties must also be classified into sub-groups. Mention these names Assad, Kabila, Castro, Kim, and what comes to mind are pejorative labels which may get inextricably entangled with dynastic regimes: dictatorship, tyranny, autocracy, despotism. Yet to confound these authoritarian dynastic republics with dynasty per se is an analytical error. Dictatorship is a

system of unlimited authority by a ruler who has absolute power. Tyranny is when a ruler depends on military might rather than on consent for his power. Autocracy means power of one person over others, that is, a kind of supreme, uncontrolled, unlimited authority. While dynasties may produce autocrats, and autocrats may found dynasties, dynasty is defined as a *system where power is held by a family, a succession of rulers who belong to the same family*.

Dynasties can be monarchical or republican, democratic or authoritarian (Table 1). All 'dynastic republics,' for instance, are offshoots of personal rule. They are necessarily authoritarian regimes. In the Caucasus, Azerbaijan is ruled by the Aliyev family (Wilson 2013); in sub-Saharan Africa, Gabon is ruled by the Bongos (Ndoutoum-Eyi, 2013), Equatorial Guinea by the Mongomo clan (Liniger-Goumaz, 1989), Congo-Kinshasa by the Kabilas (Ngolet, 2011), Togo by the Gnassingbés (Attisso, 2012) and Djibouti by the Mamassane clan (Coubba, 1993); in the Middle East, Syria by the Assads (Seale, 1989); in the Americas, Cuba by the Castros (Castro and Collins, 2009); in East Asia, North Korea by the Kims (Martin, 2006); and in Southeast Asia, Singapore by the Lees (Lee, 2000). Dynastic succession of a hereditary heir, be it a son, brother, cousin or nephew – always *male* – is achieved through un-free or unfair elections.

The 'political family,' which is how one denotes a dynasty in a democratic system, is actually a pseudo-



dynasty of several family members related by blood or marriage, including children, siblings, spouses, in-laws, and cousins, over one or more generations, consistently or sequentially winning elective office. The essential feature that distinguishes this sub-type from dynastic republics is that the family must compete for power through democratic elections; in the critical test ultimately accepts electoral defeat and yields power by the ballot. Famous modern examples include the Kennedys (Goodwin, 1991), the Bushes (Phillips, 2004), the Nehru-Gandhis of India (Adams and Whitehead, 1997), the Marcos and Aquinos of the Philippines (McCoy, 2009), the Kenyattas of Kenya (Hornsby 2013), and numerous hereditary politicians of party faction leaders in Japan (Itoh, 2003). Another noteworthy difference is that succession has often passed to *female* family members. Malhotra (2003) and Derichs and Thompson (2013) have explored several case studies of the dueling Zia and Hasina dynasties of Bangladesh and the Parks of South Korea. Scholars can consult the 'List of Political Families' (at *Wikipedia*) for a remarkable enumeration of hundreds of such cases around the world.

Despite the apparent willingness of democratic republican societies to accept it, dynastic rule by political families might degenerate into a malignant 'bonapartism' (Michels, 1966). The French Revolution started a process of change to overthrow traditional monarchies with republics. The vast majority of political systems today have republican forms of government; however this republican revolution was not a linear process. French history shows us a cyclical pattern of republican forms of government being replaced by monarchical restorations that in turn are replaced by democratic republics. In trying to understand why an increasing number of republics today have been captured by authoritarian dynastic rulers, we might consider the story of the Bonaparte family, as both a historical model of dynastic republicanism, and as a template for conducting empirical case studies.

Despite the differences in geography, culture, economic structure, class structure, and civilization, one finds 'dynastic republics' in all regions of the world that show a common five-stage pattern. First, the traditional system of government which had ruled the territory before colonialism is destroyed. Second, a new institutional system of republic is established. Third, a founder rises to power through control of the military and/or state security apparatus. Fourth, he creates a political regime of personal rule. Fifth, a member of his family succeeds him to power. Beyond those general observations it is difficult to generalize, for each country is unique, each political leader idiosyncratic, each power configuration a distinct network of social relations, and each kinship group different. (Thus a necessity for biographical method.) Of course, most autocratic dictatorships never reach the fifth stage of hereditary succession, which is why there are so few (only ten) hereditary dynastic republics today.

The story of Napoleon Bonaparte is therefore an excellent exemplar to recall in order to learn a lesson of political history. After the First Republic had overthrown the *Ancien Regime* (first stage), this general took control of the military and security apparatus (second stage), acquiring absolute power after the Directorate (third stage), coronating himself in 1800 as Emperor, thereby establishing personal rule (fourth stage). On the other hand, his children did not manage to inherit his crown, and his defeat at Waterloo definitively ended his experiment before the fifth stage of a hereditary succession could be accomplished. In understanding what Napoleon wanted but failed to accomplish, some of the important weaknesses which have prevented modern rulers from successfully establishing hereditary 'dynastic republics' can be theorized. These lessons will be useful in forecasting the future of the Nguema dynasty of Equatorial Guinea (See the conclusion of this article).

As he grew older, and the temporary intoxication of the revolution wore off, Bonaparte's fundamental aristocratic and monarchical instincts began to assert themselves. 'The means he had used to become Emperor – coup, plebiscite, the support of ex-revolutionaries – were revolutionary,' commented one of his biographers, 'but the end – a hereditary throne for himself and his family – was traditional.' (Mansel, 2015: p. 29) The French nobility had been abolished during the Revolution, and most of that deposed class who had escaped execution were living in exile by the time he had crowned himself Emperor Napoleon I. A new nobility was entitled, a class of 'barons' whose loyalty was given in exchange for their privileged status. These new nobles, however, did not share his power. One of the main differences between Napoleon's court and others is that it was a conscious creation of his will, not the product of centuries of traditions and accumulated rights. All his officials were hand picked by Napoleon himself. When First Consul, he had been surrounded by ministers, generals and councillor of state; but these men were less prominent during the First Empire. The Emperor surrounded himself with courtiers, who were always with him. His court was one of the most effective means of rapid upward mobility in the history of Europe. Surrounded by his nimbus, that is, the atmosphere generated by his court, Napoléon became cut off from reality.

Service at Napoleon's court was attractive because it gave access to the Emperor, opportunity to ask for jobs or promotion without difficulty. 'With almost no exceptions, courtiers were more interested in advancing themselves and their families than in serving their masters.' (Mansel, 2015: 49) Over a fifth of the emperor's senior diplomats came from his royal household. In theory, court life was an end in itself; but for his courtiers, it was always a means to an end. In an age when there were few exams or tests for jobs, being a senior court official could be very helpful. The courtiers also started to marry each other.

'The court was such a powerful, seductive phenomenon



that it also affected language. Addresses emphasized subjects' loyalty and deference and the monarch's glory, grandeur and condescension.' (Mansel, 2015: 56). His courtiers saw it as their duty to please their master, and told him what he wanted to hear. The flattery and formality of his court prevented Napoleon from hearing the truth. As a monarch, his principal concerns became the power of his throne, the splendour of his court and the future of his dynasty. Stendhal believed that it was 'the contaminated air of the court' which corrupted Napoleon, and after 1810, 'raised his vanity to the level of a disease.' (Stendhal, 1930: 184).

The Bonaparte family formed a dynasty of French princes whose descendants were to inherit the crown. His brothers were kings; but in his mind they were only the instruments of his politics. This mentality apparently changed after he became a father. 'The birth of the King of Rome, on 20 March 1811, was to alter his vision as the Empire. He wanted to take back, for his son, lands which he had imprudently given away.' (Tulard, 1984: 235) Such policies annoyed public opinion in France. It appeared as if the interests of the nation were taking second place to his family. Now only dynastic motives seemed to count. The motor that drives most courts is love and respect for the monarch, and his or her family. This is a necessary bases of a system that glorifies the personal service of the monarch. Yet even this dissolved in Napoleon's court. 'Finally,' writes one of his most famous biographers, 'Napoleon's family did him a disservice, less through intrigue than because of the picture it presented of a clan exploiting France and then Europe in order to build up enormous fortunes and to satisfy its dubious appetites' (Tulard, 1984: 236).

To study any dynastic system of government at work, one must look behind the veil of formal institutions and peer into the inner workings of 'palace politics.' In recent decades, sociologists studied historical monarchies with greater stress placed on the political relevance of the domestic environment of rulers, a shift in attention from modern state institutions to the traditional social setting of dynastic power – that is 'the court.' In his classic, *The Court Society*, Norbert Elias found that far from being token officials, high-placed nobles in domestic court offices retained substantial political power, sometimes formal, through titles and ranking, sometimes informal, through their sheer proximity and intimacy with the person of the ruler. In all major European kingdoms, as well as in greater Asian dynastic empires, domestic staffs catered on the ruler: royal clerks, administrators, and advisors responsible for the machinery of government. Anybody daily serving the prince or his relatives could hope to exert influence at some point. The increasing distance between 'inner' (domestic) and 'outer' (administrative) spheres exacerbated a tension in court life; between the agents who were formally responsible for making decisions and the domestic servant attending to the person of the ruler.

Elias takes great pains to clarify that court society is a

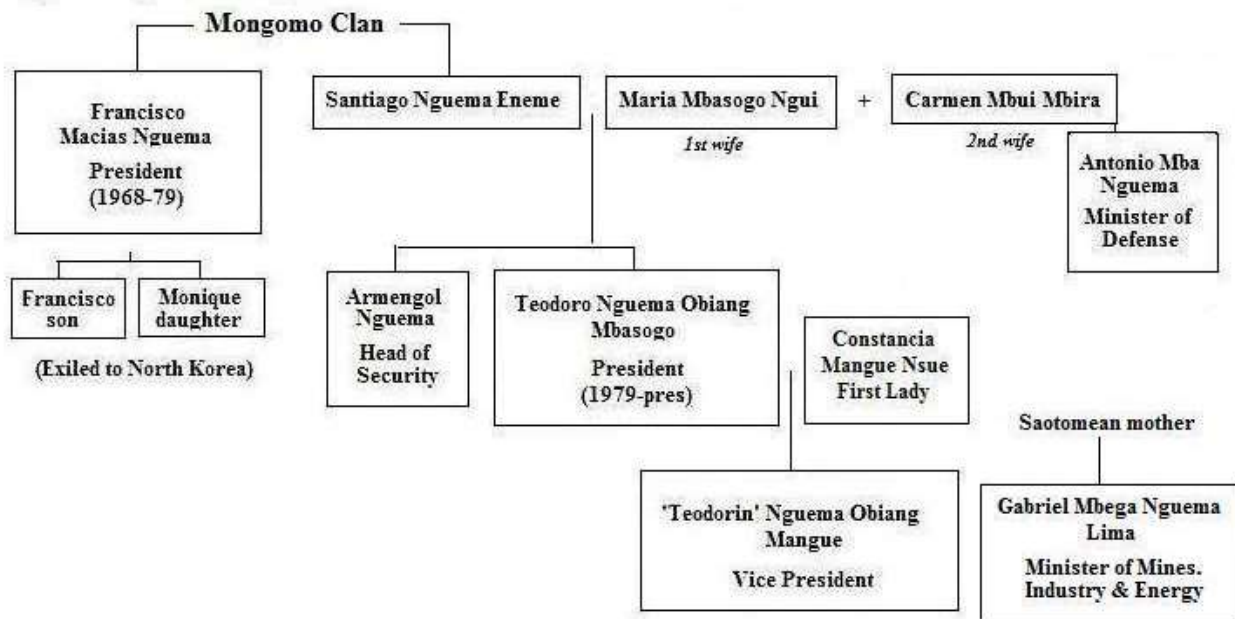
particular social figuration, a sphere of domination by a network of courtiers that only comes about when a ruler is recognized as having a monopoly, or near monopoly of power. All such societies where power becomes the monopoly of the ruler create the conditions for the emergence of some kind of court society, that is 'curialization.' (Elias, 1985: 240).

