AFRICAN STUDIES IN THE POST-COLONIAL UNIVERSITY

Edited by
Thandabantu Nhlapo and Harry Garuba

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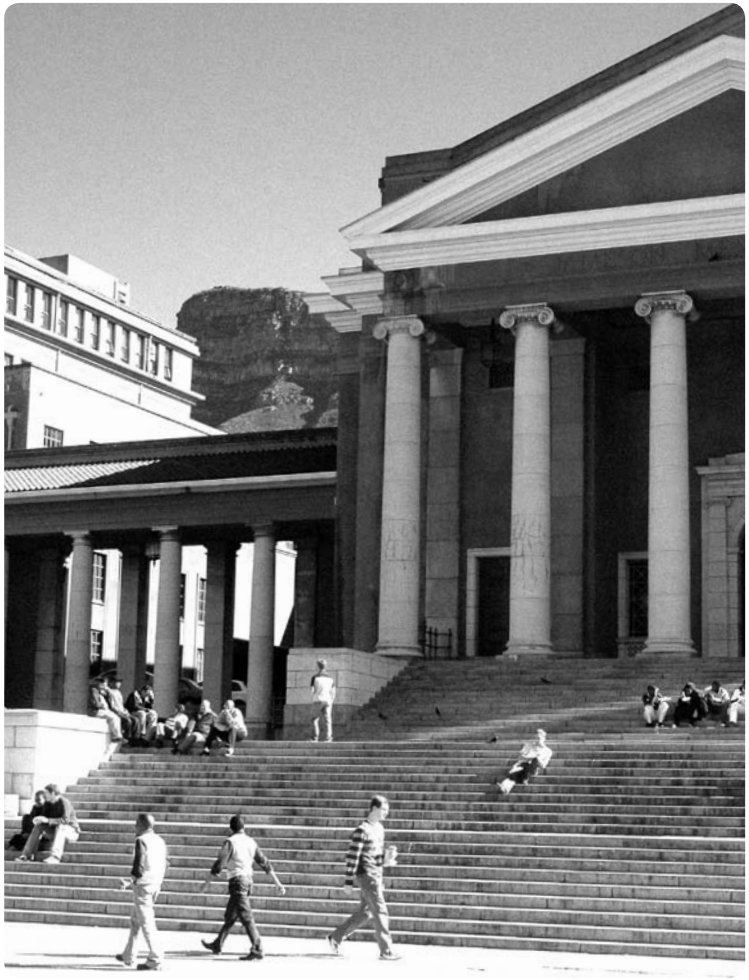

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Professor Thandabantu Nhlapo is a Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Cape Town and his responsibilities include Internationalisation with an Afropolitan niche.

Professor Harry Garuba is an Associate Professor in African Studies at the University of Cape Town and was formerly Director of the Centre for African Studies.

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FOREWORD

Universities always are, and always have been, complex institutions, with many purposes, interests and constituencies that do not seamlessly align. In the case of African universities, these institutions must play key roles in the provision of the skills and expertise that drive economic and social advancement, as well as global competitiveness. In addition, we must confront the damage done by centuries of colonial exploitation of minds and bodies, and the racism that undergirded it. And in South Africa in particular, we have to engage the pernicious legacies of apartheid, including the deliberate manipulation of the educational sector, from primary through to tertiary education, with the express intention of restricting the acquisition of skills and expertise along racial lines.

Pursuing these multiple goals demands vigorous debate on exactly the question of what can and should be expected of the university in this place at this time. So I welcome this collection as an important contribution to an ongoing debate about the university in Africa.

The University of Cape Town aspires to be an 'Afropolitan' university. What this should entail is a matter of debate, as it should be. It is institutionally unusual, perhaps, to specify a strategic goal that lacks definitional precision, but in a university setting such contestation is a sign of our institutional vitality.

The papers in this volume, delivered at the 2011 Africa Day panel discussion, help us think through the various positions of what it means to be a university in Africa, as compared to an African university; whether African studies undertaken in a university in Africa have a different purpose from African studies done in a university in Britain or Brazil; how different institutional arrangements for housing and facilitating African studies relate to particular purposes and contexts. The papers highlight the need to hold onto dual imperatives often seen as being in tension: the imperative that a good university in Africa must teach and research African history, politics, languages, cultures and must aspire to do so better than non-African universities – so we must study Africa; yet we must do so in ways that resist the traps of exoticising Africa, as if entirely exceptional and distinct from other parts of the world. Africa, after all, is and always has been thoroughly integrated into wider international circuits of knowledge, migration and economic activity. So we should always be seeing double: that which distinguishes African settings and histories, and that which integrates Africa into global versions of the problems we seek to solve, in the natural sciences as well as the social sciences and humanities.

It seems to me that the papers not only enliven the debate about what we want UCT to be in respect of its African context; collectively, they also make a case for the appropriateness of the term 'Afropolitan University' in shaping and resolving these debates. It is a term intended to capture the double vision we are aiming for: suggesting both a university that provides superior resources to research and study Africa, and one that inserts an African perspective into the universal questions academics are addressing globally; it connotes a university that engages with globalization and its impact on the continent, and vice versa. It recognizes the baggage of the history of African Studies – as all the papers so clearly remind us – mindful of the post-colonial, and 'post sovereign', 21st century demands on academics "thinking Africa".

Max Price
Vice Chancellor

PREFACE

The University of Cape Town (UCT) has celebrated Africa Day every year in the post-apartheid era. This tradition commemorates the founding of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the forerunner to the African Union (AU) on 25 May 1963 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The formation of this continental organisation was a significant step, signalling as it did the beginning of the end of the colonial era in Africa. At UCT on this date we have organised and sponsored several activities to mark this milestone in modern African history. In choosing the activities, it has always been our aim to strike a balance between the popular pursuits of showcasing African culture and cuisine and moments of deep intellectual reflection. In pursuit of the latter we have arranged an annual panel discussion on a major theme of concern to Africa, and this item has quickly become central to the programme of Africa Day.

In 2011 the theme of the panel discussion was "The Study of Africa in the Post-Colonial African University", a topic that virtually chose itself, given the debate that erupted in that year over the alleged plans to "disestablish" the Centre for African Studies at UCT which soon spilled over into the media and the public domain in general. In the preceding years successful engagements had been held on the state of democracy in Africa and on the role of civil society in ensuring good governance. In 2011 we felt that for a university that prides itself on opening up spaces for debate and contestation of ideas, there could only be one choice. The Africa Day topic had, as it were, dropped into our lap.

Stripped of the drama and sensationalism of the media exchanges, the 2011 debate focused primarily on the study of Africa in an African university in the post-colonial, post-apartheid era and on the appropriateness of institutional arrangements to encourage and enable this. This volume is the result of the presentations made during that discussion. It comes out of the enthusiastic and positive comments received during and after the discussion, and when the report on the event appeared in the *Monday Paper* and on the university's website. It was not difficult to reach a decision, in the wake of a suggestion by Professor Evance Kalula, to keep a public record of this and subsequent Africa Day engagements in the form of an edited volume.

Our request to the panellists was that they make the final papers as accessible as they had been during the presentations and that they avoid as much as possible the specialist jargon of academic writing that may inhibit enjoyment by a broad-based readership. They were also asked to avoid too many distracting notes and to retain the audience-friendly speaking voice of the public presentation. The papers collected here are the result of that endeavour, arranged in the order of the presentations of that day. Though not strictly an exact record of those presentations, the perspectives adopted, the arguments broached and elaborated, and the conclusions reached have remained essentially the same.

Lungisile Ntsebeza's paper presents an overview of the notion of "African Studies" at the University of Cape Town from the establishment of the School of African Life and Languages at the beginning of the 20th century to the present time. Beginning with the pre-establishment years of the 19th century when missionaries, eager to have a Chair in Bantu Philology, lobbied for its establishment in the university, and going on to the setting up of the Milner Native Affairs Commission (1903-1905) and then to the formal announcement of the establishment of the School of African Life and Languages, Ntsebeza argues that African Studies at UCT appears to have been highly involved with the State and its policy on the "native question" right from its inception. Using a combination of archival research, books, and interviews with key role players, he paints a picture of the shifting fortunes of African Studies at UCT and the relationship between the events that marked these shifts, on the one hand, and the influence and impact of the world beyond the university in bringing about these changes, on the other. He traces the name changes from the School of African Life and Languages to the School of African Studies in 1933, to the Centre for African Studies in 1976, and the various chairs, first in Bantu Philology (later African Philology), then the chair in Social Anthropology to which Radcliffe-Brown was appointed in 1921, and finally the A.C. Jordan Chair in African Studies established in 1993 just before the dawn of democracy, as evidencing this relationship between the State, politics,

other vested interests and the university administrators and professoriate. All told, however, Ntsebeza argues that "a serious debate and discussion about what we understand and what we mean by African Studies at UCT is yet to happen" but sees the new configuration, the School for African and Gender Studies, Anthropology and Linguistics, as providing an opening for doing this.

The second paper by Adebayo Olukoshi extends the discussion beyond the University of Cape Town to African Studies as practised in the Euro-American academy in general and, more specifically, as reconceptualised on the African continent, particularly from the period of decolonization that began in the late 1950s onwards to the present. Taking the renewed interest in African Studies in many parts of the world, especially the establishment of African Studies Centres and Institutes in India, China, Brazil, South Korea and Turkey, as its starting point, the paper reviews in broad historical context the debates engaged in and the struggles waged over the content and direction of African Studies. It traces developments from the early introduction of African Studies by European anthropologists and missionaries in support of the colonial project and the African intellectual response to this, through to the cold war and the emergence of Area Studies, and the post-independence era which saw widespread decay in the academy in Africa. Olukoshi concludes with a strong plea for the renewal of African Studies in the post-colonial university, arguing that the university cannot abdicate its responsibility to contest externally-generated versions of knowledge about Africa, despite disquiet about the tainted pedigree of the discipline. Here is how he states the main argument of the paper.

> The position that is argued is a straightforward one: although, historically, its origins are tied to a project of European imperial hegemony and colonial domination, there is no reason, in principle, why African Studies should not feature strongly and prominently in the curriculum of the post-colonial African university. The central question that needs to be addressed is not so much whether it is appropriate to study Africa in the post-colonial African university but, rather, the kind of African Studies that should be promoted and the broader scientific and strategic purposes it must serve for Africa and Africans.

Olukoshi's panoramic view of the core issues and concerns that have animated these debates over the years and in various institutional and

geographical locations is followed by Harry Garuba's highlighting of the silences that have characterised the production of the conventional, normative narratives of the histories and genealogies of African Studies. This occluded story, he argues, is the story of the emergence and consolidation of the disciplines of the modern humanities and the social sciences alongside the question of what tools can appropriately be used in the description and study of the non-western Other, and of non-western societies and social structures. In his view, the logic of the production of disciplinary knowledge from its onset led to the marginalisation and exclusion of Africa from the domain of virtually all the disciplines except Anthropology. He therefore finds disciplinary justifications of the African Studies problematic and suggests that an opening up of the disciplines to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research and teaching may be the more appropriate direction for the future of African Studies.

Leonhard Praeg's paper continues in this vein by focusing on what is obscured in the usual temporal classification deployed in the study of Africa from the pre-colonial to the colonial and then the postcolonial. This temporal characterisation ignores the conditions of possibility of producing knowledge about and from Africa which, he argues, is characterised by epistemic shifts between several epochs rather than a linear temporal progression. While he accepts the usefulness of classifications such as pre-colonial and colonial, Praeg splits the post-colonial between two epistemes, the "sovereign" and the "post-sovereign" epistemes. Following upon Foucault's use of the concept of the "episteme," he sees the sovereign episteme as characterised by the quest for *liberation, autonomy, the nation-state*, etc., while the post-sovereign refers to the waning of the nation-state and the rise of new kinds of trans-national imagined communities (e.g. Facebook) which are no longer beholden to the boundaries and binaries characteristic of the ethos of autonomy and sovereignty fostered by the nation-state. Departing slightly from both the Foucauldian conception of epistemic shifts and the linear characterisation of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial, he concludes by suggesting that "the study of Africa in the post-sovereign episteme consists of three layered aporias relating to the archive, intellectual autonomy and belonging. It is this layered nature of the historical discourse on and from Africa that makes the question of institutional arrangement such a complex one."

