

The APHELEIA Conference Series 2025

5 June 2025

Speaker: Lazare Ki-Zerbo



Lazare Ki-Zerbo, born in 1965 in Burkina Faso into a family whose maternal branch is in Mali, completed his secondary education at the Charles N'Tchoréré military College in Saint-Louis, Senegal where he met brothers from all around Africa.

He taught at the University of Ouagadougou as a part-time lecturer, while collaborating with the Program for the Development of Medium-Sized Cities in Burkina Faso where he evolved a concept in cross-border integration with Mali. At the same time, he participated in the popular mobilization activities of the Center for African Development Studies (C.E.D.A), in relation with the International

South Group Network (ISGN), collaborating with Prof. Yash Tandon.

He attended the two Conferences of Intellectuals from Africa and the Diaspora (CIAD) organized by African Union in Dakar in 2004 and in Salvador de Bahia in 2006, and the 50th anniversary of Ghana independence attended by President Kenneth Kaunda and Abdoulaye Wade.

He is currently Vice-President of the Joseph Ki-Zerbo International Center for Africa and its Diaspora (CIJKAD) and of the Burkinabe association Dialogue without Borders (DSF), he is member of the General Secrétariat of in the Pan-African Federalist Movement (MFPA), based in Bamako.

Lazare Ki-Zerbo has co-edited CODESRIA's *African studies in geography from below* and *The Pan-African Ideal*, and two collections of texts on *The Pan-Africanist Movement* in the Twentieth Century, and on Joseph Ki-Zerbo. He has also contributed to the publication of Konomba Traoré's book on *the African xylophone*, and the translation into French of Prof. Horace Campbell's book on *Rasta and the Resistance*.

“Maroni landscapes and heterotopic thoughts

in times of drought”

In Saint Laurent du Maroni, a border town in French Guiana, separated from the town of Albina (Surinam) by the Maroni River, many students are of Amerindian or Bushinengue origin (Cimarrons or Maroon Negroes), wherever they come from, because this equatorial France attracts many migrants, their parents. Some of them come from Surinam by pirogue. Can they do it this year given the exceptional drought that has hit? Another *El Niño* ? But it is not yet the Sahel.

Can we, moreover, teach philosophy in Guyana as we would teach it in the Sahel? The themes can remain identical, but the landscape could call for a certain "localization". An entire tradition wants to be without place, without link, "abstract", with a space considered by the natives or the Maroons, and many others, as "friend of Man" in the little-known thought of Arnaud Dandieu. Take the notion of nature for example, which appears in the curriculum: how can we ignore here the presence of the Amazonian forest, of the river, of this country of waters, like the great Congo basin to which only the Amazonian basin can be compared? How can we turn our backs on it? An old t debate on school and the world.

By approaching the theme of "nature", let the echo of the hikes, organized by public services, in which I take part, resonate in the woods surrounding the city. I hear a sound signature there, which is the echo of this typical bird cry, rather the refrain of the film *Aguirre*, where colonial violence and madness is seen in the character played by Klaus Kinski, as if the jungle were the projection of the demons of a character who undoubtedly embodies colonization. Yes, the teaching of philosophy and humanities can make more room for a "friend of Man" space, instead of turning its back on him. But this vision is, if one dares say, against the current.

If ancestral civilizations have invoked forest spirits, they seem to inspire a whole philosophical movement embodied for example by Denetem Touam Bona or Malcom Ferdinand. But it cannot be reduced to them. Indeed, like the intertwined vines evoked by Denetem Touam Bona, there are several paths that can be evoked without getting lost: for example, speaking of walking, *Marchar não é caminhar* by the activist Ivanir dos Santos from neighboring Brazil, but also Baptiste Morizot, Carolyn Finney, *Black Faces White Spaces* . The wandering of thought intends to walk the public both in the Maronian space where we arrived in 2018, and in the mazes of a heritage that is renewed every day.