Of course, one might object that the experience of the Bonaparte family is anecdotal, that is, the problem of external validity. Although it is beyond the scope of this single case study, and by way of introduction only, a more comprehensive study of dynastic rule has recently been published by Jeroen Duindam, who shows how, despite tremendous variety over space and time, some features were common to all historical dynasties around the world between 1300 and 1800 (before the coronation of Napoleon): (1) Kingship emerged as an extension of kinship, when one clan or one lineage imposed its hierarchical supremacy upon other descent groups; (2) Hereditary succession was never universal; (3) The ruler's kin were always close to power; (4) He was served by a household or retainers and advisors; (5) The palace was a focal point of ritual and redistribution; (6) A single figure of the monarch stood at the heart of the polity, governing as well as representing a totem; (7) These roles severely limit his freedom and complicated his personal relationships. Duindam (2016: 4-5) encyclopaedic study suggests that divergent practices can be seen as part of a common pattern, and that 'dynastic power can be seen as a relatively constant factor in a changing world' (Duindam, 2016: 318).

### **The dynastic republic of Equatorial Guinea**

Unlike most of the other dynastic republics in region, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea has not experienced an inherited transfer of power from father to son. However, the 1979 coup against President Macias Nguema was devised by one of his so-called 'nephews,' President Teodoro Obiang Nguema, who is currently preparing his son Vice-President Teodorin Obiang Nguema for dynastic succession (the critical fifth stage).

The term 'nephew' is here used in the Fang kinship system of clans and not blood lineage. Teodoro was a member of his so-called 'uncle's' inner circle. He had been head of the National Guard until 1979, when a drug-crazed Macias started executing some of his national guardsmen. Obiang's soldiers and half-brother had complained about not having received salaries for several months. One of these had been executed by Macias. Other family members had also been executed. His inner circle of Mongomo Fang feared their boss had gone insane. That was why Obiang and other insiders from the ruling Mongomo Clan overthrew Macias in what they hoped would be a quick and bloodless coup. His clan still holds most positions of power in the country, being both a



**Figure 1.** Nguemas Of Equatorial Guinea. Sources: Global Witness (2009); Liniger-Goumaz (1993, 2003); Nfumu (2006); Nguema (2007); Woledge (2013).

system of kinship and a network of state power (Figure 1).

### First Generation: Macias Nguema

Francisco Macias Nguema was born in 1924 among the Fang people of Mongomo in the deep interior of Bata, that is, of mainland Equatorial Guinea, a rectangular enclave of tropical rainforests pressed between Cameroon and Gabon. At birth his given name was *Messie*. Later he changed this to Macias. Like other founders of dynasties he was a self-made man. His origins were poor and obscure. His father was said to be a Fang witch-doctor (*beyem*) who had allegedly killed his younger brother to become the village chief, which was not a very powerful position during colonial rule. At the age of nine, this story tells, he witnessed his father being beaten to death by a Spanish colonial officer. Such a traumatic experience could only have had a profound impact on the psychology of the young boy; but there was more tragedy. On the day after his father's murder, his grieving mother, in despair, committed suicide. This was how he and his nine brothers and sisters were left orphaned. They had to sell themselves as day laborers to other families, the lowest of all positions, becoming the laughing stock of the village. Cruel events in his early childhood shaped his personality, gave him his will-to-power and his instinctive taste for violence – his dominant character traits leading his rise and fall. 'As a youth,' Appiah and Gates tell us, 'his Catholic teachers noted his paranoia, megalomania, and feelings of inferiority.' (Appiah and Gates, 2010: 98)

His people, the Fang, had first migrated into the

rainforests in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century and, according to their oral history, they learned about how to survive from the native Pygmies. Today the country's largest ethnicity (85.7%), the Fang outnumber the second largest, the Bubi (6.6%), by a 13-to-1 ratio. As for the original Pygmies, they account for less than one percent of the population. In addition to being the most numerous, the Fang are also the most warlike and powerful ethnic group in the country, channeled through their big clan structures. In Equatorial Guinea, this larger 'family' matters. One exiled opposition activist put it this way: '*La Familia*. There is nobody else' (Shaxson, 2008: 124)

There are fifty Fang clans in Equatorial Guinea. Membership of a clan is established by means of a recitation of the family tree, a lineage going back sometimes thirty or forty generations. In this process the two people wishing to establish clanship have to find a common grandfather, great-grandfather or more remote ancestor, as the case may be. In terms of social organization, the Fang are particularly free from differences of class and status, equality between all members of the society being ensured through reverence for the ancestral skull or *byer*. The Nguema lineage came from what is called the 'Esangui clan' of the Fang, remarkably one of the smallest of all the Fang clans of Equatorial Guinea. Only 10% of the population of Rio Muni in 1952; and by 1968, with 4,000 members, only 1.5% of the country's total population (Liniger-Goumaz, 2013: 34), despite their small number, this clan rose to hold absolute power.

'Equatorial Guinea has an extremely tight, intricately

interconnected society,' wrote one U.S. diplomat posted in Malabo. 'There are no arms-length transactions here. The traditions of the predominant Fang tribe prevail, and the bonds of family are as strong as they are in any other culture. By American standards, these bonds are exceedingly powerful' (Wikileaks, 2009). Spanish colonial presence had been limited to the island of Fernando Poo (Bioko). Few Spaniards resided in the mainland. Spain had done little to effectively occupy Rio Muni until the 1920s. Opposition by the Fang to any kind of foreign occupation of their territory made any penetration into the interior of the country very hazardous. In 1926, Madrid mounted a military campaign, using cavalry and modern weaponry, effectively putting an end to the Fang's warlike resistance.

Rio Muni had been one of the last places in Africa to be explored by white Europeans who considered its inhabitants to be 'savages.' Fang are animists who worship the spirits of nature and have a strong cult of ancestors. Their best known sacred rite is the *Bwiti* cult, a syncretism of African and Christian rituals. Among its ceremonies is an initiation that involves ingestion of a powerful hallucinogenic plant called *iboga* and ritual dancing to rhythmic percussion that places the initiate into a state of trance. After a day and night of dancing the initiate is forced to crawl, dazed, into the belly of the earth (a tunnel filled with dead animals and charms). He then emerges as a 'new man.' (Kelner, 2002). Macias himself performed this ritual, as did other young men, shaping a Fang mental world steeped in ethnic group feeling and individual metamorphosis.

Macias, like his father, practiced sorcery. After he had become the President, for instance, he commanded all of the Fang witch doctors in every village to give him their magical staffs. He kept these, gathered together, to draw upon their combined magical powers. In so playing on the credulity of the population, he spread rumors that he possessed super-natural powers, analogous to the voodoo powers of Papa Doc Duvalier of Haiti. It is also said that he practiced cannibalism. While such accusations merit the reader's skepticism, in the case of Macias, he did openly profess practicing witchcraft; and in the end, Fang's belief in magic was a source for his profane political power.

Equatorial Guinea had been Spain's *only* possession in the south of the Sahara; and the Spanish, like the Portuguese, had been reluctant to de-colonize this symbol of their lost empire. For if the French and English colonizers had granted some representation and limited rights to their colonial subjects, in preparation for eventual self-rule, the Spanish wanted only to maintain sovereignty over this their last African colony, south of the Sahara. Isolated from neighbors by the prison of language (Africa's only hispanophone colony) and by the press services of the fascist regime in Madrid (who filtered and censored all news information coming out of their possession), those living in the country had no biographical portraits of Macias

Nguema. It is extremely difficult to talk about his early childhood. For there are no books on the subject, few written records or archives, and most of the people who knew him then are now afraid to talk. 'People prefer not to talk, nor give any testimony about their contact with Macias. No contemporaries of Macias will provide any exact or at least any certain information about the late dictator's personal life. His relatives and siblings – the ones who could have illustrated certain of the most intimate aspects of his early childhood and adolescence – are either dead, or desiring to remain alive, prefer not to talk about their illustrious relative.' (Nfumu, 2006: p. 12)

According to Nfumu the best one can say is that Macias was born approximately in 1924. No exact birth date was ever documented. Officially his birthday was celebrated on January 1<sup>st</sup>, but this was simply a national holiday, chosen for its symbolic value as the first day of the New Year, and not a historical fact. Nfumu says that he was born at a place called *Elig* ('abandoned house' in the local dialect) located just outside of Nsog village in a small jungle clearing, where he and his family lived apart. Orphaned at an early age, Macias grew up with his three older brothers – Bituga, Meñing and Bonifacio – who were always fighting and particularly violent. He knew extreme poverty and probably malnutrition. Since he was physically small, unable to defend himself from sibling violence, he cultivated an introverted personality as a defense mechanism.

Going to school would prove to be his sole escape from an isolated and abusive home. Macias' formal education was limited to a Catholic primary school in Mongomo where he learned to read and write in Spanish. The colony did not yet provide any public education, but Catholic missions had established several mission schools to train priests and convert the natives to Christianity. There he studied and prepared for examinations that would give him *emancipado* status of an assimilated African, a privilege granted only to practicing Catholics. He failed this exam the first three times, only passing it in 1950; 'But he still showed an inferiority complex in relation to foreigners, combined with a haughty disdain for any of his own people who could not speak Spanish.' (Liniger-Goumaz, 1989: 47)

Messie, to distinguish himself, adopted Spanish baptismal names 'Francisco Macias,' borrowed from a fascist colonial officer whom he greatly admired. Working as an office clerk, he found a low-level position in the forestry department (the number-one economic activity) then worked four years on a coffee plantation (the number-two economic activity) before being appointed as Fang-Spanish translator for the Racial Court of Mongomo in 1951. There his role as cultural-linguistic intermediary between the Spaniards and the Fang enabled him both to earn his living and to ingratiate himself with his Spanish superiors, who neither spoke Fang, nor understand the culture. He was in charge of translating their court decisions; many through which he gave native lands to

Spaniards.