The final paper by Mpilo Pearl Sithole returns to the question of disjunctures between different systems of knowledge production and laments the fact that the disciplinary and methodological imperatives that govern knowledge production in our universities appear to encourage this "cold war" between the different knowledges, even when they occupy the same or contingent social, geographical and intellectual spaces. Instead of this "cold war", she advocates a kind of intellectual choreography which combines the best features of the objective/subjective, quantitative/qualitative divide and the intellectual hierarchies it produces and reproduces. As she argues, "social reality is much more complex than is usually presented in the traditional social science analytical paradigms rooted in Western science." In place of the conventional binaries, she posits a continuum. Like Ntsebeza's, her paper takes the form of reflections on ongoing work that she has been engaged in and, in a style poised between critique and advocacy, she summarises the conclusions reached so far in this work and locates them within the context of producing uniquely African scholarship (rather than merely mimicking Western models) and the imperatives of transformation in South African Higher Education.

Here, then, is the record of the panel presentations with which we marked Africa Day at the University of Cape Town on 25 May 2011, individually revised for this purpose. It is a record that takes a firm step towards realising the ideal of Afropolitanism at UCT as a many-splendoured thing which embraces both the down-to-earth and practical, on the one hand, and the deep and reflective, on the other. At this deeper end of the project should lie a willingness to ask the hard epistemological questions about the role of the university in a post-colonial society, and to think about our location in this particular part of Africa and at this particular time in our country's history, in the context of global movements and developments. This volume launches us well and truly along that journey.

Thandabantu Nhlapo
Deputy Vice-Chancellor

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Thank you all.
The Editors

CHAPTER 1

AFRICAN STUDIES AT UCT: AN OVERVIEW[1]

Lungisile Ntsebeza

This contribution is about the notion of "African Studies" at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Its main conclusion is that after 35 years of the formal establishment of the Centre for African Studies (CAS) here at UCT, a serious debate and discussion about what we understand and what we mean by African Studies at UCT has yet to happen. The contribution is based on research that I have been conducting intermittently since the end of 2007, when I did research for the then Vice Chancellor Njabulo Ndebele, the results of which led to UCT making a formal apology to the Mafeje family[2]. This initial research aroused my interest in the Centre for African Studies at UCT, and I started a more extensive research on the Centre towards the end of 2009. This new research project was interrupted by my involvement in a process that eventually led to the establishment of a new School of African and Gender Studies, Anthropology and Linguistics (AXL). I led the discussions for the establishment of this new School between March and October 2011. Although the archival aspect of the research on the Centre for African Studies, as well as the conducting interviews have been affected, my involvement in the discussions about the new School puts me in a position to comment knowledgeably about current developments regarding African Studies at UCT.

This is by no means a detailed account of the evolution of the concept of African Studies at UCT, but an overview based on work-in-progress; it is thus more suggestive than conclusive.

THE GENESIS OF AFRICAN STUDIES AT UCT

The roots of African Studies at UCT go much deeper than the establishment of the Centre for African Studies in the mid-1970s. These can be traced as far back as the 19th century when missionaries such as WA Norton were keen to have a Chair of "Bantu" philology established in the Cape.[3] Norton, according to Gordon, was a Church of England missionary "who was on friendly terms with several Cape Town professors" and also assisted missionaries to "overcome barriers of misunderstanding by providing them with proper language training".[4] Phillips tells us that he "had mastered several African languages in the course of his mission work in Africa earlier in the century"[5].

At the same time, the "native question" posed by the dilemma of a foreign minority ruling over an indigenous majority, a la Mamdani[6], pre-occupied colonialists and became a subject of serious discussion when moves were afoot for the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910. The Milner Native Affairs Commission of 1903-5 is a case in point. UCT was not an uninterested party in these processes. According to Gordon, the University publicly announced the establishment of the School of African Life and Languages "at the height of the Parliamentary debate on the Native Affairs Bill which created a permanent advisory Native Affairs Commission"[7]. It seems clear that UCT saw a role for itself in providing resources in the formulation and implementation of the "Native policy". However, the formation of the Union of South Africa, as well as the First World War shifted focus away from the common interests between State and university.

Soon after the War, Norton resuscitated debates around "the scholarly study of the indigenous African population", eventually convincing "several leading men" in academic and government circles of the importance and urgency of the issue.[8] This time round, Norton explicitly linked this endeavour with the development of government policy in its attempt to deal with the "Native problem". He argued that knowledge of the African population would lead to a solid "Native policy". Earlier on, in 1916, he had addressed the South African Association for the Advancement of Science in these terms: "Many a fatal mistake not only in dealing with individuals but also of general policy might have been avoided by a grounding in ethnology and comparative religion"[9]. Norton published a paper in 1917 entitled, "The Need and Value of Academic Study of Native Philology and Ethnology" in which he reasons that "the study of language was the best 'index to their [Natives] psychology'".[10] For him, it was absurd for a South African university to ignore, as Gordon puts it, "the languages and customs of five-sixth of the population".[11]

Norton's efforts were rewarded when the government approved the creation of a chair in Bantu Philology in 1917, a chair which he was to occupy. However, this chair was "suddenly frozen as part of the state's

wartime economy drive and Norton had to bide his time until it was re-instated in 1920".[12] Norton never tired and gave evidence to a Government committee of inquiry into university grants in 1919. This inquiry wanted to address "problems whose solution is necessary for the future safe development of a country in which white and black are to live side by side".[13] In the final analysis, the Union government endorsed the idea of establishing a school at UCT and the latter presented a plan of the school to government in 1920. According to van der Merwe, the vision was that the school would be "a sizeable faculty presided over by a dean, teaching in languages as far afield as Swahili, and with research interests in such diverse subjects as the ethnology, religion and psychology of African peoples".[14] A recommendation was made for the establishment "of a comprehensive, two-professor School of Bantu Life and Languages at UCT with a 3000 pound p.a. grant guaranteed for five years".[15] Norton, at the time 50 years of age, was appointed chair of Bantu Philology in April 1920. He suggested a name change to "African", so as not to limit his chair to "Bantu-speaking zones only". The second chair was named "Social Anthropology", rather than "Ethnology", the name suggested by the committee of inquiry.[16] Although an initial budget of 3000 pounds was approved by the government, it was cut on 24 December 1920 by half[17]. Norton was appointed, initially at professorial level in Bantu Philology, but for financial reasons was eventually appointed a lecturer in Bantu Languages and Literature, a position that was converted into a Professorship of Bantu Philology in 1921. The other chair of the School went to Alfred R Radcliffe-Brown, a 39-year-old Cambridge graduate who was "unanimously appointed" to the chair in 1921, a year after the appointment of Norton.

Based on the above, it can be argued that the University of Cape Town must be the first university on the African continent to form a school that would focus on African Studies. Furthermore, it is clear that the genealogy of the concept of African Studies at UCT cannot be divorced from the colonial strategy of ruling over the indigenous people. The role that Radcliffe-Brown and by extension anthropology played in this regard is of particular interest. According to Gordon,[18] there was clear complicity between Radcliffe-Brown and the colonial project, something which, according to Gordon, had far reaching implications for the discipline of Anthropology and its implication not only in the colonial project but also

in the elaboration of the apartheid project in the 1940s and later. Gordon[19] cites Paul Rich (1984) in noting that General Smuts personally invited A.R. Radcliffe-Brown to establish the social anthropology course at the University of Cape Town in 1921, leading to the establishment of the first distinctly South African anthropological journal, *Bantu Studies*. Fortes remarked that "at the time" there was "not a single full-time professorship of anthropology in any British university",[20] suggesting that the first full-time professorial position in the British system was awarded to Radcliffe-Brown, at UCT.

According to Phillips, he tried to convince government of the importance of the school. As Phillips puts it:

> Thus, he organised intensive vacation courses in African life and languages for missionaries and civil servants, testified before a Government commission of inquiry, gave several extension lectures in the Peninsula and beyond and delivered a series of impressive talks to the annual conference of Transkei magistrates in 1924.[21]

As Chair of Social Anthropology, Radcliffe-Brown was also head of the School,[22] He was seemingly a popular teacher, drawing large numbers of students.

Relations between Radcliffe-Brown and Norton were apparently not at their best. Norton's main interest, Phillips seems to suggest, was research, rather than teaching. His courses never attracted more than one student a year, something that was not appreciated by both Beattie, the principal, and his colleagues. He enjoyed collecting "native lore and history" from the elderly which he wrote up and published as "intellectually lightweight papers" between 1921 and 1926.[23] On his part, Radcliffe-Brown despised the work of Norton as the following quote shows: "(A) trained anthropologist with no knowledge of the languages will do work of infinitely more scientific value than an untrained man with a perfect knowledge of the language".[24] Radcliffe-Brown wanted the chair of Philology to go. This eventually happened in 1923. Although Norton resigned with effect from 1 April 1925, he was forced to leave on the day of his resignation. This, according to Phillips, spelt the decline of African languages at UCT, with the school being a school in African languages only in name.[25]

Radcliffe-Brown resigned in 1925 and went to the University of Sydney to take up a newly created chair in social anthropology, "frustrated by

trying to extract research funds from unimpressed colonial bureaucrats".[26] Indeed, on the year he assumed duties in 1921, the government grant was further cut by half from 3000 to 1500 British pounds. He apparently left the School in a state of disarray, under the leadership of "his erstwhile research assistant, AJH Goodwin, who became acting professor "and two postgraduate students as temporary replacements".[27] Whilst assisting Radcliffe-Brown, Goodwin developed an interest in "archaeological artefacts".[28] He went on to introduce in 1929 a new course in Ethnology and Archaeology.

Tom Barnard took over from Radcliffe-Brown from 1926 to 1933. According to Phillips, he "left no mark as an anthropologist on South Africa; in fact after leaving Cape Town, he dropped anthropology altogether for botany".[29] During his tenure, the School's grant from the Government was further cut. His response was to forge closer ties with the colonial government and try to attract students by offering "vocationally-orientated courses", geared towards "'native administrators' and missionaries".[30] However, the response to these courses was poor for the simple reason that while the Native Affairs Department offered bonuses "to officials who gained the diploma", the Public Service Commission "refused to recognise the diploma for promotion purposes".[31] This naturally did not make the Diploma attractive to administrators. According to Phillips, between 1923 and 1930, the courses "drew exactly two Native Affairs Department men".[32] Politicians saw the School as dealing with "the 'native problem' in a far too academic way", according to Phillips.[33] As a result, it never had a direct influence on policy, something that had been envisaged when the school was established. However, Phillips does concede that "by its focus on the traditional elements of African society, it is possible that" the School "contributed in some degree to the development of the ideology of segregation which became the direction 'native policy' took between the wars".[34]

By 1933, eight years after the resignation of Radcliffe-Brown, the then Principal of UCT, Sir Carruthers Beattie, was to confide "to his old friend C.T. Loram" as follows:

> At present I look upon the school as our worst effort. We were unfortunate in many ways in getting Radcliffe-Brown – a careerist – and Norton – a fool. I have taken on my job for another three years … One of the objects will be to pull this school together or get rid of it.[35]

As will be seen below, Beattie did not jettison the idea of the School, only the name changed.

Phillips, though, in his account of the formative years of the University of Cape Town up to 1948, is more sympathetic and makes observations about the school that may have important lessons for UCT, particularly in relation to the small departments' and interdisciplinary debates. According to him:

> UCT's School of African Life and Languages provided the exemplar for the study of African societies at university level in South Africa. By 1930 three similar schools had been founded at the country's main universities, all of them based on the UCT interdisciplinary model. Moreover, such a framework permitted the new disciplines of social anthropology and archaeology to develop at a time when their practitioners would have been hard put to justify their creation as independent university departments – the fate of Bantu Philology shows what could happen to a department which did not prove its raison d'etre to the academic community. It should also be borne in mind that, though neither Social Anthropology professor undertook much original research, the School itself acted as a fruitful training ground for several of South Africa's pioneering anthropologists and archaeologists and as a conduit for generous research funds from the Government.[36]

Important as these lessons are, the colonial heritage of the School is important to bear in mind as the story of African Studies at UCT unfolds.

THE SCHOOL OF AFRICAN STUDIES: 1933-1974

As already noted, Beattie, despite his sharp criticism, never closed the school. When the Great Depression was over,[37] Beattie persuaded the University to reinstate the chair of Social Anthropology which had been frozen when Barnard resigned in 1933. He also recommended the establishment of full-time chair of Bantu Languages.[38] The name of the school was changed to the School of African Studies.

The first Chair of the "new" School was Isaac Schapera who assumed duties in 1935. As with Goodwin, Schapera was Radcliffe-Brown's student, who did a "Masters with the master".[39] Apart from social anthropology, the other departments that were associated with the School of African Studies were: African languages; archaeology and native law and administration. The latter changed its name to Comparative African Government and Law under the headship of Jack Simons from 1938 to 1966, when he was banned

by the apartheid government. Notable names in the other departments include GP Lestrade (Chair in Language, 1935-1962); A/Prof John Goodwin (UCT staff in archaeology between 1923-1959). The latter, according to van der Merwe, co-authored with van Riet Lowe in 1929 *The Stone Age Cultures of South Africa* and was founder, in 1945, of the *South African Archaeological Society*, "with Prime Minister JC Smuts as the first life member".[40]

The following quotation from Phillips provides an idea of the activities of the School up to the introduction of apartheid in 1948:

> With two committed and industrious young men filling these core posts from 1935, the School was revivified. Under the new name of the School of African Studies, it launched a multidisciplinary survey of life in Langa location with the aid of a grant from the Carnegie Corporation, instituted a sub-department of Native Law and Administration and in 1942 recommended publication of its research in a new series of "Communications from the School of African Studies". By 1948 nineteen such "communications" had been produced, emphasizing that, though students might be few and the School's prime purpose, training administrators and missionaries, largely unfulfilled, its output of original research was high. This helped temper the feeling in more traditional academic circles that the School and what it taught were otiose oddities, with as dubious a claim to a place in a university curriculum as Norton's Bantu Philology Department had been in the 1920s.[41]

The "two committed and industrious young men" Phillips is referring to were Schapera and Lestrade. With regard to the series, Communications from the School of African Studies, most reviews sang songs of praise of the School of African Studies at UCT.

Once again, and as Phillips has observed, the study of Native life was, as was the case with the previous School, the main focus of the successor. As before, the purpose was to inform government and equip it with strategies of ruling "Bantu people" as the following quote by Beattie clearly shows: "People were often apt to forget that the European race was not the only civilised one, and they could never hope to legislate for the Bantu people without a knowledge of the civilization of those people".[42] For Phillips, Lastrade was "so immersed …in the peculiarities of individual Bantu languages that he energetically campaigned for their use in African schools as part of the promotion of what he perceived as a distinct "Bantu culture", a fact not unnoticed by the Bantu Education authorities in the 1950s as they drew him into their syllabus-planning committees.[43] This, however, was not the case with Schapera who, according to Phillips, did not share his colleagues' "one-dimensional view" and never succumbed to

the training of the founding fathers of the discipline: Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski at the London School of Economics (LSE).

In the mid-to-late 1940s, the School of African Studies was joined by two scholars of repute: A.C. Jordan in 1946 and in 1948 by Monica Wilson. Jordan was a lecturer in Lestrade's Language section of the School of African Studies and had by then published his classic, *Ingqumbo yeminyanya* (The Wrath of the Ancestors). He became the first black African to be awarded a PhD in African Languages at UCT. Recent electronic correspondence with his wife, Phyllis Ntantala, paints a picture of the calibre of Jordan. She recalled how Jordan responded to criticism of him leaving Fort Hare University for UCT in these terms: "I am going to UCT to open that door and keep it ajar, so that our people too can come in. UCT on African soil belongs to US too. UCT can and will never be a true university, until it admits US too, the children of the soil. I am going there to open that door and keep it ajar"![44] Monica Wilson had also briefly lectured in the Department of African Studies at Fort Hare University before taking up appointment at Rhodes University where she was when she joined the Department of Social Anthropology within the School in 1948, the year the National Party came to power and introduced apartheid.

In 1952, Monica Wilson became the head of the School. This was at a time when the apartheid regime was formulating legislation that would entrench separate development in South Africa. One such legislation was the so-called extension of Universities Act of 1959 which effectively introduced Bantu Education in tertiary education. A.C. Jordan found apartheid unbearable and ended up resigning from UCT to, in the words of his wife, "go start afresh somewhere, thus forfeiting all his Pension Rights except what he had paid into". Things were not to become easy in the 1960s as Jack Simons was banned from teaching and forced to leave on an exit permit in 1965. His daughter, Mary Simons, who taught in the same Department as her father, was also banned from teaching in 1976.[45] There was also what has since been referred to as the Mafeje affair of 1968, when Archie Mafeje was appointed senior lecturer but his appointment was not executed as a result of what the UCT Principal at the time, Sir Richard Luyt and Council, claimed was interference by the apartheid regime. The decision to rescind Mafeje's appointment was roundly criticised.[46]

The actions of the apartheid regime suggest that the once cordial ties between some members of the School and the government were becoming

a thing of the past. But it is not clear what conception, if any, of African Studies was upheld by the school. What seems clear is that the resignations and harassments of members of the school weakened it. Apart from the external threats from government, van der Merwe introduces internal dimensions and sees the weakening and eventual demise of the School as firstly, "a process of internal fission with the establishment of independent departments of African Languages (in 1967) and Archaeology (1968). According to him, these sections within the School "had grown to the size of departments in their own right"[47]. Secondly, van der Merwe observes that "courses with the "African" prefix were starting up in subjects like history and economic history" and "many other departments", concluding that "having achieved its goal of making UCT community aware of the continent they live in, the School engineered its own demise." Lastly was, for van der Merwe, the retirement of Monica Wilson in 1973, "who had laboured hard and long on behalf of the school".[48]

It is worth noting that the first two internal reasons advanced by van der Merwe above for the demise of the School can be instructive for current debates and discussions about Centres and Institutes of African Studies, not only at UCT, but across the African continent. What is also of current interest would be an examination of the notion of an Africa focus in departments. What did it mean then what does it mean now?

THE CENTRE FOR AFRICAN STUDIES

The demise of the School of African Studies did not deal a death blow to the notion of African Studies. Barely a year after the resignation of Wilson, discussions on African Studies at UCT were underway. Interviews and van der Merwe's account show that there were members of the academic staff, students and administrators who "'wanted' to do something about African Studies'", leading to a series of public meetings. Van der Merwe, who joined the Archaeology Department in 1974, recalls that he found himself chairing these fiery sessions, probably because he "did not really understand what was going on". Later, he makes the remark that the way universities operate is "by catching you unawares",[49] an observation, given my own experience, I would certainly endorse. These discussions led to a proposal for the establishment in 1975 of a Board of African Studies "to coordinate research and teaching among the many departments involved in the subject".[50] Interviews show that young academics and students in departments that constituted the School of African Studies worked hard to ensure that African Studies as an interdisciplinary space was revived.[51] The possibility of revitalising African Studies at UCT received a boost with its approval by the Vice Chancellor, Sir Richard Luyt, and the Senate.

Another important development that took place at the same time as these discussions were taking place was the involvement of Harry Oppenheimer, who was at the time Chancellor of UCT. Ron Davies recalls that

> senior members of the Anglo American and De Beers Chairman's Fund were scouting to establish a 'special project' in UCT to commemorate the Chancellorship of Mr Harry Oppenheimer and at the same time mark the UCT 150 Appeal then gaining momentum. In that exercise Sir Richard Luyt, on 10 June 1975, at a meeting with its Chairman, Mr Michael O'Dowd, drew the attention of the Chairman's fund to the idea of supporting the development of African Studies at UCT.[52]

The outcome was a donation for the establishment of a Centre for African Studies. Some of the funds were to be used to develop a library on African Studies so as to support the work of the Centre while the rest would be invested so as to generate income for the Centre's activities. Apart from the library, it was envisaged that the activities of the Centre would include invitations to prominent scholars in African Studies, recruitment of post-graduate students from countries on the African continent, as well as facilitation of UCT staff members' visits within the continent.

The Centre was approved by the Council on 28 July 1976 and "promptly affiliated to" the Harry Oppenheimer Institute which "has provided a major share in funding the activities of the Centre." Professor C. de B. Webb (History) was the first chairman of the Board of African Studies and Nick van der Merwe from the Archaeology Department was the first Director of CAS. The Centre was not based in any particular department, "although African Languages, Anthropology, Archaeology, African History and African Economic History" formed the core.[53] It was open to any "interested staff member or post-graduate student involved with African Studies in its broadest sense".[54] The Centre did not have permanent staff members, "other than clerical", with "organisations which had previously pursued independent interests in African Studies … affiliated with" it including the Africa Seminar and the South African

Labour Development Research Unit (SALDRU).[55] Offering no courses of its own at its inception, the emphasis was "firing enthusiasm for an 'African Studies component' in established courses".[56]

The main activities of the Centre in the initial years took the form of weekly lectures on "the historical background of South Africa's diverse peoples" and on "contemporary problems and planning in education, medicine, urbanization and economics"[57] and, in 1979, "colloquia on current research".[58] As part of UCT's 150 celebrations, the Centre hosted the 1979 national conference of the professional societies of anthropologists, archaeologists, economists and geographers. However, the greatest achievement of the Centre appears to have been the establishment of the African Studies Library, which, as van der Merwe puts it, "amassed a vast amount of primary source material at which scholars [...] [were] just beginning to nibble".[59] Research results were also striking with members associated with the Centre, making up about 30% of members of the Arts Faculty and yet producing "nearly 50 per cent of its research publications in 1978".[60] In his response to Mahmood Mamdani in their exchange over the teaching of African Studies at UCT (see below), Martin Hall gave a succinct account of the activities of the Centre in the 1980s:

> ... since the beginning of the 1980s, the Centre had developed an interdisciplinary curriculum, both in an undergraduate "introduction to Africa" and in post-graduate Diploma and Honours courses that linked a wide range of disciplines ... and framed them within contemporary affairs ... In the face of attempts by the apartheid state to stifle all opposition ... the Centre organised seminars and conferences that critiqued the state and presented the policies of banned organisations. All of this is on record: the Centre's publications, the long Africa Seminar series, reports, documents and curricula.[61]

The dramatic developments of the late 1980s and early 1990s, leading to political negotiations for a democratic South Africa resulted in discussions in the Centre that led to the establishment of the A.C. Jordan Chair in African Studies in 1993. For Hall, this was part of a "drive to reverse isolation and connect South Africa to its continent".[62]

It is clear from the discussions of the selection committee that the Centre was still grappling with what African Studies would entail at UCT, particularly given the looming possibility of the demise of apartheid and rule by the ANC. The first meeting of the selection committee was on 11 October 1993. The "nature of the Centre and what African Studies should be" were central to the discussions of this and subsequent meetings. These were some of the requirements for the incumbent: "somebody with an established research record, a commitment to multi-disciplinary approaches, admin experience as at some time this person will serve as Director of the Centre; and also have considerable contacts in Africa". It was also disclosed that "(p)art of the reason why Anglo American has given the funding for this chair is to develop links with the rest of the African continent". One member was clear that they did not want "somebody who would be a clone, the same as before", the Centre, according to the member wanted a person who would take it in "new directions and who has a new network and new background". At the same time, the new person was expected "to also consolidate the work that is being done in the Centre".[63] It is also clear that the selection committee was committed to appointing a black person.[64]

There can be little doubt that the above process was destined to set UCT on a new path in terms of African Studies, radically different from what UCT had ever known and experienced. However, as I argue in my article published in the Codesria Bulletin in December 2008 on the relationship between Archie Mafeje and UCT, the manner in which some senior members of the selection committee handled themselves casts serious doubt on their commitment to the sentiments expressed in their discussions about the qualities of the incumbent. Mafeje's pedigree, based on his writings, international standing, referees and the fact that he was appointed at UCT on merit in 1968 as Senior Lecturer, made him a natural candidate for the job. It is now common cause that he was not even interviewed.

However, the appointment of Mahmood Mamdani in the second round of the selection process for the A.C. Jordan Chair could in many ways be seen as a corrective measure, if not, as developments below show, an accidental appointment based on possibly not knowing the person. Mamdani was appointed in September 1996 and within a month of his appointment put forward his vision of African Studies at UCT. Very succinctly, Mamdani's key question was what a centre for African Study should be in the context of post-apartheid South Africa.[65] He contended that "there is hardly any comparative work that relates South African

themes to developments north of the Limpopo, much less to north of the Zambezi", leading him to come to the conclusion that the name, Centre for African Studies is "a misnomer".[66] Mamdani was particularly critical of the colonial study of Africans as the Other and the notion of what he referred to as "South African exceptionalism", emphasising the importance of "locating South Africa in the African experience".[67] According to him, African Studies should be "an institutional home for the study of ourselves" and "a way of understanding the world we live in from different, multiple and simultaneous vantage points".[68]

He continued along this line of criticism in the much publicised seminar of 22 April 1998, held at UCT. The circumstances leading to this seminar are part of the much broader study of the history of African Studies at UCT and will not be subject of discussion in this contribution. Suffice it to say that Mamdani was, after a year of his appointment, requested to draft a curriculum for an introductory course on Africa. A committee was set up to assess the curriculum. There was disagreement between Mamdani and members of the committee over the teaching and content of the course. He was subsequently suspended from the committee and a substitute course replaced the one he had designed. Mamdani felt that this response warranted open debate. The April seminar was the outcome of this. Mamdani launched a scathing criticism about how Africa was taught in the past, that it was developed outside the African continent, studied by non-Africans within the context of colonialism and later the Cold War and apartheid. He again raised the issue of South African exceptionalism, largely drawn from his award winning book, *Citizen and Subject* (1996). He attacked the substitute course for having a racialised periodisation along the lines of suggesting a pre-colonial past without the white person, Africa under white rule and Africa after the White Man relinquished political control. He championed a de-racialised curriculum, which would draw primarily from discussions forged in the academy in independent Africa.