This so-called 'Father of Independence' was a Spanish collaborator during the twilight of colonial rule. Macias was an insignificant personality who took no part in the actual struggle for independence, and unlike the other militants who were beginning to resist the Spanish, he continued to work obediently for his colonial masters. Easy to manipulate, they say, because of his limited intellect, he was a tool of Generalissimo Francisco Franco's fascist dictatorship. In a revealing statement that he later made to the Spanish press after he had risen to power, 'During the time that I worked for the Spaniards, they never beat me, nor did I ever receive a single insult or castigation from them. I never offended the white man while he was the boss. When a white man ordered me to clean his toilet, I did it without complaining, and then I cleaned my hands. I learned how to win over the white man by learning how to be his inferior' (Nfumu, 2006: 15).

In 1963, the name of the two provinces was changed to Equatorial Guinea. Dropping the colonial reference to Spanish, setting up a General Assembly with some power to pass laws, a nascent political class was born. More strident nationalists fled into neighboring Gabon and Cameroon to pursue the anti-colonial struggle there. Prominent nationalists were educated *Fernandinos*, creoles who lived on the island of Fernando Poo; and the Bubi, the indigenous islanders, who had fled to the mountains in the interior to avoid forced labor on settler plantations. Working on their own cocoa farms in the mountains had given Bubi villages a considerable degree of economic autonomy, and a spirit of political independence; but they were few in number, and Spain dealt violently with them. Protected from the demands of the planters by influential Spanish missionaries by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Bubi had been unable to successfully struggle for their independence under the fascist regime that came to power in Madrid in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their last rebellion, in 1910, had been suppressed by their own monarch, King Malabo I (1837-1937). This act of collaboration did not save him. Later, after he killed a colonial officer, King Malabo died in prison while serving a life sentence.

If things had happened in Fernando Poo the way they had happened on other islands, it could have been an islander (Bubi or Fernandino) who would have risen to power at independence. They were the most hispanicized, the most assimilated, the most familiar to the colonial authorities, and had not waged war against the Spanish since 1910.

However, the Spanish authorities decided to administratively consolidate the islands with the mainland province of Rio Muni, tragically linking their fate to their populations. The Fang were more numerous and more warlike than the islanders. This was decisive to the future rise of Macias to power.

Macias did not particularly like the islanders. As a young man he had failed the civil service exam three times, an

experience that had left him with a hatred of the educated middle-class creoles. He only cooperated with the Fernandinos because he calculated that, once independent of colonial rule, he would have no difficulty getting rid of these effete intellectuals. With an education limited to the primary-school level, and collaborative subservience to the whites, he had not attracted any supporters among the leaders of the independence movement. Nevertheless, whatever his social and intellectual lacunae, Macias knew how to take advantage of his position, an adept at extracting bribes and kickbacks, and exploiting peasants who needed help; while crassly ingratiating himself to Spanish superiors. It was not until 1963, serving as mayor of Mongomo, that he even joined a political party, *Idea Popular de Guinea Ecuatorial* (IPGE).

Political participation had been hastily organized by the fascists into new political parties. Before then, Madrid had not permitted other political parties to exist ... not even in Spain. Guinea had not experienced an industrial revolution so there was no left-right party spectrum. Nor had its people experienced a national revolution, so there was no large united nationalist party with a long history of struggle for independence as one finds in other African countries. In a sense, all of the political parties were at least nominally nationalist, but the process of nation-building was incomplete. Lacking the normal ideological spectrum, political parties naturally organized along ethnic lines. Ostensibly nationalist parties based on a numerical Fang majority led many Fang politicians to believe that *they* were the nation; but not all Fang adopted this idea. Between autonomy and independence, other Equatoguineans had a more multiethnic political vision, especially exiled creoles who had taken refuge in neighboring Cameroun and Gabon. These exiles had formed into two political movements: *Movimiento nacional de Liberación e la Guinea* (MONALIGE), and *Idea Popular de la Guinea Ecuatorial* (IPGE).

Atanasio Ndongo Miyono, the leader of MONALIGE, led the Fang anti-Spanish opposition before fleeing to Gabon to live in exile and lobbied the UN for de-colonization under the protection of Gabon's President Léon Mba (himself an ethnic Fang). The other leading nationalist figure was a Bubi named Marcos Ropo Uri, who had founded the multi-ethnic IPGE during a critical scission in the MONALIGE liberation movement in 1958-9. While the influence of these two anti-colonial parties was weak, the general trend toward political independence in West Africa was not, and Madrid submitted to the pressure of its ally the United States, holding a referendum on the questions of autonomy in December 1963. Spain permitted a moderate political formation, *Movimiento de Unión Nacional de la Guinea Ecuatorial* (MUNGE) to promote 'national unity' inside the consolidated colonial territory. MUNGE was not considered a threat, because it was inside the territory, and so it could be regulated by the colonial authorities.

Macias' big promotion came in 1964, when he was named the Minister of Public Works in the new autonomous government. He had distinguished himself by extolling the clemency of Spanish judges in his court translations. His work as a clerk for surveyors of the Department of the Public Works in Bata had also given him a reputation of effectiveness. The most influential factor behind his ministerial appointment was the patronage provided him by a shady Spanish businessman named Antonio Garcia Trevijano. Macias had attracted Trevijano's attention while in charge of building public roads along the coastline around Bata –the main connection with Gabon and Cameroon in those days. Trevijano had connections with settlers, businessmen and colonial officers in Santa Isabel (that is 'Malabo'), as well as a phone book full of contacts in Madrid. This Spanish businessman was the one who gave Macias the Spanish contacts he desperately needed to advance his political career.

Under pressure from both the expatriate Equatoguinean nationalists and the United Nations, Spain finally announced it would hold a referendum on independence in 1968. Trevijano was involved in shuttling back-and-forth between Malabo and Madrid to negotiate the interests of the Spanish foresters and other local businesses with the regime in Madrid. He managed to get Macias a rendezvous with Francisco Franco, to draft a new constitution based on the Franco's fascist model. In Africa, colonial powers still had considerable influence in their former colonies. Trevijano saw in Macias the perfect front-man for his own business ambitions, a man who would protect his interests, keeping Santa Isabel in the sphere of influence of Madrid.

A referendum was held on August 11, 1968, in the presence of UN observers, recording 63% of the electorate in favor of independence under a new constitution; but a majority of the Bubi, wary of the mainland Fang, had voted against the proposed constitution. They wanted to be independent of not only the Spanish, but also the Fang. Their campaign slogan – 'Yes to Independence, but without Río Muni' – was tragically ignored. Madrid went ahead and ratified the constitution, based on Franco's centralized fascist system of presidential rule, and scheduled presidential elections, which were contested by three candidates: Bonifacio Ondu Edu (MUNGE) who as transitional president had already developed a reputation for corruption and arrogance, and therefore won only 37% of the vote; Atanasio Ndong Miyone, (founder of MONALIGE) who received 21% of the vote; and Macías Nguema (IPGE) who promised a return to 'traditional Fang values' and won 42% of the vote. Since none of them had a numerical majority, a second-round run-off election was held. Unfortunately, his two opponents refused to join forces. Ndong Miyone threw MONALIGE's support to Macías. This gave him a victory in the second round.

Called the country's unique democratic election, unlike

the subsequent stage-managed spectacles of electioneering, the 1968 ballot victory provided Macias with both the legitimacy to rule and his subsequent moniker of Founding Father.

The defeated Ondo Edu, fearing for his life, sought refuge among his Fang brethren in Gabon. Macias obtained his extradition, placed him under house arrest, accused him of a plot and had him executed, without trial, along with other members of MUNGE, including several deputies. This was followed by an attempted coup d'état, ostensibly staged by Ndong Miyone, his other opponent, who had just helped get him elected. According to the official version, Miyone had stormed the presidential palace with a small troop of loyalists from his fief in Rio Benito, but was 'surprised' by Macias, who, after a heroic hand-to-hand struggle, threw this treacherous opponent out a palace window. More reliable eyewitness testimony said that he had really been convoked to the palace by Macias, where his legs were broken with iron bars by the Presidential Guard, and then he was finished off in prison by the army chief of staff. Hanged in his cell, Miyone's death was reported as a suicide. This was followed, soon after, by the extrajudicial death of his wife.

The West African region was a highly unstable place in those days, in part because its post-colonial states were still nation-building. Macias read Adolf Hitler, and professed admiration for both the man and his ideas (Nfumu, 2006: 17). He came to believe that only by building a popular nationalist movement could he eliminate his political rivals and suppress emerging foreign enemies. He founded a violent youth movement, linked to the army, called *Juventud en marcha con Macias* (Youth on the March with Macias) inspired by the notorious Hitler Youth.

This was when Macias changed from a Spanish collaborator to an anti-Spanish nationalist. On 25 February 1968, while he was traveling through the town of Bata along the coast Macias noticed a Spanish flag flying over some buildings left over from the colonial period. 'All of his suppressed rage over the condescending way the Spanish colonialists had treated him before independence boiled over and he ordered the Spanish consul general to pull down the flags. The consul general refused, so Macias sent a band of his Macias Youths to attack the expatriates.' (Wallechinsky: n.p.) Travelling from plantation to plantation, he delivered radical anti-Spanish speeches on how imperialists had exploited the Equatoguinean people, and in so doing inflamed many unemployed disgruntled youths who went about sacking and pillaging Spanish plantations, resulting in the exodus of more than 6,000 (out of a total 7,000) Spaniard who fled during Macias' first year in office, a portent of things to come.

Having driven out the Spanish settlers no one was left to limit his concentration of power. Macias merged all existing political parties into a new organization, *Partido Único Nacional* (United National Party) which was placed

under his personal control. Its name was later modified to the *Partido Único Nacional de los Trabajadores* (United National Workers Party) commonly known by its acronym PUNT. All political activity outside this ruling party was made illegal. By July 1970, a mere two years after post-independence democratic elections, Macias Nguema had created a one-party authoritarian regime; but it was not until May 1971 that he abrogated the 1968 constitution, and was able to use his party monopoly to establish a regime of personal rule.

In 1972 he proclaimed himself as President for Life and donned more megalomaniacal titles like The Immaculate Apostle of Steel and The Unique Miracle of Equatorial Guinea, and he unleashed his wrath upon the country's intelligentsia. He closed the libraries and prohibited the use of the word 'intellectual,' even fining his education minister for using it at a cabinet meeting. The National Assembly named him Grand Master of Education, Science and Culture. He also attempted to shape the religious practices of this former Spanish Catholic colony by ordering his photograph to hang beside church altars and the clergy to preach in their sermons 'God created Equatorial Guinea thanks to Papa Macias,' including a reminder to the laymen that 'Without Macias, Equatorial Guinea would not exist.' In the end, he banned all religious meetings including funerals, as well as the use of Christian names (Wallechinsky: np).