Mamdani's provocation elicited responses from Johann Graaff, who was a member of the committee, and Martin Hall, who was not a member of the committee but was drawn in in the drafting of the substitute course. Again, it is not my intention to get into the nuances of their responses in this overview. What I can highlight here is that Graaff's response was largely based on pedagogical issues with an emphasis on the importance of focusing on the honing of the academic skills (argumentation, essay writing, synthesis and analysis) of first year students. Both Graaff and Hall, who held similar views, suggested, in my view, that Mamdani raised the bar too high in terms of course content and prescribing primary texts written by African scholars. Mamdani had interpreted this as of form of or an extension of Bantu Education to UCT, a claim that his colleagues strenuously rejected. Hall's response was more substantial and tackled Mamdani on his claims about racism and South African exceptionalism.

Almost all the people I interviewed and who witnessed these discussions were of the impression that they were acrimonious, "unnecessarily conflictual". However, none doubts that the positive outcome of this process was, in the words of one of my interviewees, "an exceptional and invigorating level of verbal and written academic debate between senior role players". These discussions, unfortunately, were never pursued as Mamdani resigned and took up appointment in the United States. From there on, the Centre for African Studies was never the same and, for reasons best suited for another discussion, gradually "deteriorated" to a point where by 2009 there was a distinct possibility that it would be "disestablished".

BY WAY OF CONCLUDING: THE CURRENT SITUATION AND BEYOND

The possible disestablishment of the Centre was not only viewed by some academics at UCT with concern, particularly considering its history, but was seen as something of a contradiction, given the Vice-Chancellor's commitment to Afropolitanism. A task team, of which I was a member, was set up, whose brief was "to conduct a series of consultations and discussions both inside the faculty and across the university more widely in order to develop a number of possible scenarios, to offer debate and decision by the faculty and the university which relate to the future role of the Centre for African Studies". However, just as we were beginning to focus on the task, two more departments, the Institute for Gender Studies and Social Anthropology, were included. Following a series of discussions, members of the task team came up with a proposal for the establishment of a new school that was tentatively named The New School

for Critical Enquiry in Africa. This proposal was accepted by the faculty executive but there were problems with its implementation resulting in the collapse of the process at the end of 2010. A series of developments, not least the involvement of students mainly in defence of the Centre, led to a Humanities Faculty forum meeting which was held on the 25th of February 2011 to discuss possible ways of taking the collapsed process forward. At a subsequent faculty board meeting, I was appointed to facilitate discussions that would lead to the establishment of the new school – involving the three departments, the Linguistics unit and three NRF research Chairs, including mine, based in the Humanities Faculty. After lengthy discussions, all participants, including students, agreed to establish a School of African and Gender Studies, Anthropology and Linguistics. The proposal was accepted by all university structures and the school started its business at the beginning of 2012.

The importance of articulating an intellectual direction for the school was acknowledged, but there was also recognition of the fact that time was needed to debate the differences that led to the collapse of the earlier attempts to set up a school. In this regard, it was proposed and agreed that these debates would take place within the new school and that the process would be reviewed after four years.

This takes us back to the point I raised at the beginning, namely that the issue of African Studies at UCT has yet to be discussed. The discussions leading to the establishment of the school did not address the issue; they were more about setting up a school and postponed dealing with the tough issue of what the intellectual business of the school will be and how, if at all, the school will address the issue of African Studies at UCT.

While it is possible for the rest of the school to avoid addressing the question of African Studies because of their disciplinary anchor, my humble opinion is that the Centre for African Studies cannot. Although not its exclusive responsibility, the burden for leading discussions and initiatives towards clarifying and promoting African Studies lies largely on the Centre. Against this backdrop, my sense is that whatever form the debate takes, high on the agenda must be an opening up of discussions about the history of African Studies at UCT with specific reference to the history of the Centre for African Studies over the last 35 years or so. While it might be true that no clear-cut notion of African Studies can be discerned at UCT, it is obvious that certain individuals or groups of individuals in various positions of power have held their own conceptions of African Studies. These need to be uncovered and put on the table for robust debates. Crucial to this project would be a review of the Mamdani debate of the late 1990s as well as the selection process for the AC Jordan Chair that the late Archie Mafeje applied for but was not even interviewed. The latter would entail a deeper understanding of the intellectual and scholarly contributions of Mafeje that established him as a world renowned scholar. There is a lot that can be learned if this exercise were to be allowed to take place without interference. To make this task possible, the records of the Centre for African Studies would have to be opened to those of us who are keen to pursue this task.

NOTES

1. I am grateful to Emeritus Professor Ronald Davies for sharing his "timeline" on the Centre for African Studies. I am using it as a guide in my project on African Studies at UCT.

2. See L. Ntsebeza. (2008). The Mafeje and UCT saga: An unfinished business? *CODESRIA Bulletin*, *3&4*, 36-43.

3. R. Gordon. (1990). Early social anthropology in South Africa. *African Studies*, *49*, 15-48, p. 17.

4. Gordon, p.17.

5. H. Phillips. (assisted by the research of the late HM Robertson). (1993). *The University of Cape Town 1919-1948: The formative years*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town in association with the UCT Press, p. 21.

6. M. Mamdani. (1996). *Citizen and subject*. Cape Town: David Philip.

7. Gordon, p. 18.

8. Phillips, p. 21.

9. Quoted in Phillips, p. 21.

10. Gordon, p. 17.

11. Gordon, p. 18.

12. Phillips, p. 21.

13. Quoted in Phillips, p. 27.

14. N.J. van der Merwe. (1979). African studies. In A. Lennox-Short, & D. Welsh (Eds.), *UCT at 150: Reflections* (pp. 62-67). Cape Town: David Philip, p. 62.

15. Phillips, p. 22.

16. Ibid.

17. Van der Merwe, p. 62.

18. Gordon, p. 15.

19. Gordon, p. 16.

20. Fortes as quoted in Gordon, p. 16.

21. Phillips, p. 24.

22. Van der Merwe, p. 62.

23. Phillips, p. 2.

24. Quoted in Phillips, p. 23.

25. Phillips, p. 24.

26. Gordon, p. 16.

27. Phillips, p. 25.

28. Ibid.

29. Phillips, p. 26.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Phillips, p. 27.

34. Ibid.

35. Cited in Gordon, p.22.

36. Phillips, pp. 26-27.

37. The School lost the government research and publications grants in 1931, during the depression.

38. Phillips, p. 270.

39. Gordon, p. 23.

40. Van der Merwe, p. 63.

41. Phillips, p. 270.

42. Quoted in Phillips, p. 167.

43. Phillips, p. 271.

44. E-mail correspondence with author, 16 April 2012. A.C Jordan, alongside Archie Mafeje and Mahmood Mamdani, will be a subject of detailed study in my longer term and in-depth study of African Studies at UCT.

45. Interview at UCT.

46. For a detailed account see F. Hendricks. (2008). The Mafeje affair: The University of Cape Town and apartheid. *African Studies*, *67*, 423-451.

47. Van der Merwe, p. 63.

48. Ibid.

49. Van der Merwe, p. 64.

50. Ibid.

51. These academics included the then recently appointed Nick van der Merwe, Mary Simons from Comparative African Government and Law (CAGL), Martin West from Social Anthropology and Martin Hall from Archaeology and Ron Davies. Amongst students can be mentioned Mugsy Spiegel and Patrick Harries.

52. Copy of the timeline in author's possession.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.

57. Van der Merwe, p. 65.

58. Ibid..

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

61. M. Hall. (1998). "Bantu education"? A reply to Mahmood Mamdani, *Social Dynamics*, *24*, 86-92, p. 87.

62. Hall, p. 88.

63. File 300, Box 44.1.3 (2), *Administrative Archives, UCT*.

64. File 300, Box 44.1.3 (2), *Administrative Archives, UCT*.

65. M. Mamdani. (1996). Centre for African Studies: Some preliminary thoughts. *Social Dynamics*, *22*, 1-14, p. 1.

66. Mamdani. (1996). Centre for African Studies, p. 2.

67. Mamdani. (1996). Centre for African Studies, p. 4.

68. Mamdani. (1996). Centre for African Studies, p. 6.

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CHAPTER 2

RE-MAKING AFRICAN STUDIES IN THE POST-COLONIAL AFRICAN UNIVERSITY: SOME NOTES

Adebayo Olukoshi

There has, of late, been a broad revival of interest in African Studies both on the African continent and in other regions of the world. This is attested to by the launching of new initiatives and/or the expansion of existing ones for the study of Africa among emerging/re-emerging powers such as Brazil, China, India, South Korea, and Turkey, to cite the most prominent examples, for which the continent has become a strategic terrain that must be followed closely at all levels. The realignments in the global distribution of economic power and influence that the increased weight of key new or reviving international actors is producing, and the structural transformations associated with them, are also propelling a growing demand for knowledge about Africa – and creating collateral opportunities for many institutions to enjoy income flows from a new generation of international students.[1] Furthermore, African Studies programmes in different parts of Europe and the Americas have been repackaged during the last decade or so to respond to the shifting information and knowledge needs of the international development cooperation and security communities.[2] Additionally, both for reasons internal to the African continent's own contemporary development trajectory and in response to growing demand expressed through various programmes of internationalization and student exchange, there has been an investment of new resources in African Studies in different institutions of higher education and advanced research in Africa itself even if this has been uneven, selective, and uncoordinated.[3] Remarkably, and perhaps on a scale not previously seen before, African Studies – as with the generation of knowledge more generally – is today no longer undertaken primarily within the confines of universities but has come to be anchored as well in an array of governmental and non-governmental think tanks and research centres.

Amidst the renewed interest in African Studies that is in evidence, a pertinent question that has arisen and which has animated debates across the African continent relates to whether it is appropriate to have African Studies in a post-colonial African university, what exactly such a programme of African Studies should mean, and what the contours for its development and consolidation might be in order for it to be relevant to present and future needs. It is on this debate that this essay focuses, doing so by seeking to place the core issues that are in contention and the concerns that have been expressed in a broader historical perspective that allows for a brief review of the origins of African Studies and the struggles that have been waged over its content and direction over the years. The position that is argued is a straightforward one: although, historically, its origins are tied to a project of European imperial hegemony and colonial domination, there is no reason, in principle, why African Studies should not feature strongly and prominently in the curriculum of the post-colonial African university. The central question that needs to be addressed is not so much whether it is appropriate to study Africa in the post-colonial African university but, rather, the *kind* of African Studies that should be promoted and the broader scientific and strategic purposes it must serve for Africa and Africans. It is to this question that attention should be devoted and if they did so constructively as part of a broader articulation of their mission, African universities would have succeeded in contributing in a meaningful way to the unfinished task of retrieving African Studies from its unhappy colonial origins and rescuing it from the many perverse uses and systematic abuses to which it has been subjected by successive generations of self-proclaimed Africanists, principally located in the citadels of Europe and the United States in particular.

ROOTS, CONTOURS, AND DYNAMICS OF A DEBATE

The contemporary debate in Africa on African Studies has deep historical roots and, in many ways, echoes an earlier round of discussions that took place in the lead up to independence and in the early years following the achievement of national liberation from direct colonial rule. The broad framework for this earlier round of reflections was established in the period from the end of the Second World War to the beginning of the 1960s. This was a period that witnessed a considerable mobilization of political opinion around such issues as the African identity and personality, the right to self-determination, the imperatives of independence from all forms of foreign rule, the strategic importance

of unity for a partitioned people, the centrality of self-reliance to the collective quest for nationhood, and the critical place of sovereignty in the march towards a continental rebirth. Much of the mobilization that took place was encapsulated in the historic ideals of pan-Africanism and its hopes that Africa would yet recover itself from the legacies of a prolonged history of pillage and plunder that it had suffered.[4] It necessarily called for the deployment of intellectual resources aimed, at a minimum, at contesting and repudiating the unfounded but widely held notion that sank roots both in the academy and the society in Europe and elsewhere that Africa had no history or record of human civilization that was worth recalling or relating with.[5]

At the heart of the questions that were raised and the concerns expressed by an earlier generation of African scholars was the fact that much of what was introduced as African Studies comprised the efforts of European anthropologists and missionaries to build an understanding of Africans and the African world in an elaborate but misguided exercise at seeking to know the "native" Other who was defined from the outset as being "tribal" and, therefore, fundamentally different and consigned to the lower rungs of the ladder of human progress. Colonial/missionary anthropology was especially central to this endeavour and, indeed, came to define its parameters. It was, as has been pointed out by many critics, an anthropology that was constructed on wrong assumptions, blinkered by racism, and replete with problems of methodology. Yet, it was critical to the project of colonial domination, including the self-appointed mission of the European imperial powers to "civilize" the African and acquit the "white man's burden".[6] This anthropology was built into the teaching of Africa in most of the universities and associated centres of advanced learning in Europe; it was to be carried over into the development of the curriculum of the pioneer universities established in Africa, especially after the Second World War, by the colonial powers. After all, most of the colonial universities that were created were set up as poor carbon copies of British and French universities, complete with curricula imported directly from the colonial metropolis with little or no modifications to accommodate local context and history in Africa.[7] In all of the disciplines of the Humanities and the Social Sciences that were offered in the metropolitan and colonial universities, a central, underlying refrain, whether explicitly stated or not, was the "backwardness" of the African and the challenge of helping Africa to transit into the age of civilization and progress on the basis of the path that had already been trodden by Europe – and, later, the United States. Development, in this sense, was reduced to a unilineal evolutionary exercise in simply copying/imitating/repeating what Europe and the United States had already long done at an earlier stage in their history. In this formulation, the Euro-American historical experience came to be stylized into an ideal that was then conflated with the universal. The international was similarly reduced to the European or the American almost as though they were synonymous. No alternative was considered possible to the "models" which Europe and the United States were thought to offer the world or represent for the colonized.

It is not surprising, considering the radical anti-colonial momentum that built up after the Second World War, that the tendentious reading of the African world and the misrepresentation of the African that pervaded the earliest generations of African Studies focused the attention of an emerging crop of African scholars fired by a determination to correct the misconceptions that dominated received wisdom about the continent and, at the very least, simply set the records straight.[8] Their endeavour began to gather full momentum during the period after the Second World War, the same period when the nationalist agitation for an end to colonial rule and the restoration of African independence increased in stridency. From the disciplines of Anthropology, Economics, Sociology, and Medicine to History, Archaeology, Philosophy, Religion, and Literature, among several others, African scholars challenged the kinds of African studies that had been fostered in Europe and America, and foisted on them. In time, a nationalist anti-colonial historiography was to develop that provided a counter-narrative to the one supplied by the European high priests of African Studies. The dawn of independence provided a robust opportunity for these scholars to undertake a wholesale re-writing of existing curricula and infuse the African experience into the traditions and canons of the various disciplines of the Social Sciences and the Humanities that they sought to recast and revamp.[9] The decolonization of the educational curriculum went hand-in-hand with the project of the decolonization of the university. Efforts were made to build epistemic communities steeped in the African world and which rejected racial stereotypes of the continent that was the stuff of colonial African

Studies and insisted that underdevelopment was not a fatal condition but a product of historical processes that are well known.[10] The efforts at countering the narratives, impact, and legacy of colonial African Studies were boosted by the establishment of many more universities in the post-colonial period. The efforts also benefitted from useful alliances with a broad spectrum of scholars in the European and American academies who, for varying reasons, were dissatisfied with the dominant approach to African Studies and attempted to produce counter-narratives about the continent both on their own and in alliance with like-minded African scholars.[11]

At the same time as pioneering African scholars across various disciplines challenged colonial African Studies and the refraction of its assumptions about Africa into various domains and fields of knowledge, the East-West Cold War context that emerged after the Second World War spurred the emergence of Area Studies in the United States as part of the broad geo-strategic need for more detailed knowledge by American policy makers on developments in different regions of the world. African Studies in the United States may have had some good reasons – and a fair margin for manoeuvre – not to simply ape and mimic European African Studies with its entire colonial overhang. However, it was to be speedily incorporated into the general development and funding of Area Studies.[12] While, on the face of things, it marked a boost for African Studies and, for a period at least, helped to secure its financial base in American universities, in practice, its close connection to US foreign policy and geo-strategic objectives in a politically and ideologically polarized world meant that it became excessively instrumentalized to serve narrow ends. Its overall fortunes were also to swing according to the changing political pendulum in Washington and the extent to which officials of successive administrations were either optimistic or pessimistic about Africa. The challenge of developing an African Studies that would be driven from within Africa by endogenous imperatives and which would respond to the priority concerns of the African world remained essentially unmet. Indeed, mainstream African Studies made in the USA was to become another exercise in the study of Africa through the lenses of other people and an idealized styling of American historical experiences into flawless models that were projected abroad with the help of a big academy and the equally impressive academic industry that was built around it. As with

colonial African Studies, this methodological *faux pas* was to set its limits as a serious scientific enterprise; it was to be challenged both within the American academy and in Africa.

The significant investment of effort made over the period from the 1950s to the 1970s in the retrieval of African Studies from the colonial frame within which it was originally forged in Europe and the geo-strategic Cold War considerations of Area Studies to which it subsequently became hostage, did yield some important and lasting results for which science as a whole became the richer. Driven primarily, though not exclusively by Africans, the efforts that were deployed produced new knowledge about Africa from antiquity to more recent historical periods;[13] generated innovations in the archaeological and related social research methods, including the validity and use of oral sources; contributed a plethora of new conceptual frames for analyzing social processes; enabled the writing of African experiences into various disciplines from which they were previously excluded; rolled back the weight of colonial anthropology in the study of African societies; and broadened African Studies beyond cultural and linguistic research, to cite just a few examples. Some of the disciplines in which important strides were made at decolonizing the curriculum and infusing it with content that resonated with the African context whilst simultaneously enriching and re-orienting it included History, Literature, Sociology, Political Science, Religion, and Philosophy. It is perhaps also instructive that they were the disciplines around which some of the most vibrant debates occurred. It is noteworthy too that some of the African university centres and sites where the most vigorous attempts were made at decolonizing the curriculum also attracted some of the most diverse international interests by way of staff and students coming from different parts of the world who wanted to be part of new thinking and refreshing experiments in the generation of knowledge.

However, challenges in the post-colonial period to the autonomy of the university and the disaffection that developed between the African academy and the continent's political leaders/policy makers combined with the subsequent economic crises that enveloped the region from the beginning of the 1980s to translate into a chronic underfunding of higher education that, in time, also became a crisis of vision, mission, and identity for many a post-colonial university. There are many dimensions to the crisis which a high proportion of African universities underwent

but these need not detain us here as they are very contemporary and have been adequately addressed in the literature.[14] Suffice it to note that insofar as the study of Africa in the post-colonial university is concerned, the minority, even marginal status of the African voice and presence in African Studies that began to be tackled in the early post-colonial period was reinforced further as local structures of research collapsed into decay, a brain drain from the academy was triggered, and the campus ceased to be a space for open debate. The decline in the fortunes of African-driven efforts at rewriting African Studies is attested to by various indicators such as the volume of production, the locus of influence in the definition of parameters and tools of African Studies, and the one-sided division of labour that persists between African researchers as conscious or unconscious collectors of raw data and their counterparts in Europe and the United States as the producers of grand theories, concepts and narratives out of the data collected.[15]

Recent interest on the African continent at reviving African Studies has been associated with engagements by some of the higher education institutions in programmes of internationalization through which they receive exchange students interested in Africa for short periods of time. Such exchange students have come not just from Europe and the United States where study abroad initiatives have been in vogue for some time but also from Asia and Latin America in increasingly significant numbers. From Legon to Dar-es-Salaam, Cape Town to Cairo, Maputo to Casablanca, and Yaoundé to Dakar, these exchange programmes have offered attractions in terms of the opportunities they provide to the participating African universities to generate extra incomes for themselves through the specially-packaged programmes they develop for the visiting students and the tuition which their faculties dispense. However, for all the direct and indirect benefits which the exchange programmes are said to offer, it is clear that they have been uneven, fragmented, selective, and limited in their spread, impact, and reach. Much more importantly, they have not been accompanied by a systematic investment of research efforts into carrying forward the unfinished businesses of decolonizing the sciences in general and African Studies in particular. Re-engaging this challenge in a systematic way that is organic to a retooled sense of mission, vision, and identity must rank as one of the critical tasks before the post-colonial African university today.

RENEWING AFRICAN STUDIES IN THE POST-COLONIAL UNIVERSITY

It is understandable that some five decades or more after African countries began one after the other to accede to independence, strong doubts persist about the need for and validity of African Studies in the post-colonial university. This is in spite of the valiant efforts made to decolonize the field within Africa. It is also in spite of the broad adherence by many an African intellectual to the ideals of pan-Africanism, an adherence which could be expected to predispose them, almost naturally, to the encouragement of African Studies on the continent. The "original sin" of African Studies as a handmaiden of colonial oppression, the continued domination of the field by perspectives emanating from outside the African continent, the gross under-representation of African voices in the politics of the production of knowledge about the African continent, the stereotyping of Africa that still underpins most of the mainstream African Studies, and the increasing practice of self-referencing or the incestuous referencing of a closed circle of associates as a substitute for patient field-based research have fuelled a deep-seated disquiet which has translated into a questioning of its value to the African academy. Moreover, mainstream African Studies has, for all intents and purposes, been and remained an instrument by which big and dominant interests have sought, from one period to the other, to understand Africa for the purpose of better articulating and pursuing their interests. It has had less to do with attempts at African self-understanding and projection. In consequence, it has been suggested that African scholars who, in living Africa on an everyday basis and following the changes taking place continuously hardly refer to their vocation as African Studies and themselves as Africanists, would do well to concentrate their talents on studying other regions of the world for the long-term benefit of Africa.

While the disquiet in many African circles about the nature and shape of contemporary African Studies in understandable and some of the arguments that have been tabled against its incorporation into the post-colonial university are cogent and ought to be taken seriously, it is equally important to recognize that nothing stops those outside the African continent – in Europe, the Americas, Asia and anywhere else – who invest in different versions of knowledge production about Africa that suit their needs from continuing to do so. In fact, it can be

expected that they will stay committed to generating their own version of African Studies for as long as it serves the particular interests they seek to advance. These interests will not necessarily or always tally with those of Africans; in fact, they could be diametrically opposed to Africa's own concerns. It is precisely for this reason that the terrain must not be conceded to them. Instead, their goals, approaches, and conclusions should be contested inch by inch. In doing so, it will also be crucial not to lose sight of the fact that there are many good reasons why Africans should themselves be studying Africa – not simply for the legitimate purpose of rebutting inaccuracies and misrepresentations that abound in African Studies made elsewhere in the world but, even more importantly, for the fact that the development of a robust scientific understanding of Africa in its mutations and transformations is a duty which Africans owe themselves first and foremost, and that must be undertaken with all the rigour and seriousness it deserves. Self-understanding is a prerequisite for a proper understanding of others. An anchorage of African Studies within the dynamic of the production and reproduction of livelihoods on the continent and the changing interface between Africa and the rest of the world which it generates will necessitate intellectual engagements on a continuing basis with the past, present and future of Africa. No institution is better placed to lead such intellectual engagements and imbue them with a rigorous scientific content than the post-colonial university.

There are other additional considerations why the post-colonial university has a responsibility to immerse itself fully in African Studies. Universities are, by definition, centres of excellence which strive to function according to globally-recognized standards. However, they are also not indifferent to history, location and context. Although the post-colonial African university will do well to invest itself in the pursuit of universal knowledge that transcends boundaries and meets the best standards of scientific excellence known to humankind, it will also be odd and outrightly irresponsible if it did so without embracing a definition of the universal that includes a proper integration of its African environment and context. A critical mistake that was made in the past was to assume that that which presents itself as universal is in the external realm and is, by definition, a mark of excellence. However, the universal is first and foremost local in origin and (initial) anchorage, responding as it does to a problematic that is generated in a specific local domain. Excellence from this point of view is itself not disconnected from the quest to tackle local problems and respond to local needs. For better or for worse, the post-colonial university is tied to the African world; its mission, vision, and identity cannot be crafted from generation to generation in the abstract and without a willingness to engage fully and without reservation with the African world as a starting point for its engagement with the rest of the world. To embrace Africa and immerse itself within it has never been incompatible with ambition to engage with the world.