In 1973 in the name of authenticity he renamed Santa Isabel the capital city 'Malabo' (after the Bubi king) but also renamed Fernando Poo after himself ('Masie Ngueme' Island). He was smoking large quantities of *bhang* and abusing *iboga*, which led him to hallucinate and carry out long crazed monologues with his dead victims. He ordered entire families and villages to be executed. His cruelty led to his comparison with the Ugandan tyrant Idi Amin and Central Africa's Emperor Jean-Bédél Bokassa. Macias displayed a cinematic depravity. During one infamous celebration on Christmas Day 1975 he lined up 150 of his political opponents in a soccer stadium and shot them dead while a macabre brass band played 'Those Were the Days, My Friend.' (Ghazvinian, 2007: 172). Gruesome executions took place in the notorious Black Beach prison, *Playa Negra*. 'When it became too expensive to use bullets, victims were garroted or forced to kneel and have their skulls smashed with iron bars. Some died of thirst; others were buried alive or died from gangrene following torture. To spread terror, some were beheaded, their heads left on poles in the streets.' (Roberts, 2006: 21).

Economically speaking, the country was completely ruined. Almost all productive activity was ground to a standstill. This was in the days before the oil boom and cocoa exports had declined. Only forestry was still providing any revenues. State coffers were emptied. There was not enough money to pay soldiers. When the government director of statistics dared to publish lower-than-expected economic forecasts, Macias said 'You better learn how to count,' had him tied up, and

ordered him to be physically dismembered. The country's central bank was closed down. Foreign currency went back to his home village where the state treasury was placed at his disposal in cash for his personal discretionary use. When the governor of the former central bank tried to stop him, Macias had him executed. Unpaid soldiers began kidnapping foreigners and holding them for ransom (Bartrop, 2012). Macias, to prevent his people from escaping the country, ordered his men to destroy all fishing boats and to mine the only road leading out of Rio Muni. Despite these policies, one-third of the population managed to escape into exile.

Personal despotism was colored by dynastic style. Nguema's family and his larger clan controlled all the institutions of government. By 1978 both the civilian ministries and armed forces were all dominated by Fang Esangui from Mongomo. His cousin Esono Nguema was both the vice president and the minister of foreign affairs. One of his nephews, Ayingono Oyono, was simultaneously the minister of finance, minister of trade and industry, director of information, director-general of security, secretary of state for the presidency, chief of protocol and the commissioner for state enterprises. His cousin Feliciano Oyono was permanent secretary of the ruling party PUNT. Another of his cousins, Oñana Mba, commanded a company of the National Guard while yet another, Maye Ela, was military commander of Bata. His 'nephew,' Obiang Nguema, who commanded the National Guard, was the military governor of Masie Nguema (that is Bioko) Island (Liniger-Goumaz, 1989: 61).

During his 1979 trial, Macias had defended himself by replying, 'I was President of the Republic, not Director of Prisons' (Liniger-Goumaz, 2013: 41), a remark intended to implicate his nephews Obiang and Ela, who were the prison directors responsible for running the infamous *Playa Negra*. In 1980 a special reporter for the Human Rights Commission underlined that the torture and arrest of priests had become more aggravated in 1975, the year that Obiang and his acolytes had been promoted to their prison directorships. The 1979 coup removed a head of state but not the dominance of his clan or the system of political kinship. It is this continuity and not change which merits attention. A resident in the capital city observed that 'fifteen months after the fall of Macias, the situation in Equatorial Guinea has hardly changed. Behind the wheels of new automobiles you can often see the new leaders of the country who were old ones, that is to say, the same ones during the Macias era, and who, with rare exceptions, come from Mongomo, and belong to the clan which had dominated the country during the previous era.' (Liniger-Goumaz, 2013: 46).

By the end of 1980 the new government was overwhelmingly composed of members of the Mongomo clan, mostly Essangui Fang. At the top of the pyramid was Obiang Nguema, President of the Republic, President of the Supreme Military Council, Head of State, Head of Government, Minister of Defense and Security, Minister of

the Economy and Finances, and Minister of Information (He was an Essangui of the Mongomo clan). The First Vice President and Minister of Foreign Affairs was Maye Ela (also Mongomo). The Minister of Public Administration, then Minister of Health was P. Obama Ondo Eyang (Essangui of Mongomo). The Minister of the Interior was F. Mba Nchama (Mongomo), Minister of Education T. Mene Abeso (Essangui of Mongomo), Minister of Justice P. Mensuy Mba (Mongomo); Minister of Agriculture P. Obiang Enama (Mongomo); and Minister of Industry, Mines and Energy P. Nsué Obama (Esangui of Mongomo). One Mongomo cousin was ambassador to the OAU. Another one ran the UN mission in New York. One nephew served as the UN Ambassador, C. Nvono Nka Manene (Essangui of Mongomo). Another one served as the Ambassador to Nigeria, J. Micha Nsue (Esangui of Mongomo). And another one, A. Owono Assangono (Esangui of Mongomo) was Ambassador to both Spain and Italy. All key security positions were held by clan members, like M. Ndongo Mba (Esangui of Mongomo), the military governor of Bioko (Liniger-Goumaz, 2013: pp. 33-34).

There is not much to say about the private household life of this mad ruler. Driven by his narcissism he slept around with many women and sired many bastards, and it is even said that he killed the lovers of his third wife and husbands of other women he desired; extrajudicial killings, no investigations. After being orphaned, his brothers had not provided him a good model of parenthood. He did get married, three times, and refuting rumors he was sterile, he produced three known legitimate children. Shortly before his death in 1979, he negotiated a deal with the Kim Il-Sung of North Korea to send his wife and three children to Pyongyang, where they lived the next fifteen years. His youngest child just published her memoirs *I'm Monique, From Pyongyang* (2013) in Korea, recalling being scolded by a grandfatherly Kim Il-Sung to study hard. Both she and her brother Francisco attended the same prestigious military academy as the Great Leader's son, Kim Jong-il. A strange coincidence, this anecdote involving two hereditary republics, it raised the specter of preparing Macias' natural children for a return to power; but that never happened. They played no role in the first dynastic succession (Wolledge, 2013).

Figure 1 provides a simplified genealogy to highlight some key members of the dynasty. Notice that there are no bloodlines connecting the family of Macias and Obiang Nguema. Macias is usually identified as having been an 'uncle' of Obiang; however he has clarified this.

'Macias was not one of my uncles, despite what people often imagine. In the Fang ethnicity, there exists a tradition of the 'large family' or tribe, like in most other African countries. Those who belong to it have affinity relations, great respect for one another, on many levels; but in reality, those whom one calls 'uncles' are most often distant 'cousins' who belong to the same tribe, but are not from the same family lineage.' (Nguema, 2007: 19)

Similarly the term 'brother' is often used by the Fang to refer to step- or half-brothers without the slightest importance given to the blood distinction; but it would be wrong to think of such fraternal relationships as being distant for they were raised together as brothers in the same household. They *felt* like full blood brothers.

Instead of hereditary succession from father to son the Nguema dynasty transferred power along another branch of the large family tree, that is, along the branch of the Esangui clan. Commenting on a rooster icon that Macias has chosen as his party mascot in 1968, Obiang explained their common ancestry: 'I come from the same tribe as Macias, we have the same genealogical roots, and we know our ancestors for many generations, perhaps even to the time before Christ, and we can recite them by heart. At the very origin of this series of generations and ancestors is a rooster. It was a reference to our mythological family' (Nguema, 2007: 47).

## Second Generation: Obiang Nguema

Obiang was the son of a Gabonese father who came from a branch of the Essangui clan living on the Gabon side of the border, the 'Kos-Essangui' (Nfumu, 2006). 'I was born on June 5, 1942 in the small village of Akoakam, three kilometers from Mongomo, a locality that is situated east of the territory of Equatorial Guinea. The name of Akoakam comes from two Fang words: 'stone' and 'safe refuge.' Also it's true that I do remember my birthplace as a solid and comfortable environment. This village is located in the zone of the Esangui tribe who belong to the greater ensemble of the Fang ethnicity.' (Nguema, 2007: 18-19). His parents Santiago Nguema Eneme and Maria Mbasogo Nguema had five children. Teodoro was the eldest son. He had two older sisters, Immaculada Awomo and Agustina Nchama, in addition to a younger brother and sister, Armengol Ondo and Maria Luisa Mengue. His parents were polygamous. 'When my mother found that my father was beginning to advance in age, she advised him to take a younger second wife whom she had chosen herself. This second wife, Carmen Mikue Mbira, bore my father five children. Among these five half-brothers and sisters is Antonio Mba Nguema, who is currently a general. My mother died when I was twelve years old, and so it was my stepmother who took care of us, who raised us. She still lives in our village, but a lot of my close relatives now live with me in the capital, Malabo (Nguema, 2007: 19). At her funeral in 2014 this stemother, 'Mama Mbom,' was mourned by some 150 grandchildren.

His father died in 1974. He had been a hunter and farmer. In his youth he had worked on French forestry concessions in Gabon, mostly because he wanted to earn enough money to get married. That was where he met Teodoro's mother, in French Gabon, not Spanish Guinea. Teodoro was the only member of his family who went to school, when he was ten years old. The closest school to



his village was located in the main town of his district, Mongomo, three kilometers away. It was a secular school, an official government school, rude grass shacks built out of local materials. All of its teachers were Guineans. 'It was not until later, in 1959, at *Colegio de los Hnos de La Salle*, in Bata, that I first had any Spanish teachers' (Nguema, 2007: 20). Each class had between 150-to-200 students, and one teacher, whose aim was to implement the official policy of assimilation. 'In all the schools of my country only the language of the colonizer was used, and so my education was all in Spanish. When I arrived on the first day of class, I could not even speak a word of it. I had to learn this language at the same time that I learned my other subjects, because they were all taught in Spanish' (Nguema, 2007: 21). School teachers maintained an iron discipline. 'If you arrived late, talked during class, or fought with other classmates, they had punishments, often severe, even corporal punishments, for example, with a cane or a stick. I understand today that this was part of our education' (Nguema, 2007: 22) After elementary school in Mongomo, he attended *Collège Cardinal-Cisneros* in Ebebiyin, the closest public secondary school in the northeastern extremity of the country near the borders with Cameroon and Gabon. Classrooms were just as overcrowded in Ebebiyin as they had been in Mongomo. There were only two professors.