Also, although in a time past, there was a tendency to treat Africa as one homogenous terrain bound together by a range of common characteristics – economic, social, cultural, geographical, and historical – massive changes taking place on the continent have also generated a differentiation that necessitates important investments in gaining a deeper, and more nuanced understanding of the dynamics of change and transformation on the continent. To be sure, Africa and Africans are still bound together by a shared pan-African ideal forged out of a common set of historical experiences. These commonalities should not, however, blind the student to the differences that are accumulating in an array of socio-economic and political domains, and the necessity of studying them closely and systematically as much for scientific as for policy reasons. The building of comparative knowledge within Africa about the continent has become an urgent necessity; properly undertaken, it will represent a radical departure from a mainstream comparative research which basically reduces African experiences to a subset of the histories of other people. In their unity and diversity, African countries have much to teach one another and learn from themselves which African Studies in the post-colonial university has a duty to help unlock. In doing so, refreshing conceptual frames and suitably adapted terminologies are likely to be produced which, by their originality and explanatory power would enter into the international reflections on Africa that continues to be dominated by unchanging stereotypes and the recycling of tired concepts of increasingly doubtful scientific value.

Furthermore, although the contemporary university manager is called upon to pay attention to the balance sheet at a time when public funding of higher education is under stress and independent revenue generation is paramount, it is crucial to make a distinction between the search for money-yielding programmes and the independent value of knowledge

generation both generally and with specific regard to African Studies in particular. The post-colonial African university worth its salt will be hard-pressed to justify a neglect or elimination of the study of Africa simply on the argument that it is not economic or does not pay its way, or cannot be accommodated within the imperatives of a new managerialism that has come to hold sway in many campuses. If there is any site in which scholars all over the world should expect to find challenging programmes on Africa with which they can engage for the sake of the advancement of science or the deepening of their understanding, it is clear that it must be on the continent itself. Properly developed, such a site will, by the strength of the reputation which it builds and the diversity of resources which it offers, be in a position to attract a healthy mix of local and external scholars to animate scientific life and create knowledge that offers refreshing insights.

The case for African Studies in the post-colonial university cannot be over-stated and many more arguments can be advanced.[16] Over and above these arguments, however, it is also important to invest energy in the nature and type of the African Studies programme that the post-colonial university should encourage and pursue. This is a concern that cannot be taken for granted. Here, the challenge which is posed, and which also serves as an opportunity, is to develop a programme of African Studies that does not simply replicate or mimic African Studies outside Africa, especially from Europe and the United States. In so doing, it must, among other things, avoid the treatment of the African world in exotic and esoteric terms; overcome the notion of Africa as an exception to the norm for which specially-invented analytic frames must always be generated; challenge the ahistoricism that is rife in much of mainstream African Studies; refute the idea that the problems of the continent are fatalistic; encourage a reading of Africa from the vantage point of its history and the refraction of that history into the contemporary dynamics that are shaping its present and future; build a corpus of comparative research on Africa that is undiluted by a practice of reading the continent through the assumptions and experiences of other peoples and regions; and aim to be the primary repository of well-ground and considered thinking about the dynamics and prospects of Africa as a region. Furthermore, African Studies in the post-colonial university should be of the type which, through a painstaking understanding of the African world, re-engages the disciplines with experiences from the continent and infuses theory with perspectives from the region. Also, the post-colonial university should aspire, as a duty, to offer the best research resources on Africa available anywhere in the world to researchers, doing so in collaboration with other African institutions as may be necessary and opportune.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

The future of the post-colonial university is intricately tied to the history, present fortunes, and future prospects of the African continent. The university cannot exist and function without relating to the location and context within which it finds itself. African Studies remains largely underdeveloped on a global scale, especially when compared to other fields such as American or European Studies. It remains even more disadvantaged in the way in which it is positioned in the quintessential post-colonial university. Much of the problems that have been posed owe to the colonial origins of African Studies but matters have also not been helped by decisions connected to the reform of post-independence higher education that have resulted, *inter alia*, in the downgrading, if not the outright termination, of the teaching of African History in many of the universities on the continent and a failure to prioritize the funding of primary research in the work of the academy. A first step towards recovering the ground that is being lost could be taken by whole-heartedly embracing the remaking of African Studies in the post-colonial university as a niche that is considered central to its historic mission and identity, and the vision it promotes of a transformed Africa.

NOTES

1. Alongside the new scramble that is being played out for Africa's natural resources – and the custom of its growing middle class, investments in the study of Africa, including African languages, are also being carried out.

2. The needs and interests of the official aid and security communities have increasingly weighed heavily on the research and teaching programmes pertaining to Africa. In the case of the security community, the period since the 11 September, 2001 attacks on the twin towers in New York and elsewhere in the United States, has spurred this community's interest in supporting research to generate knowledge that can be used in its work of containing "terrorists".

3. One dimension of this is the growth in the number of fee-paying private students of African origin, often though not exclusively from resource-rich countries, targeted for recruitment by universities across the continent and around the world even as the continent gets more closely integrated into the growing international trade in educational services.

4. K. Nkrumah. (1970). *Africa must unite*. London: International Publishers; N. Azikiwe. (1968). *Renascent Africa*. London: Frank Cass; N. Orizu. (1999). *The voice of freedom*. Enugu: Horizontal Publishers are just three examples of the works of anti-colonial nationalists aimed at mobilizing Africans for a continental rebirth.

5. One of the most prominent and cited proponents of the notion that Africa had no history was Hugh Trevor-Roper who at different times exercised his trade as a Historian at Oxford University.

6. Among the most consistent and virulent critics of colonial anthropology was Archie Mafeje. See his essay, A. Mafeje. (1971). The ideology of 'tribalism'. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, *9*, 253-261.

7. From Fourah Bay College in Freetown which was paired with and modelled after the University of Durham in England to the University of Ibadan that was launched as a college of the University of London and the University of Dakar that was developed under the aegis of Sorbonne in Paris, France, the colonial university was closely tied to the apron strings of a "mother" metropolitan university from the principal colonizing countries.

8. Many of the pioneer critics of colonial African Studies as originated and practiced in Europe had, themselves, been trained mostly in universities in the United Kingdom and France. They endured accounts and assessments of their continent that did not tally with their understanding or knowledge of Africa. The example of Cheikh Anta Diop in France was illustrative of the frustration they suffered.

9. Some of the leading lights of this effort included prominent Historians and social researchers such as Kenneth Dike, J.F. Ade-Ajayi, Adu Boahen, Emmanuel Ayandele, J.D. Omer-Cooper, Saburi Biobaku, and Michael Crowder, to cite a few of the names belonging to or associated with the Ibadan School; Yusufu Bala Usman from the Zaria School; Arnold Temu, Walter Rodney, Bonaventure Swai, Dani Wadada Nabudere, Haroub Othman, and Issa Shivji from the Dar-es-Salaam School.

10. See, for example, W. Rodney. (1972). *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*. London: Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications. One institutional by-product of this radical rejection of European narratives on Africa and the African condition is the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) that was established in Dakar, Senegal, in 1973 to project African voices and their counter-/alternative narratives about the history and development of the continent.

11. Perhaps the most prominent of this category of scholars was the late Basil Davidson who devoted an entire life time documenting the history of Africa and questioning some of the fallacies about the continent that had been popularized through mainstream African Studies.

12. See D. L. Szanton. (Ed.). (2004). *The politics of knowledge: Area studies and the disciplines*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

13. In this regard, the efforts of the nationalist school of African History were particularly salutary. Much of that effort was translated into the production of the acclaimed UNESCO series on the general history of Africa. The works of Cheikh Anta Diop on the black African origins of Egyptian civilization are also worth keeping in mind.

14. See, for example, P. Zeleza & A. Olukoshi. (Eds.). (2004). *African universities in the twenty-first century*. Vol. 1: *Liberalization and internationalization*, Vol. 2: *Knowledge and society*. Dakar: CODESRIA Books.

15. See International Social Science Council. (2010). *World social science report: Knowledge divides*. Paris: UNECSO and ISSC.

16. One additional argument that may be worth keeping in mind centres on the all-round change in politics, economy, and society which Africa is currently experiencing. The dimensions of this change are numerous, and including the rate and scale of urbanization, demographic shifts that are tilted in favour of the youth, etc.

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CHAPTER 3

AFRICAN STUDIES, AREA STUDIES, AND THE LOGIC OF THE DISCIPLINES

Harry Garuba

> In their encounters with Africa, the disciplines have travelled a considerable distance from their unadulterated Eurocentric origins, but many traces remain which continue to envelope Africa in the analytic shadows of difference and even derision.
>
> *Paul Zeleza*[1]

> The challenge to parochialism has, however, been deeper than the question of the social origins of researchers. The new voices among the social scientists raised theoretical questions beyond the question of the topics or subjects of legitimate study, and even beyond the argument that evaluations are made differently from different perspectives. The argument of these new voices was also that there have been presuppositions built into the theoretical reasoning of the social sciences (and indeed into that of the natural sciences and the humanities as well), many of which in fact incorporated *a priori* prejudices or modes of reasoning that have neither theoretical nor empirical justification, and that these *a priori* elements ought to be elucidated, analyzed, and replaced with more justifiable premises.
>
> *Immanuel Wallerstein et al*[2]

I wish to frame this presentation around a specific set of questions: how do we think the study of Africa in a post-colonial, post-apartheid university at the present moment? How do we think this in relation to the histories and legacies of Area Studies, on the one hand, and the genealogies of African Studies as a field of intellectual inquiry, on the other? This framing allows us to think these questions through the histories and genealogies that make the present such a crucial conjuncture. What distinguishes and marks this present is that it is a period of crisis and opportunity in South African higher education: apart from being marked by urgency of the transformations that are required in post-apartheid South Africa, the contemporary moment is also one in which tremendous changes are taking place in the world of higher education; changes which impact upon this terrain in general and also specifically impact upon the study of Africa in universities in Africa. And my question is: How do we think these processes together, first, in terms of doing the work of transformation that has to be done in South African tertiary institutions; and, second, in understanding the import of the transformations that are taking place in higher education in the world and the manner in which these articulate or disarticulate with the first objective, particularly with regard to the study of Africa?

I want to suggest that one of the ways to profitably think through these questions is to foreground the histories from which they arise. In this presentation, therefore, I will attempt to sketch these histories in outline, explore the meanings and legacies that they have bequeathed us and highlight their silences and elisions in order to map a way forward. I will begin with a brief reading of the conventional narrative of the ways the study of Africa has been framed and conducted since the nineteenth century, aligning these frames with concurrent processes and shifts in the knowledge and power equation in the academy and in the world. It is thus a story of the disciplinisation of knowledge and the role accorded to Africa in this process and how to think ourselves out of these frames.

GENEALOGIES OF THE STUDY OF AFRICA

The conventional story of African Studies or more broadly the study of Africa is too often told in terms of the paradigms that framed knowledge production about Africa in particular eras and the changing fortunes of the field in relation to these changing paradigms. The usual narrative goes like this: first, there was the Anthropological/Missionary Era of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth coincident with colonialism, followed by the Area Studies/African Studies Era concurrent with the rise of American power and the Cold War often said to have begun in 1945, and finally, the Globalisation/Global Studies Era roughly corresponding to the end of the Cold War through to the present. This is the story as told.