'It was more than 80 kilometers away from Mongomo, so obviously I could not get there on foot. I was obliged to live there. Since I didn't have any family living in Ebebiyin, I found myself with friends whose families let me stay in their homes. They didn't charge me anything to stay in their homes, but I did have to contribute a little money for food and supplies, and participate in domestic tasks. I was therefore obliged to work: loading trucks, carrying water, doing small favors for people and chores for local merchants. The schooling was free, and this work familiarized me with manual labor.' (Nguema, 2007: 24)

In order to study there, the law had stipulated that children must be baptized first. 'I had not been baptized. Therefore I started going to catechism and they eventually baptized me in the church at Ebebiyin, when I was fifteen years old. I was the one who chose my baptismal name, Teodoro.' (Nguema, 2007: 26)

He became a monitor, or teaching assistant, at the *Colegio de los Hnos de La Salle*. 'Once my classes at Ebebiyin were finished, I wanted to go to the Mission school at Bata, because that could get me into the *Ecole Supérieure Indigène* (ESI) to become a teacher or an administrative assistant. So I moved to Bata in 1959. I had some family there, my big sister Agustina Nchama, who welcomed me to live with her in a completely unselfish way' (Nguema, 2007: 27). He was admitted into the College of the Brothers of La Salle, who asked him if he wanted to be a monitor, that is, a student who continued to study while taking care of younger students. He passed the test, and became one of the school's ten monitors. 'Before La Salle, in the schools I went to, I had never had any real Spanish classmates; but this was a European-level

establishment, so now I did have them. There were only boys. It was not a co-ed school. There were a lot of Spanish boarders as well as some Guineans who shared the same quarters, the same bedrooms. Although there were two dining halls, one for the young Spaniards and rich Guineans, the other for the children of less fortunate parents, this was less about racial discrimination and more about financial discrimination. In the end, all of our coursework was rigorously the same.' (Nguema, 2007: 28)

His metamorphosis from an aspiring teacher to a military cadet occurred at this time. 'I was studying in a religious establishment, but had a taste for military discipline. I had a brother who was a soldier. When I paid him a visit at his quarters in Bata, I admired how the military were so well organized. I had even asked if I could be an intern at his camp during vacation, but the commander – a Spaniard – refused' (Nguema, 2007: 30). While he was studying at La Salle, he heard that the colonial authorities were organizing a competitive examination for admission to officer training in the Territorial Guard. Winners were to be given scholarships to attend the Zaragoza Military Academy in Spain. 'Immediately I realized that this would be an excellent opportunity, not only to become a soldier, but to directly accede to the rank of officer. I was one of the only two students at La Salle who was admitted.' (Nguema, 2007: 32)

Zaragoza Military Academy was richly endowed during the era of fascist rule. Francisco Franco had once been its director, in 1928. After he won the Spanish Civil War, he had transformed it into the most prestigious military academy in the country. King Juan Carlos I, for instance, was a graduate. Those twelve junior officers from Spanish Guinea – including Obiang – who graduated from Zaragoza are known as the *Grupo de Zaragoza*. 'At the Academy our Spanish classmates were by far the most numerous, more than a thousand of them, while we were only ten Equatoguineans. There were no students coming from any other origins. I made many friends' (Nguema, 2007: 33).

The original plan had been that he would follow exactly the same general preparation under the same conditions as his Spanish classmates, then return home, while the others would continue for two more years, finishing their specialization in different academies like infantry, cavalry, artillery, and so on. 'But after our first year, there was a change in the educational policy, and a system of separate education was established for us. While our thousand Spanish classmates continued to follow what was essentially military instruction, we received more classes about the history and geography of Spain! We were disappointed. We had the distinct impression that the Spanish authorities no longer wanted to provide us advanced military training, contrary to what they had said before.' (Nguema, 2007: 34-35).

In 1965, he left the Academy with the rank of second-lieutenant. His first assignment was Micomeseng in the northern region of Rio Muni along the border with ex-French Cameroon. 'There had been quite a few incidents in that region, notably with our exiled brothers

who were starting to launch operations against the Spanish. I was assigned there, with one of my classmates. I was still a single man in those days; but like any young person who begins to feel responsible for his own existence, I was already thinking about getting married. So when I was garrisoned at Micomeseng, I paid a visit to Constanca Mangué Nsue at the religious school in Bata where she was studying. I had known her as an adolescent, when she lived next door to the family I was staying with. She and I were able to see one another more often when I was stationed in Bata, and we got engaged in 1967. In Malabo in June 1968, independence was declared on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October, 1968, and two months later, we were married in the church at Mongomo' (Nguema, 2007: 36).

'She is the First Lady, the one who shares my life, officially and privately, who discretely backs me up, who devoutly takes care of my home. She is also the one who has given me three children, the eldest a few years after our marriage, then the twins a few years later. My private life may sometimes appear complicated in the eyes of foreigners, because I'm African, and so I live according to African traditions. Even after my marriage, I kept in contact with other women, who gave me other children I acknowledged. My second wife is the mother of six children. The oldest of them, today an adult, holds an official function in the government [Defense Minister Antonio Mba Nguema]. The difficulties my two wives might have had all disappeared in the end. Today they have good relations and share the exalted task of raising our children. The future is in their hands, working so that our children will be our projection into the future, and in so doing, insuring our continuity. Elsewhere I have had other children, who I do not recognize as my rightful heirs but who I take care of anyway. They have my support and my protection. I think that I ought to fulfill my duty towards them' (Nguema, 2007: 36-37).

In his memoirs, Obiang paints an unflattering portrait of his predecessor, constructing his legitimacy by delegitimizing his predecessor. 'A cult of personality flourished under Macias. We endlessly sang his praises. We built statues of him in public places. His effigy figured everywhere, on our stamps, on our bank notes. The North Koreans, who have taken the art of apologetic propaganda to its farthest point, made a film about him in the 1970s, an incredible panegyric without nuance, showing that he wanted to be seen as an African Kim Il-sung, with that apparent characteristic of the Korean 'Great Leader' being appreciated by his people on account of the 'progress' which he had brought them' (Nguema, 2007: 62-63).

'The army remained legalist, pacific, essentially passive. Macias had created a Militia that was composed only of his partisans, a unit which had a tendency to supplant the army. That was how his confidence with the army progressively degraded, and it saw itself progressively separated from effective responsibilities. The same happened with the police, also marginalized by

this Militia. Myself, at that time I was in charge of the land forces, a function which I had assumed at the moment of independence because I had been one of the highest ranking officers present in the capital. Macias Nguema had kept the post of defense minister for himself, assisted by a secretary general of defense. I was named to that post in June 1976. So I had been obliged to see him often. It was not possible to speak with him frankly about any problems, for example, the role of his Militia. There was no point in that. The Militia was commanded by diverse politicians, who were all very close to Macias. Ultimately the Youth on the March with Macias merged into the Militia. Youth constituted one of the main political forces of power for Macias' (Nguema, 2007: 68-69)

'Those later called '*Grupo de Zaragoza*' were comprised of officers who had been classmates of mine in Spain at the Zaragoza Military Academy, aroused a general mistrust, because we were qualified as pro-Spanish! We were submitted permanently to surveillance and several of my companions fell into disgrace and were even brutally expelled from the army. Officers, still controlled by politicians, were sent to bases around the national territory. We were deliberately dispersed. There was no question of letting us meet and put our heads together about anything. Macias mistrusted everybody, notably in the army. Over the final years, the situation had so degraded, on both the economic and the political level, that it had become really catastrophic' (Nguema, 2007: 69)

'While he was still in Bata, and I was in Malabo, he ordered me to work beside him. He was starting to mistrust me; and he was right. Not that I ever imagined undertaking anything against him, I was simply in complete disagreement with his means of acting and governing. Macias gave me a lot of dossiers, but these were often unrelated to the army and my official functions. Once when I came to his village, during an interview held in the middle of the forest, I noticed that he had a bad feeling about me, and that it was less an interview than an accusation. He asked me questions which showed that he had bad feelings about me. Perhaps someone had denounced me, or simply said something about me that was negative. Surely I had not undertaken any conspiracy against him, but there were jealousies, an entourage who did not want me around. I felt that Macias had lost all his confidence in me' (Nguema, 2007: 72-73).

Macias had heard a rumor about an attempted coup, and called Obiang to leave Malabo and come to Bata. Obiang made numerous pretexts (no airplane available, not enough fuel) until Macias sent a military contingent to seize Malabo's central square and force him to come. The army divided into two groups, those in Bata, who would fight for Macias, and others in Malabo, who wanted change, and saw in Obiang a leader capable of taking the country's institutions out of their insupportable situation. 'When the rebellion really started, on August 3, 1979, with the occupation of strategic point in Bata, several armed skirmishes erupted. Malabo, meanwhile, remained calm.

Macias tried to react with soldiers based in Bata, but was forced to recognize that a great number of them had already abandoned him and come over to my side. Some of those who were in favor of Macias had tried to appeal to me. I tried to explain to them that the era of Macias was over and the time for change had come. Bitter combats happened around the presidential palace, which fell after several hours of struggle. The partisans of Macias, the small group of loyal ones who were still by his side and who were being assisted by Chinese and North Korean military advisors, had left their bases in the interior up until Niefang, where they fought elements coming from Bata. The combats were hard, the two parties using heavy armaments. From Malabo, seeing the resistance of Macias' forces, I myself had sent reinforcements by airplane, to help that fraction of the army which had trusted me and was fighting on our side. The situation at Niefang remained undecided for several hours. There were real confrontations causing numerous deaths' (Nguema, 2007: 74). Eventually Macias and his remaining unit of armed advisors were blocked in the forests on the way to Cameroon. He had fled with a small group of loyalists, but had been prevented by Obiang's supporters, who cut down trees on the roads, forcing him to flee on foot through the forest. He was recognized and denounced by women who were working in the fields near the village of Noankien, in the Mongomo district. The rest of the story is legendary.

When the soldiers came to arrest him, it is said that Macias fled into the jungle, carrying with him two suitcases full of cash, which constituted the remainder of the national treasury. Hunting him down through the tropical rainforests and finding him hidden in a small cabin, his clansmen told him he was surrounded, that he must either surrender or die. According to one version of this legend before he came out with his hands on his head he had burned all \$105 million of the cash (Ungar, 1989: 424). Soldiers dragged him back handcuffed to face the Supreme Military Council, a kangaroo court that found him guilty and sentenced him to death; but fearing his witch-doctor-of-an-uncle's ghost might take revenge from beyond, Obiang sent a Moroccan firing-squad to shoot him. Killing one's uncle is an unspeakable taboo among the Fang people tantamount to parricide. So Obiang's seizure of power was not without its problems of legitimacy. Macias' madness had justified his nephew's 1979 coup, not his holding power ever since. Obiang is Africa's longest, and the world's third-longest, ruling non-royal head of state.

'The majority of my friends from the *Grupo de Zaragoza* had been kicked out of the army and had returned to their villages. I was practically the only one left in office. I asked them join me to reorganize the army and take control of the novel situation.' (Ungar, 1989: 77). Obiang and his *Grupo de Zaragoza* were probably able to maintain their grip on power because they served Western interests. The historical context was the Cold War, and the regime of

Macias Nguema had been serving Soviet neo-colonial interests (Liniger-Goumaz, 2013: p. 30). This is why, following the 1979 coup, major Western powers celebrated the end of Macias' communist dictatorship. International financial organizations expressed their overflowing enthusiasm for the potential of Obiang to start new projects with foreign credits.