As recently as 2011, in the new bilingual journal *Afrika: Ankara University Journal of African Studies*, Jeffrey D. Howison, in an essay entitled "Walter Rodney, African Studies, and the Study of Africa" summarised it in this manner:

> The prevailing approach to the study of Africa has passed through (at least) two eras. The first, from roughly the end of the 19th century through the conclusion of the Second World War, was dominated by Anthropology and inherently related to the project of European colonialism. During this period, as Immanuel Wallerstein has written, the study of Africa was largely monopolized by anthropologists who conducted their fieldwork among the various "tribes". Those conducting the research were not only exclusively European, but they were generally "of the nationality of the governing colonial power...In political terms, the anthropologists of this period were largely secular missionaries, liberal mediators between the tribe and the Colonial Office (plus metropolitan public opinion)." With the post-WWII

> breakdown of European colonialism in the face of national independence movements, the political and economic foundation of the approach soon dissolved and there subsequently merged a new paradigm that would supersede the anthropologists of the colonial period.[3]

The new paradigm was – of course – the Area Studies paradigm that found institutional home in the various African Studies programmes in several universities in the United States of America and the West in general. The global political context had changed from the shoring up of colonial power to managing the rivalries from the fallout of the Cold War. When Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president, addressed the first congress of Africanist scholars on African soil, in Accra, in 1962, he may not have realised how ironically right he was when he urged the assembled scholars to move away from the anthropological framework to the sociological in African Studies. Here is how he phrased his injunction:

> African Studies is not a kind of academic hermitage. It has warm connections with similar studies in other countries of the world. *It should change its course from anthropology to sociology,* for it is the latter which more than any other aspect creates the firmest basis for social policy.[4]

Although Nkrumah was promoting a broad pan-Africanist agenda and his turn to sociology intended to move the disciplinary gaze to Africans as modern subjects rather than simply ahistorical tribesmen and women, he was not to know that beyond the disciplinary and methodological, the Area Studies paradigm was in its turn differently defining the scope of its objects of inquiry. As Howison notes in his article, the African Studies programmes, in the spirit of area studies, limited Africa to what was referred to as "sub-saharan Africa" and the founding in the USA of the African Studies Association (ASA) in 1957 "further limited the scope of historical and social inquiry both through the conceptual divorcing of the pan-African diaspora from the African continent and through the exclusion of those scholars who did not conform to this particular vision of Africa".[5] In his opinion, therefore, the post-Cold War period of intellectual and institutional crisis and the consequent neoliberal restructuring which led to cuts in higher education funding that hit Area Studies programmes such as African Studies particularly hard should not simply be cause for lamentation but be seen as an opportunity for a redefinition and rebirth in the study of Africa.

It must be admitted that when the area studies paradigm collapsed, some prominent African and Africanist scholars did try to seize the moment and use it as an opportunity to find new ways to justify the study of Africa within the academy, outside and beyond the institutional cover that area studies had provided. To take one notable example, the volume of essays edited by Bates, Mudimbe, and Barr entitled *Africa and the Disciplines: The Contribution of Research in Africa to the Social Sciences and Humanities* (1993) attempts to make the case on the basis that African Studies has shaped the disciplines and various fields of knowledge and thus contributed to the search for universal truth.

> Our purpose in this volume is to trace the impact of research in Africa on the core disciplines; we therefore asked prominent scholars to answer the challenge posed by these questions. Our contributors responded by looking back and showing how the study of Africa has shaped their fields. We also asked them to look forward and identify the central problems, themes, and questions in the disciplines and the contribution of African research to their agendas. We did so by posing additional questions: "How does the study of Africa contribute to the cutting edges of your discipline?' and "how does it shape your field?"[6]

However pragmatic and legitimate this approach may be, a justification of the study of Africa on the basis of its contribution to the growth of disciplinary knowledge such as this is problematic on several grounds and here I will focus on one: the role of disciplinary knowledge in the production of Africa.

ANOTHER GENEALOGY: SILENCE AND THE PRODUCTION OF DISCIPLINARY KNOWLEDGE

Allow me begin this section with a newspaper photograph and a story.

Sometime in 2011, the media published a remarkable photograph of Barack Obama and his National Security team watching live images of the US Navy Seals' attack on a compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, in which Osama bin Laden was killed. This photograph is remarkable not for the event it records but for the story it tells about our world and the order of knowledge we inhabit. Here was a small coterie of people watching an event happening far away, in another *area* of the world; and soon after, the same people or their agents announce what happened to the world; and then they set in motion the terms and frameworks through which the event will be discussed and debated, understood and evaluated. As academics are

wont to say, they provide us with the problematic and frame the terms in which the discourse will be conducted. All of this, far away from the scene of the event. In this rendering, the people of Abbottabad, the Pakistanis, on whose home ground the event takes place become simply objects in the narrative, present only as evidence of failure, lack, or corruption; located within a narrative teleology constructed from elsewhere. [We will come back to this question of a narrative teleology later on.]

Reading this image, the discourses circulating around it, and the institutional sites of their production and dissemination, provides an insight into what "area studies" is all about. The scholarly study of Africa in institutions of higher learning within the domain of area studies is often knowledge constructed from a distance about an area of the world by "experts," from outside of the area in question.

At this point, let us draw out the analogies between this vignette and the conventional narrative of the different eras in the history of the study of Africa and the silences in the production of that narrative. I will focus on two: first, the long process of the formation, naming and consolidation of disciplinary knowledge and its boundaries and demarcations in the universities, beginning in the nineteenth century, and the role assigned to Africa in this process; and second, the process I like to refer to as the revolt of the objects of study and the role of Africa in this eruption.

What is hidden from the narrative of the Anthropological/Missionary era of the study of Africa is that this was also the period when the disciplines as we know them today in the humanities and social sciences began to emerge and take shape. Wallerstein *et al.* express this with remarkable clarity in their report. They say:

> Although the underpinnings of the divisions within the social sciences were clearly crystallizing in the first half of the nineteenth century, it was only in the period 1850-1914 that the intellectual diversification reflected in the disciplinary structures of the social sciences was formally recognized in the principal universities in the forms that we know them today. To be sure, in the period between 1500 and 1850 there had already existed a literature concerning many of the central questions treated in what we today call social science – the functioning of political institutions, the macroeconomic policies of the states, the rules governing interstate relations, *the description of non-European social systems*.... But all this was not yet quite what we have come to mean today by social science, and none of these scholars yet thought of himself as operating within the framework of what later were considered the separate disciplines.[7]

This elided fact in narratives of the study of Africa is important for the reason that it was in this process of disciplinisation and the creation of the disciplinary structures of knowledge that Africa fell out of the boxes and landed in the domain of anthropology. I need to underline why this is so significant to highlighting the silences in the narrative of the study of Africa. African and Africanist scholars are fond of invoking Hegel's infamous statement that Africa has no history or emphasising the fact that the discipline of anthropology was enabled by imperial power and was often implicated in the colonial project, which is as it should be. But what has not been highlighted in equal terms is that many of the disciplines of the humanities and the social sciences, being disciplines of modernity, were invariably defined in opposition to Africa – African animism, African irrationality, African orality, etc. In short, Africa was the ultimate sign of the non-modern that was not available to disciplinary attention, except within the domain of anthropological knowledge. In a telling statement in his book *Relocating Agency: Modernity and African Letters,* the Nigerian literary critic Olakunle George asserts that fifty or so years ago his book could not have been written because its object of inquiry – African literature/African letters – was not available to theoretical/disciplinary attention. This claim, which tells us something we already know about Africa and the disciplines, should always be borne in mind because it tends to be forgotten when we immerse ourselves in our disciplines in unexamined ways.

> We may use 1958, the year of the publication of *Things Fall Apart,* as the moment of the inauguration of African Literature as it has come to be known in the world of formal education. We may go back a further ten years, and use instead the collection *Anthologie de la nouvelle poesie negre et malgache de langue francaise* (1948). Either way, the institutional category we have come to know as "modern African literature" did not exist some fifty years ago. What this implies is that five decades or so ago, this book could not have been written – principally because its object was not a category available to theoretical attention.[8]

We need to recall that in their pursuit of the ideal of "scientific objectivity" and "empirically verifiable knowledge," the emerging disciplines of the social sciences adopted the radical separation of subject from object (of study) as an article of faith. The one discipline-in-deviation that conceptually dealt with the non-modern and methodologically sanctioned

"participant observation" rather than separation of subject and object was anthropology; it thus became the only disciplinary home available for the study of African worlds. So in the long process of the formalisation of the modern architecture of disciplinary knowledge production, Africa functioned as the ultimate negation, the excluded Other, about which a different order of knowledge and a different framework of knowledge production and methodological justification was needed. This history of the separation and consolidation of the disciplines and the role assigned to Africa in the process is important in understanding the relationship of the study of Africa to the disciplines.

Indeed, it scarred, in many ways, the nature of the entry of Africans into the disciplinary production of knowledge as it was then structured. This is because, unlike the objects studied in the natural sciences which cannot rise in revolt, in the social world in which social sciences and anthropology operate they can and sometimes do. And so, at that point marked in the conventional narrative as post-1945, when the disciplines had been named, consolidated, and homed in university departments, the world began to change and new voices started clamouring to be heard, to be accommodated within the structures of knowledge production that had held sway. The revolt of the objects of study was underway. With decolonisation and political independence in many African countries from the late 1950s onwards, African scholars entering into the academy were disconcerted by this structure and by the absence or marginalisation of "Africa" from the disciplines and sites of knowledge production. Rejecting the logic of the Anthropological/Missionary era and the logic of Area Studies, they endeavoured within their various disciplines to make "Africa" more visibly the object of intellectual engagement and academic production. In this, they encountered problems – not simply as a matter of perspective or legitimate object of study but at every level of disciplinary enunciation, paradigm and practice. To draw from the second epigraph by Wallerstein *et al.,* their problems began at the level of the "presuppositions built into the theoretical reasoning of the social sciences"[9] themselves which they strained and struggled in every disciplinary sphere to change.

Two major trajectories, among others, may be identified and highlighted within this struggle and new endeavour: the first was to produce and place more "African content" at the forefront of research and the curriculum while the second focused on the more formal and

structural struggle to question and extend the various disciplinary apparatuses they had inherited. This second struggle operated at the level of the authorized objects of study, theories, methodologies, and the paradigms and practices that make up the canon of the discipline: in short, the level of 'disciplinary reason' and its foundations. The one invariably fed into the other: it is one thing to insist that students study some pre-colonial African emperor, for example, but it is quite another to produce disciplinarily validated knowledge on the subject, in the 'absence' of the usual written archival sources. As a consequence, many of these African scholars found themselves straining to break out of the methodological and conceptual constraints of their disciplines and, in an instance such as this, seeking alternative archives and sources and making a case for their scholarly validity in the face of overwhelming disciplinary denigration.

That was the era in which debates about issues such as "Is there an African Philosophy?" flourished and, with it, came novel appellations such as "sage philosophy", "ethno-philosophy",[10] and so on, deployed as slightly denigrating, descriptive terms not validated by disciplinary authority. This was perhaps the ultimate postcolonial paradox in knowledge production: that the new producers coming on the stage sought the prestige of disciplinary validation and authority while the nature of their research and writing was undermining this authority and destabilising its foundations. These debates about disciplinary definitions and demarcations, concepts and methodologies, raged within many of the disciplines of the humanities from the 1960s to the early 1980s. In African literature and literary studies, the debates moved from the basic question of "What is African literature?" through the legitimacy of literatures written in European languages claiming to be African literature to the very concepts and tools of analysis inherited from the discipline. Scholars spent a lot of time (and paper) in contestation over questions such as "Is there an Epic in Africa?", "Can African performances which do not fit the Aristotelian criteria be described as drama?"[11], "Is there an African tradition of tragedy and if so, what are it sources?", etc. Examples abound in several disciplinary domains. These discursive contestations of disciplines and disciplinarity are often occluded or silenced when we blandly refer to this period as the era of area studies. This silencing is significant and was to profoundly influence and shape the choices made down the road, so to speak.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that a certain unmaking

of disciplinary boundaries was taking place but it was, at this time, unnameable as such. Remember: this was happening before the self-reflexivity that was to come later in many disciplines. For many of the disciplines, these were debates that were happening in the domain of "area studies" not within their respectable core. The so-called "linguistic turn" in the humanities and social sciences that came with the rise of poststructuralism and postmodernism owes much more to these debates than is often acknowledged. Though disciplinary boundaries soon adjusted to this new reflexivity and reaffirmed themselves as a new generation of African scholars settled into their allotted spaces within the disciplinary architecture of the university, it is still problematic, I think, however pragmatically we may frame it, to seek to justify the study of Africa on the basis of its contribution to the disciplines. To appropriate the title of the Gulbenkein report, the study of Africa, on the contrary, was calling upon us to open the disciplines rather than adopt and justify their self-admittedly fragmentary understandings of the world.