The two main foreign interests concerned with the country's resources were Spain and France. Spain saw its opportunity to re-engage with its former colony and in 1980 invited fifteen Equatoguinean soldiers to train at its *Academia de los Grupos Especiales de Operaciones*, in Guadalajara, and sent military advisors and police officers to Equatorial Guinea with large quantities of anti-riot equipment. France had been trying to enter Equatoguinean offshore waters to conduct exploratory oil drilling and therefore now made a determined effort to cultivate better relations with the new regime in Malabo. In 1985, France granted the country membership in the CFA franc zone, that is, its African currency zone (despite it never having been a French colony). The United States was also interested. Major U.S. oil companies were making discoveries elsewhere in the Gulf of Guinea, so they knew that large reserves were waiting to be discovered offshore around the islands.

Equatorial Guinea's oil story had begun during the colonial era when Spanish seismic crews found signs of potential petroleum deposits offshore. Spain did not have a national petroleum company with sufficient technological prowess to drill deep-water offshore and therefore had left these oilfields undeveloped, until the French Elf-Aquitaine; pioneer of offshore drilling in neighboring Gabon, tried to help the Gabonese to annex two islets on the border – Mbanie and Corisco – so as to gain access to their sub-surface oil reservoirs. Gabonese President Omar Bongo claimed the islands had been inhabited by tribes from his country; but the International Court decided that they legally belonged to Equatorial Guinea. Obiang angrily cut his ties with the French oil men for many years after that dispute over the islets. This was when a new American ambassador, a Texas oil man arrived in Malabo, his tenure (1988-92), seeing the first contracts signed by U.S. oil firm Walter International; this independent Houston firm eventually re-sold to Mobil Oil. When ExxonMobil started producing oil in 1993 the formerly invisible Equatorial Guinea became a strategic asset in US national energy security policy.

According to IMF country reports, between 1993 and 2007, government revenues increased from \$2.1 million to \$3.9 billion (IMF, 1998: 27; IMF, 2009: 25), windfall revenues derived, almost exclusively, from oil. After the discovery of Zafiro field in 1995, oil production increased dramatically, peaking some ten years later at 376,000 barrels per day (Energy Information Administration (EIA), 2012). US Ambassador, Chester Norris, had been appointed by George H.W. Bush after serving in Saudi Arabia and then in Lagos at the US embassy in oil-rich

Nigeria. After his retirement, Norris became a consultant for Ocean Energy, a firm involved in oil drilling in Equatorial Guinea. The main street in the wealthiest suburb of Malabo is named Chester E. Norris Avenue (Silverstein, 2002). Taking advantage of the vacuum left by the incapable Spanish and insatiable French, Norris helped to negotiate an agreement for American oil firm to acquire vast offshore concessions and drilling rights, in exchange for millions of dollars being deposited offshore at the Riggs Bank in Washington D.C. Obiang was the sole signatory on the first accounts at the Riggs Bank. This was his first major oil deal. All of the country's oil revenues would soon be run through Riggs Bank accounts to which only Obiang and members of the ruling clan had access, oil-revenues of the Equatoguinean state being thereby discretely converted into the private Nguema family estate.

Meanwhile the indigenous Bubi believed this oil located around their island was *theirs*. In 1998, an angry group of Bubi youths attacked Obiang's soldiers with rifles and hunting knives, trying to throw off the Fang yoke. Retribution by the Nguemas came swiftly and brutally. 'Soldiers and Fang civilians dragged Bubis from buses and their homes and beat them; some were executed. At police stations, men had their shoulders dislocated; women were raped and made to 'swim' naked in mud and 'show what they did with their husbands.' One woman was told – regarding the fork that had been thrust into her vagina – 'from now on, that is your husband.' (Shaxson, 2008: p. 123) Soldiers bound the hands and feet of Bubi prisoners behind their backs. Then they cut off the tops of their ears with scissors, before smearing them in sardines and dumping them in stinging ants.

Those ants were a specialty of Obiang's younger half-brother, Armengol Nguema Mbasogo Ondo, head of national security, who had seen this sadistic form of public execution during the time of his uncle, and perfected under the regime of his older brother. Over the decades, Armengol had cultivated his reputation as a sadist and torturer to inspire fear. According to Montesquieu (2008: 127), 'despotic government has fear as its principle'. Wearing a pistol, which he liked to use in front of others, Armengol hid his own fear behind a mask of terror. Usually, he travelled around the country with Moroccan mercenaries. His henchmen in the country's prisons systematically held inmates in decrepit conditions without access to the basic necessities. 'Prison authorities tortured, beat, and otherwise abused prisoners and that such abuse, combined with a lack of medical care, resulted in the deaths of prisoners' (U.S. State Department, 2001). Only those who could pay cash were able to procure what they needed. Few could avoid house-of-horror methods of torture and deprivation of the country's prisons; the most dreaded being *Playa Negra*, or Black Beach.

Armengol had not participated in the 1979 coup, because he had not been a professional soldier at that time. In fact, before the palace coup he had been a

practically illiterate peasant who had practiced a little farming. He spent most of his time hunting in the jungles around Mongomo. After 1979, Obiang provided his younger brother with lessons in reading and writing and sent him to Morocco for military training. He also paid for his training by Israeli security experts on how to protect the presidency from internal threats (Liniger-Goumaz, 1993: p. 285). These rapid promotions to the pinnacle of power can only be explained by nepotism.

The Nguema brothers can be compared to the Assad brothers of Syria, or the Gnassingbé brothers of Togo, violent, brutal, and lawless. Like those other authoritarian dynasties, a festering sibling rivalry erupted into a political affair. Armengol coveted the presidency, but Obiang preferred his son. In a normal family this would have been a psychological problem dealt with in therapy; but in a dynastic regime, it can turn into a political problem. The early years of the regime Armengol acted in ways that maintained his position. In 1981, for example, he and Mba Oñana, one of his cousins from the Mongomo clan, violently repressed a small group of ostensible plotters in a supposed coup to overthrow his brother, although no judicial process would ever prove their guilt or even the existence of such a plot. His older brother rewarded him by naming him chief escort of the president, deputy director of Banco de Crédito y Desarrollo and a member of the board of directors of Banco Exterior de Guinea Ecuatorial y España ('Guinextebank'); a mixed public-private import-export bank comprised of the Equatoguinean government and Banco Exterior de España. All four members of the board of directors – Mba Oñana, Efua Efua, Ondo Mañe, and Armengol Nguema – came from the Mongomo clan. From its debut, it had been an empty sack, and in 1985 the Spanish finance minister had actually tried to sell Spain's part of the bank to the French Banque Internationale de l'Afrique Occidentale; Paris was not interested. This was before the oil boom.

Price Waterhouse audited Guinexte bank in 1987, reporting that over half of its losses could be accounted for by political loans accorded to members of the Nguemist government, by relatives of the ruling clan, or by businesses associated with them. First Lady Constancia Nguema had received a 20 million CFA loan to open a hair salon. The finance minister received 20 million, and the prime minister, 13 million, for their own businesses. A brother of the deputy director of the bank received an 11 million peseta loan to import unsold leftover jumper sweaters from Valencia. Even a member of its board of directors, Mba Oñana, was granted a loan for 6 million. Other members of the regime who received loans from the bank were the minister of mines of hydrocarbons (8 million), a former defense minister (7 million) and the wife of a former prime minister (6 million). In total, members of the regime accounted for 423 million pesetas of the bank's unpaid debt, which at the moment of its dissolution, in 1988, was an unbearable 1.3 billion pesetas. The listing of its principal creditors showed how political loans allowed

the dynasty to amass personal fortunes: Obiang (162 million CFA), Constance (40 million), brother-in-law Olo Mba Nzeng (21 million), cousin Mba Oñana (14 million) and the wife of that cousin (16 million), another cousin Mensuy Mba (12 million), nine other members of the Mongomo clan (81 million), and Oyo Riquezza and Sericho Bioco, members of the Zaragoza Group (64 million). By themselves Obiang and his wife accounted for 47% or almost half of these corrupt 'political loans' (Liniger-Goumaz, 1993: 227-232)

The World Bank was trying to put Equatorial Guinea on the path of structural adjustment, and for two and a half years, Robert Klitgaard worked on these neoliberal reforms inside the country; later publishing *Tropical Gangsters* about corruption and human rights violations. 'Unpaid loans to Spanish businessmen and government officials have left Guinexte bank broke,' he lamented. 'Honest people cannot retrieve their savings or take money from their checking accounts. Taxes cannot be paid' (Klitgaard, 1990: 2). All his efforts to re-launch cocoa production were a failure. Then on August 9<sup>th</sup> 1988, an attempt was made to assassinate Obiang, and Klitgaard witnessed first-hand how the security apparatus of the state functioned, its arbitrary arrests and detentions. His interview with Don Armengol was chilling (Klitgaard, 1990: 241).

Things changed for the Nguema family with big oil money, billions of dollars in revenues and not millions. For a long time Armengol thought that he would acquire the presidency from his brother and enjoy the perks of power his uncle Macias had enjoyed during the first years of independence; this time enjoying them with the financial support of the Americans, so long as he allowed them to exploit his country's resources. Once oil rents started coming into Riggs Bank, the family started acquiring multi-million-dollar mansions in the United States, and the prize of presidential power just too great a temptation for him to sit back and accept his elder brother's plan for hereditary succession by Teodorin. Their sibling rivalry eventually manifested itself politically in the 'Wonga Coup' of 2014 (Roberts, 2006). This attempted coup was carried out by mercenaries, paid for by British financiers, to overthrow Obiang and replace him with exiled opposition leader Severo Moto, who had promised to grant preferential concessions to oil corporations affiliated with the coup plotters. A dramatic version of it was later broadcast on British television. It grabbed world attention because Mark Thatcher, son of the former U.K. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, was arrested in South Africa, and later pled guilty to having helped finance it. South African police proved that he had transferred \$285,000 to the mercenaries involved and had met and talked frequently to them prior to their attempt. The man who led this failed coup, Simon Mann, was a British mercenary who founded Executive Outcomes, which fought on the side of the Dos Santos regime in Angola and also protected the Kabbah government of Sierra Leone. Both missions were successful. Mann also helped found

another private security force, Sandline, earning a dog-of-war reputation as somebody who could provide decisive tactical victories in weak African states; but on this occasion he chose the losing side.

'Obiang is a billionaire,' he explained. When billionaires holler for help, help comes' (Mann, 2011: p. 48). Mann was arrested in Zimbabwe and spent the next three years in a Harare jail, where he wrote his memoirs. 'Moto had a man at the heart of Obiang's court,' he wrote, 'someone next to the President is secretly plotting against him' (Mann, 2011: 50). Suspicion was soon cast in Armengol's direction. One of Mann's main co-conspirators had been a South African arms dealer named Nicolas du Toit, who had been arrested in Malabo, tried in an Equatorial Guinean court, and sentenced to a 34-years prison sentence. Du Toit and Armengol were shareholders in a private security company called Triple Options that was implicated by regime's prosecutors in the attempted coup. This was the pretext Teodorin needed to attack his uncle, convincing his father that Armengol was no longer trustworthy enough to let him run presidential security.

Armengol was being pushed out of the president's inner circle by Obiang's wife and children. At the 2012 party congress, Obiang was re-elected leader of the PDGE, and his wife Constanca was elected honorary president of the women's party's organization. His son Teodorin is president of the party's youth organization, in addition to serving as Vice President of the Republic, that is, number two in the line of succession. Other close relatives of Obiang hold ministerial portfolios, including his younger son Gabriel Mbega Lima (minister of mines), his 'uncle' (step-brother) Antonio Mba Nguema (defense minister) and his 'nephew' Nicolas Mbama Nchama, (national security). Armengol is no longer head of presidential security, but reportedly spends most of his time at his Virginia estate in the United States.

Obiang's cabinet includes an impressive number of Essangui Fang from Mongomo: Deputy Prime Minister Clemente Engonga Nguema Onguene (step-brother of the president), Minister of Defense Antonio Mba Nguema (step-brother), Minister of Mines Gabriel Mbega Obiang Lima (president's son by a Saotomean woman), Minister of Finance Miguel Engonga Obiang Eyang, Minister of Transportation and PTT Bonifacio Bacale Obiang, Civil Aviation Leandro Nguema Mba (another son), PDGE leader Ricardo ('Riki') Mangue Obama Nfube,

### Third Generation: Teodorin Nguema

The regime has harsh *lèse majesté* laws with heavy prison sentences imposed upon anyone who defames the head of state. As for the private life of the presidential family, such matters are kept secret. To live happily, the expression goes, live hidden. Even the most discreet family portrait in the conventional sense of the term would have to include the First Lady Constanca Mangue Nsue de Obiang, born in 1952 in Angong, a town near Mongomo

and educated by Spanish nuns at a mission school in Bata. In 1969 she gave birth to the president's oldest son and heir apparent, Teodorin. Her official role as Obiang's consort, and her continuous social activities, make her a prominent public figure in Equatorial Guinea. Her proximity to the person of the neo-patrimonial ruler is her major source of influence. Even a dictator suspicious of other kinsfolk may come to treat the mother of his children as a close and personal confidant. Obiang's choice of Teodorin as heir to the throne is an indicator of just such proximity and spousal complicity of Constanca.

Constancia has long exercised a real power over her husband. 'She is the real boss,' said one seasoned former diplomat, 'the archetypal manipulator, gifted with a strong personality and an undeniable natural authority. If she were to disappear, the father and son would have a hard time doing what she does.' (Hugeux, 2014: p. 226) She claims to come from a more prestigious line of the Mongomo Clan than her husband. Others say that she does not, pointing to her many name permutations as evidence: that is Constanca Obiang, Constanca Mangué de Obiang, Constanca Nsue Mangué, Constanca Mangué Nsue de Obiang, and Constanca Mangué Nsue Okomo. This last name comes from her mother, reputed to be a Fang sorceress who uses her powers to cast the president's fortune.

Internationally she works with Sylvia Attias (ex-wife of French President Nicolas Sarkozy now married to Richard Attias) run an annual dog-and-pony show for foreign investors called the New York Forum Africa, where Constanca and Sylvia have given speeches about the empowerment of women, and bestowed awards. The foreign press corps is flown each year to Malabo to attend these spectacles which grace the First Lady with lavish media coverage. One apogee of the First Lady's personal matriarchy is her recent donation to four Fang women from Mongomo who represented groups of women merchants in Ebebiyin and Eyiayon. 'The event took place at the Presidential Palace of Koete, Mongomo, where they received *thirty million in cash* from the patroness of the national education system,' proudly wrote Benjamin Mangué Micha (note his middle name) on the official government webpage: 'After the donation, the beneficiaries expressed their gratitude for the support of Constanca Mangué, who oversees the empowerment of women in Equatorial Guinea' (July 24, 2015).

Of course, had this money not been embezzled from the public purse, it might have arrived in that village through normal government spending. As influential inside the country as she is unknown to the outside world, Constanca has been closely watching over the destiny of her eldest son Teodorin. 'She will continue to support Teodorin whatever the cost,' said one former ambassador: 'She is an African Jewish mother' (Hugeux, 2014: 222). She is said to have convinced her husband to reform the country's constitution in 2011, introducing the office of vice president. Six months later, Teodorin was appointed to

the post of second vice president in charge of defense and domestic security, an office not even mentioned in the recent constitutional amendment passed by a plebiscite. Plagued by US criminal corruption charges and pending charges for *biens mal acquis* (ill-gotten goods) in France, when two French judges got Interpol to issue an international warrant for his arrest, Teodorin asked his mother to convince his father to pressure Paris to stop the investigation. The arrest warrant has since been lifted. 'Anyone other than Téodorin would have been neutralized,' said the same ambassador, 'as his father could plainly see the political and diplomatic damage being caused by these passing whims' (Hugeux, 2014: 223).

In addition to Téodorin, she also has promoted the well-being of her other children. Her daughter Almudena was given a job at France Télécom Orange in 2007. After the First Lady came to personally thank the director of the Malabo branch, Almudena was suddenly and without justification propelled to the post of assistant to the director. Almudena never worked, but at least she showed up to work. 'Every morning,' he recalls, 'her chauffeur would drop her off at the office' (Hugeux, 2014: 225). Ruslan Obiang Nsue, the middle son, was named the new minister of youth and sports in 2012, and her youngest son Wenceslas is the head of protocol at the palace. "He was eventually tried in absentia by the French courts and, on 27 October 2017, was sentenced to a three-year suspended jail term and a fine of €30 million for embezzlement, money-laundering, corruption and abuse of trust."

In their report, *The Secret Life of a Shopaholic: How An African Dictator's Playboy Son Went On A Multi-Million Dollar Shopping Spree in the U.S.* (2009) the anti-corruption watchdog Global Witness published startling revelations about the lifestyle of the forestry minister. 'Despite an official salary of \$4,000-\$5,000 a month as a minister in his dad's government, Teodorin has acquired a fleet of fast cars, a \$35 million mansion in Malibu, a private jet, and he is reported to be building a 200-foot custom luxury yacht, complete with shark tank.' Despite the closure of Riggs Bank in 2004, the report explained, several major U.S. banks (Bank of America, Wachovia, UBS, Union Bank of California and First American Trust) continued to deposit Nguema money as it came into the country.

The report described Teodorin as a spoiled third-generation dynast corrupted by privilege, who squandered his opportunity to become educated and lost himself to Western decadence. 'For high school he was sent abroad to be educated at an exclusive French boarding school. He attended University in France as well, though little in the way of education appears to have taken place there. A former US intelligence officer who after joining the private sector was hired to track his activities, because he was viewed as a potential successor to his father, said his academic career in France was marked by extensive partying and general revelry' (Global Witness

2009: 7). In 1991 he enrolled in an ESL program at Pepperdine University in Los Angeles where one of his teachers remembers him as arriving on campus in sports cars or limousines. 'He had, literally, an entourage,' she said. 'He was there to party. He rarely came to class.' (Global Witness 2009) During his time at Pepperdine he staged lavish parties in a \$35 million mansion where reportedly a fire broke out during one of his hip hop house party bacchanals. He moved to the Beverly Wilshire Hotel, and ordered a Bentley to be flown in from Scotland in order to shuttle between Beverly Hills, Malibu and Pepperdine. A teacher at Pepperdine remembers receiving phone calls constantly concerning his unpaid bills: 'There were people trying to locate him in all directions.' She eventually re-directed these callers to Walter International, a Houston-based oil company with substantial interests in Equatorial Guinea. According to US Ambassador, John Bennett, the program at Pepperdine, which Teodorin quit after five months, had cost the Houston firm \$50,000 (Global Witness, 2009: 8-9).

Stories of his spendthrift behavior circulated, like offering thousands of dollars for personal meetings with famous L.A. musicians. He set up a hip-hop label called TNO Entertainment. He offered a six-figure award to anyone who could get him an introduction to Halle Barry. Another time he rented a 300-foot yacht for \$680,000,000 to woo the rapper Eve, whom he had dated. (That was three times the government's public health budget.) Teodorin eventually dropped out of Pepperdine and returned to a family villa in France where he was given a job with a logistics firm called Saga interested in doing business with Malabo. Saga wanted to establish personal relations with the family. 'Teodorin didn't do any work, and rarely turned up,' said one person familiar with him at that time: 'He just took up desk space' (Global Witness, 2009: 10).

Life in Paris was good. He reserved three suites at the Plaza Athénée, a five-star hotel, taking multiple suites which normally go for tens of thousands of dollars per night, enjoying conspicuous female partners, conducting 'family business' with an entourage of bodyguards, girlfriends, businessmen, friends, diplomats, oil men, stars, singers, intelligence agents, military attachés and visiting family members. They all passed through glass doors of the hotel's elegant lobby. 'All he knows is how to spend money,' remembered a businessman, 'that's how he measures success.' At one extravagant dinner at *La Maison du Caviar* the businessman remembered, 'He booked a private room, ordered a lot of champagne, and so much caviar that you could have scooped it with a shovel' (Global Witness, 2009: 11).

In 1998, President Jacques Chirac ordered one of his counselors for African affairs to investigate Teodorin. A 200-page French police dossier showed how the playboy heir controlled numerous bank accounts at Barclays, BNP Paribas and HSBC, had conspicuously used to purchase a fleet of luxury cars, including a Ferrari 550 Maranello, a

Ferrari 512M, two Maseratis, one Rolls Royce, several Bugattis each worth a million-and-a-half dollars. During one of his official state visits to Paris, the president had granted some television reporters an interview. When they arrived in his suite, they heard the president's son in the next room screaming with what sounded like a woman's high-pitched voice. 'Ah, it's just my son,' the president assured them, 'quarreling with his mother.' They later found out that Teodorin had just crashed his new red Ferrari and was arguing with his mother to write him a check to buy a new one (Hugeux, 2014: 224).

French anti-corruption organization Sherpa, run by a French lawyer, William Bourdon, gathered all the accusations of corruption circulating about Teodorin's behavior and filed a suit in French courts in 2007 for ill-gotten goods. At first, the French government did not prosecute him, under pressure from the French oil men who were doing lucrative business with the Nguema regime. In 2012, Sherpa re-introduced the charges, and politically independent French judges finally issued an arrest warrant for charges of money laundering and receipt of stolen goods. French police soon raided Teodorin's £150 million villas on Avenue Foch and Avenue Marceau and seized his 15 cars (worth 11 million dollars) as well as his art, antiques and fine wines (worth several million dollars). He claimed that this villa and its splendors did not belong to him personally, but were being used for diplomatic purposes (Sherpa, 2013). His father even named him Equatorial Guinea's Ambassador to UNESCO to prove it; but his diplomatic status is never recognized.

The U.S. Justice Department also filed charges for corruption and money laundering, but was unable to get enough hard evidence of the illegal origin of his fortune that they had to drop all charges, negotiating a settlement in 2014 for Teodorin to pay \$30 million in damages. One piece of hard evidence was testimony by Roberto Berardi, Teodorin's business partner, who revealed wire transfers made in the company's name that were used to pay for a million dollars' worth of Michael Jackson memorabilia. Today this whistleblower is languishing in Black Beach prison, where he had been repeatedly tortured and denied food and water for several days at a time. No caviar is shoveled into his cell.

Christiane Amanpour got a live CNN interview with Obiang during one of his voyages to the United States, broadcast October 5, 2012, which she used to ask him the hard questions about the heir apparent:

'Your son Teodorin has been accused of corruption, embezzlement, extortion and money laundering. And the French authorities have issued an international arrest warrant for him on these money laundering charges.'

'I believe this is all the work of our enemies replied Obiang. First of all, my son, even before he became a politician, he's always been a businessman. He has his own private business activities. But when he became a politician and entered into government, he produced an accounting of all his properties, both here in the [United]



States as well as in France, all of which was actually acquired long before he got into government.'

'Well asked Amanpour, the question is, how does your son who lives in Equatorial Guinea have a \$180 million mansion – this is in France – 11 luxury cars – Bugattis, Ferraris, Rolls-Royce, Maserati – a \$3 million clock and a lot of things in the United States adding up to about \$315 million, mansions, jets, Ferraris, Michael Jackson memorabilia? I mean, how does your son get that much money just as a minister?'

'I will say it again said Obiang. He did not achieve all this as a minister. He was a businessman before he became a minister. He has his own businesses in Equatorial Guinea. And he has some companies in Malaysia as well. He has his personal finances that he manages, but there are no signs, or any proof, that he had actually embezzled any government property or government money. The moment he became minister he contributed a great deal into the coffers of the government administration.'

'Let me ask you, would you hand over power to your son? Is he your designated successor, Teodorin?'

'I will say to you that Equatorial Guinea is a democratic nation. It's not a monarchy. It is a republic. Therefore, if my son, if he aspired to become president, he will have to carry out his own campaign, and win victory over the leaders of the other political parties.'

'Well, you've agreed to come to us and have this great interview, so why don't I give you the opportunity to then tell your people that at the end of this 7-year term, which will have been your fourth term, you will step down, and you will allow your country a real chance at democracy?'

'I have been elected by the people. Therefore, I cannot betray the people's will. But the people must express themselves against me for me to step down. But I say that the fact that I established two terms in the constitution, that was my will, because you can't stay in power forever.'

Since then an internal power struggle over the looming succession has pitted Teodorin against another one of Obiang's many polygamous sons Gabriel Mbega Obiang Lima, the minister of mines, industry and energy. Lima studied international business in the US, and returned to Malabo in 1997 to entered the ministry's civil service as an English translator. 'The ministry was looking for people who understood the American mentality,' said Gabriel in a televised interview which he gave to Africa24, 'because we work with the Americans.' He soon moved up to a mining corps technician, presidential advisor on petroleum matters, secretary of state for hydrocarbons, deputy minister, and finally minister. He is someone who has worked his way up the ropes. 'So I can safely say that it was not just handed to me, I had to work for it, and I have to prove to everybody and not just His Excellency that I am capable of doing the work.' Lima is the son of a Saotomeanon women inseminated by the president, one of Obiang's many polygamous wives, making him Teodorin's step-brother.

## CONCLUSION

### The theory of three generations

Myriad are the reasons for founding dynasties. One of these is death anxiety. For many people, bearing children appears to be the most satisfying way of defying chaos and death. Parents want to survive through their offspring. Rulers die but their families might live on. 'All forms of conquering death are ways of joining our dying selves to something that continues' (Lowry, 1982: p. 297). Such ambition is personal and psychological. Yet this practice of associating a son with the power held by his father has enabled institutional succession to be ensured, necessary for the legitimacy of all political organizations over time (Wenzler, 2010: 36). Many monarchies in the world today came out of succession crises in kingdoms which were not at first run on the hereditary principle. Construction of a dynasty supposes, in effect 'a projection into the past that legitimizes the power of the founders ... and their successors' (Le Jan, 2006: 32) Dynastic succession allows for a stable transfer of power. Family rule is a form a continuity.

Other reasons are sociological. Family is the central agency of childhood socialization, social integration, the marshaling of resources and cultural values, providing social capital. Coleman defined this as 'the value of these aspects of social structure to actors as resources that they can use to achieve their interests' (Coleman 1988: 101) and Putnam 'features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit' (Putnam 1995: 67). Bourdieu, (1973) coined cultural capital to describe valuable material and symbolic resources which children benefit from their families (Bourdieu 1973). We tend to focus our gaze on the individual; but a ruler's biography would be incomplete without some account of his kith and kin and his in-laws. 'It is not individualization that matters in the globalized world so much as the nature of those family resources and family processes, in so far as they open up or limit the options available to each individual' (Edgar, 2004: 14).

Modern dynastic rule can also be a part of the construction of national identity. Since autocratic states in the developing world are comparatively new, trying to invent their national histories by creating national identities top-down, their dynastic rulers are nation-builders. With very short histories of independence, some rulers can construct national identities or 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983) that are linked to their own person and/or family. Here the classical values of patriotism are particularly well suited to monarchial states, where the monarch abstractly personifies state power and provides a focus for the loyalty and sacrifice of his subjects. Attachment of a subject to his homeland is concretized by love for the person of the monarch (Clark, 2009: 221).

Personification of the state becomes a powerful ideology buttressing dynastic rule.

When institutions are weak, men are strong. Weak institutions may explain the proliferation of new dynastic regimes in postcolonial republics. Mismanagement, corruption, debt and state failure have resulted in diverse forms of recomposition, like the hereditary republic where the public thing – ‘res publica’ – is held as a private estate, or patrimony. World decline in representative government, or ‘democracy in retreat’ (Kurlantzick, 2013) also creates a favorable international climate for dynasties, another source of legitimacy.

Personal rule refers to relationships of the leader or ruler, whether based on family, clan, ethnic ties, friendship, loyalty or reciprocal obligations (Jackson and Rosberg, 1982). Many Arab presidents were overthrown during the Arab Spring of 2011, but none of the Arab monarchs were. One hypothesis is a ‘monarchical exception’ in the region (Herb, 2012).

External factors are just as important as internal ones in buttressing dynastic rule. British colonialism for example set many royal houses on their absolute sovereign thrones. Half of all ruling dynasties around the world today are traditional monarchies in the former British Empire, including sixteen ‘Commonwealth Realms’ where Queen Elizabeth II serves as ex officio as Head of State. During the colonial era, the British had destroyed existing states and replaced them with colonial bureaucracies lacking legitimacy. Colonial officers buttressed their power with local rulers, paramount chiefs, kings, queens, princes, sheikhs, emirs, big men and ruling families, ‘utilizing the traditional systems as a framework for colonial rule’ (Fairbairn et al., 1992: 17). Preservation of their royal collaborators during decolonization resulted in dynastic inheritance of formal state power.

There is also the possibility that the constantly growing inequality of heritable wealth around the world today (Piketty, 2014) may be conducive to hereditary rule. Many dynastic regimes are related to the flow of private wealth into tax havens (Michel 2013), offshore fiscal paradises. Foreign financial support may offset their lack of domestic legitimacy and shield dynasties from liability or prosecution. Half of the dynasties are in countries identified as ‘tax havens.’ As Malinowski (1944) once said, ‘if the relic is perpetuated, it is that it has acquired a new meaning, a new function.’ (p. 30)

What the case study of Equatorial Guinea has illustrated was how the Nguema dynasty came to power, following the normal five-stage process found in other dynastic republics. First, a strong man comes to power through capturing the military and security apparatus, then he establishes personal rule. Once absolute power has been achieved, the only step left is hereditary succession. Whether or not Obiang Nguema will achieve what Macias Nguema did not, the fifth stage of dynastic rule, hereditary succession to Teodorin (or Gabriel Lima) will depend on many factors. All dynasties ultimately will perish. It is only a

question of time. Six centuries ago, the renowned Arab scholar Ibn Khaldun declared that ‘as a rule, no dynasty lasts beyond the life span of three generations’ (1967: p. 136). Does this rule of three generations provide something like a predictive social scientific law?

Here is his idea in a nutshell. ‘The builder of the family’s glory knows what it cost him to do the work, and he keeps the qualities that created his glory and made it last. The son who comes after him had a personal contact with his father and thus learned those things from him. However, he is inferior to him in this respect, inasmuch as a person who learns things through study is inferior to a person who knows them from practical application. The third generation must be content with imitation and, in particular, with reliance upon tradition. This member is inferior to him of the second generation, inasmuch as a person who relies upon tradition is inferior to a person who exercises independent judgement’ (Ibn Khaldun 1967: 105). ‘The fourth generation, then, is inferior to the preceding ones in every respect. Its member has lost the qualities that preserved the edifice of its glory. He despises those qualities. He imagines that the edifice was not built through application and effort. He thinks that it was something due his people from the very beginning by virtue of the mere fact of their descent, and not something that resulted from group effort and individual qualities. For he sees the great respect in which he is held by the people, but he does not know how that respect originated and what the reason for it was. He imagines that it is due to his descent and nothing else. He keeps away from those in whose group feeling he shares, think that he is better than they. He trusts that they will obey him because he was brought up to take their obedience for granted, and he does not know the qualities that made this obedience necessary’ (Ibn Khaldun 1967: 107).

The first generation who found the dynasty keeps in mind the difficulties they overcame in obtaining power and continues to do whatever is needed to maintain it. These founders are sharp and greatly feared, so people submitted to them. Then the second generation listen to their fathers explain how power was first acquired. Living in luxury and tranquility, these sons lost many of the virtues of their fathers; but not all, because of their personal contact with them. Yet their understanding from listening is inferior to that from personal experience. Corrupted by luxury, ‘they live in hope that the conditions that existed in the first generation may come back, or they live under the illusion that those conditions still exist’ (Ibn Khaldun 1967: 137). The third generation is content with ignorantly imitating their predecessors, dispensing with their ways and wasting the qualities and virtues which make creation and maintenance of dynastic power possible. They forget that greatness and glory are attributes earned with hardship and difficulties, and assume that these attributes were always with them due to their lineage. Over the course of three generations a dynasty goes ‘senile’ and gets worn out. ‘Three

generations last one hundred and twenty years,' Khaldun, (1967) concludes: 'As a rule, dynasties do not last longer than many years, a few more or a few less, save when, by chance, no one appears to attack them. If the time is up, the end of the dynasty cannot be put off for a single hour, nor can it be advanced. In this way, the life span of a dynasty corresponds to the life span of an individual (Ibn Khaldun 1967: 137-8).

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interest.

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