This alternative genealogy and it silences show us that Africa's relationship with the disciplines has rarely been an easy one. However, as Ellen Messer-Davidow, David R. Shumway, and David J. Sylvan tell us:

> For only two centuries, knowledge has assumed a disciplinary form; for less than one, it has been produced in academic institutions by professionally trained knowers. Yet we have come to see these circumstances as so natural that we tend to forget their historical novelty and fail to imagine how else we might produce and organise knowledge. Our world is so naturally divided into, say, biology, sociology, and musicology that when we try to imagine alternatives to these disciplines, we think merely of combining them: biochemistry, sociolinguistics, ethnomusicology.
>
> Socially and conceptually, we are disciplined by our disciplines. First, they help produce our world. They specify the objects we can study (genes, deviant persons, classic texts) and the relations that obtain among them (mutation, criminality, canonicity). They provide criteria for our knowledge (truth, significance, impact) and methods (quantification, interpretation, analysis) that regulate our access to it.[12]

It is understandable that at the moment of neo-liberal globalisation academics, especially those in African studies programmes, who have to contend with cuts in funding in higher education, recognise the centrality of the core disciplines and their departments in the modern university and seek to adjust to that reality. The shift from the old manner of thinking of education as a public good to a new conception of it as an economic product linked to economic productivity and national competitiveness in very unmediated and unproblematised ways has been fundamental. The knowledge economy is probably the most sanitised phrase that describes a knowledge capitalism which has made crude market-driven models and ideas such as valued added, continual innovation, new technologies, consumers and clients all pervasive in the thinking (and speech) of university administrators. Recognising this new reality, however, does not mean that we entirely abandon or further silence the story that this alternative genealogy of the study of Africa tells us.

BY WAY OF A CONCLUSION

Reading through the literature produced within the context of the disciplinary reflexivity that arose in the 1980s and spread through many of the disciplines, what surprises is the marginal role accorded to Africa and the study of Africa or the study of the Other in general in setting this process in motion. This should make us pause and ponder the manner in which disciplinary histories and teleologies are constructed. The question of disciplinary teleologies is important because disciplines are supposed to move forward not move backwards in the production of knowledge and moving forward is conceptualised in a crudely additive manner. Even when the "primitive" becomes an object of disciplinary attention, for example, the credit does not go to the "primitive" but to the expansion of the frontiers of the discipline in its objects of legitimate attention, its tools, theories and methods for focussing this gaze. Thus, the disciplinary fragmentations that followed in the wake of various foundational critiques could comfortably be seen mainly as the consequence of the postmodern questioning of the Enlightenment project and its conceptions of reason, subjectivity, and so on, in a remarkably hermetic Eurocentric manner. Within this teleology, the discursive resistance and revolt of the Other becomes a marginal episode in the narrative of disciplinary trajectories. That Africa, the study of the Other, could be accorded such a cameo role in these disciplinary eruptions is the reason why the question that animates the book *Africa and the Disciplines* could reasonably be asked – without irony – in the first instance.

I want to suggest, instead, that the question that we should be asking

ourselves today in the Humanities and Social Sciences in Africa, is this: how do we teach, study and research Africa in an African institution of higher learning in the 21st century in a way that does not reproduce the legacy of area studies and the blinkers of the inherited disciplines? And what will the study of Africa look like if the problematic was constructed from a standpoint of embodied intimacy rather than distance? And what if the critical and methodological frameworks that orient the process of knowledge production take that previously unnameable trans-disciplinarity, that undermining of disciplinary boundaries and the fragmented knowledges they foster, as their point of origin?

It is here – with these questions - that we begin at the Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, at the present moment.

NOTES

1. P.T. Zeleza. (2006). Introduction: The disciplining of Africa. In P.T. Zeleza (Ed.), *The study of Africa: Vol 1: Disciplinary and interdisciplinary encounters* (pp. 1-35). Dakar: Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA).

2. I. Wallerstein, et al. (1996). *Open the social sciences: Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the restructuring of the social sciences.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

3. J.D. Howison. (2011). "Walter Rodney, African Studies, and the study of Africa." *Afrika: Ankara University Journal of African* Studies, *1*, 43-66, p. 60.

4. K. Nkrumah. (1973). *Revolutionary path*. London: PANAF, p. 212, emphasis added.

5. Howison, pp. 61-62.

6. R.H. Bates, V.Y. Mudimbe, & J. O'Barr. (1993). Introduction. In R. H. Bates, V.Y. Mudimbe, & J. O'Barr (Eds.), *Africa and the disciplines: The contribution of research in Africa to the social sciences and humanities* (pp. xi-xxiii). Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, p. xi.

7. Wallerstein et al., pp. 12-13, italics added.

8. O. George. (2003). *Relocating agency: Modernity and African letters.* Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 196.

9. Wallerstein et al., p. 47.

10. See for example: B.J. Hallen & O. Sodipo. (1987). *Knowledge, belief and witchcraft: Analytic experiments in African philosophy.* Stanford: Stanford University Press; D.A. Masolo. (1994). *African philosophy in search of identity*. Bloomington, Indianapolis and Edinburgh: Indiana University Press and Edinburgh University Press; H. Odera Oruka. (1990). *Sage philosophy: Indigenous thinkers and modern debate on philosophy*. Leiden: E.J. Brill; T. Serequeberhan. (1994). *The hermeneutics of African philosophy: Horizon and discourse*. New York: Routledge.

11. See for example: Y. Ogunbiyi. (1981). *Drama and theatre in Nigeria: A critical sourcebook*. Lagos: Nigeria Magazine; B.A. Osofisan. (1974). *The origins of drama in West Africa.* Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ibadan; R. Finnegan. (1970). *Oral literature in Africa*. London: Clarendon Press; I. Okpewho. (1979). *The epic in Africa: Toward a poetics of the oral performance*. New York: Columbia University Press.

12. E. Messer-Davidow, D.R. Shumway, & D.J. Sylvan. (1993). Preface. In E. Messer-Davidow, D.R. Shumway, & D.J. Sylvan (Eds.), *Knowledges: Historical and critical studies in disciplinarity* (pp. vii-viii). Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, p. vii.

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CHAPTER 4

AFRICAN STUDIES, EPISTEMIC SHIFTS AND THE POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

Leonhard Praeg

I was invited to contribute to this conversation because of an opinion piece I wrote for the *Mail and Guardian*[1] on what I think of as a certain aporetic tension in the Centre for African Studies (CAS) debate. Although in what follows I do not focus exclusively on that debate I also do not want to lose sight of it for the simple reason that I think it urges us to break into its two constituent elements the question before us today. These elements are firstly, what *kind of knowledge* do we need to produce on and from Africa today? And secondly, what *institutional arrangement* best reflects that need. I will only make some very general comments about institutional arrangement towards the end – in part, because doing so presupposes knowledge of a whole range of issues relating to history, transformation and neo-liberalism at this university which I am simply not qualified to address. I focus therefore on the first question. More specifically perhaps on the question, what are the historical conditions for the possibility of knowledge on and from Africa today?

I want to respond as philosopher and teacher – that is, as a person whose intellectual interests cannot be confined to African Studies however broadly conceived but who nonetheless takes very seriously what it means to teach philosophy in an African context. For me this connection between being an *intellectual* and being a *teacher* is important. The university as modern institution was from its inception conceived to be somewhat useful and somewhat useless. Put less crudely, not all knowledge is legitimated by a calculus of utility whether political or economic. This has and should always remain the case. Having said that, I personally tend to err on the "useful" side – and by useful I mean nothing more than that the answer to the question "What is the place of the study of Africa in the post-colonial university?" is, in part, a question about the meaning and place of subjects like philosophy in Africa.

In order to more carefully delimit the place of our thinking about Africa in the post-colonial university I shall argue that historically there have been three epistemically distinct objectives of knowledge production on and from Africa and that mapping these may bring some clarity to the question of institutional arrangement. But first, a caveat.

In 2010 I spearheaded the introduction of a project at Rhodes University called "Thinking Africa" which was formally launched in 2011. For us the parameters of today's question are slightly different from those at UCT. At Rhodes we have never had an autonomous institute dedicated to the study of Africa which means that at Rhodes we have to engage the meta-question regarding the place of African Studies at the post-colonial university wholly within the broader question of curriculum or epistemic transformation. That does not mean that the debate around CAS is not relevant to us. It is. In fact, I have to confess that my initial interest in the CAS debate was sparked less by the question of your institutional arrangements than by the fact that it compelled me to reflect on the nature of our *responsibility* – to our students, to our various disciplines and, if such a thing can be conceived, to what *being* and *thinking* Africa means. Long before the re-structuring of higher education in South Africa through the inappropriate language of accountancy and auditing, when these trends were already sweeping Europe, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida addressed this question of our responsibility when he stated that –

> today the minimal and in any case the most interesting, most novel and strongest responsibility, for someone attached to a research or teaching institution, is perhaps to make this [politics], its system and its aporias as clear and thematic as possible. In speaking of clarity and thematization … I still appeal to the most classical of norms, but I doubt that anyone could omit to do so without, yet again, putting into question every thought of responsibility …[2]

I take this to mean that as intellectuals our first responsibility consists in articulating the paradoxes and aporias that criss-cross in the university *qua* intellectual space of research and teaching – aporias, tensions and contradictions that reveal something of what it means to work in a discipline, whether philosophy or African Studies, in an institutional and intellectual culture that has essentially become, not just inter-disciplinary but indeed post-disciplinary. This, then, is how I read Derrida's invitation: to reflect on a number of aporias or unresolveable paradoxes that mark the post-colonial study of Africa. They become visible only once we consider the various aims or objectives that the production of knowledge on and from Africa has historically had. To reflect on these aporias in the context of that history is, I think, a pre-condition for addressing the question of institutional arrangement. In

what follows, then, I will do three things:

1) enumerate four historical epistemic breaks in knowledge production on and from Africa;
2) point out how each of these objectives is haunted by a specific aporias;
3) suggest that these aporia can usefully frame the question of institutional arrangement that we are all grappling with.

FOUR EPISTEMIC BREAKS

To begin, I want to suggest that the simple binary division between pre- and post-colonial Africa implicit in today's question is not always helpful because it obscures important differentiations in both epochs – particularly, I shall argue, in post-coloniality. Of course the distinction between pre-colonial and colonial will always be true and useful but I want to split the post-colonial epoch in two further epistemes, the "sovereign" and "post-sovereign."

Before I offer a brief description of each of the four epistemes, I want to emphasise that the epistemic breaks advanced here, although indebted to Foucault's thinking, are not discontinuous in the sense suggested by his own work. The epistemes I discuss, although occurring one after the other, do not simply unfold in horizontal or linear fashion. Rather, I imagine them as vertically layering the discourse on and from Africa. It is this layered complexity that makes a debate such as the one about CAS so difficult and complex.

THE PRE-COLONIAL AND COLONIAL

In *The Invention of Africa* Mudimbe reminds us that "[a]lthough generalizations are of course dangerous, colonialism and colonization basically mean organization, arrangement. The two words derive from the latin word *colêre,* meaning to cultivate or to design … [C]olonists … as well as colonialists … have all tended to organize and transform non-European areas into fundamentally European constructs".[3] In this colonial episteme the *politics* is one of oppression, the *mode of knowledge production* is domination and the *objective* is the demonstration of western *superiority.*

I want to suggest that this re-organisation or re-arrangement of Africa into a European construct was, in a very specific sense of the word, *whole* or *complete*. By this I mean that there can be no anti-colonial re-imagining or re-arrangement of Africa, no re-covery of an Africa (the so-called "indigenous knowledge systems") that preceded colonialism that will not depart from a logic of negation suggested by the "anti-" in anti-colonial; no re-covery of a pre-colonial Africa that will not be informed, determined and contaminated by the language and concepts that constitute the archive of this European organization of Africa. And therein lies our first aporia: the very concept of the pre-colonial is generated by or is a function of its antithesis, *the colonial*. Any idea we may have of what this "pre-colonial" means emerges, conceptually, from the category of the colonial and remains, in our exploration of it, contaminated by the language of the archive. This contradiction is not one we can somehow avoid or side-step because it is an aporia which means we have to do the work of re-arrangement full knowing that the very attempt to do so works both *within* and *against* dominant western constructions of knowledge. Let us call this the *aporia of the archive*.

The topic of this conversation suggests that the pre-colonial and colonial epistemes are followed by a third, namely post-coloniality. As indicated, I want to split this historical epoch into two distinct epistemic epochs, namely the sovereign and post-sovereign.

THE SOVEREIGN EPISTEME

What followed after the formal end of colonialism can be described in terms of two interrelated processes: *politically*, state-making, and *intellectually*, the recovery of pre-colonial modes of thought that, it was argued, could be deployed to provide the intellectual foundations for post-colonial state-making. These two projects were inseparable: political *sovereignty* was reflected in intellectual *autonomy* and vice versa. The *locus classicus* of this inseparability was perhaps the African Socialism project – a project that literally argued for the codification of pre-colonial modes of thinking and being in the language of a contemporary ideology that, so it was hoped, would provide the intellectual foundations for the post-colonial state. Here, the *politics* is one of liberation and the *objective* of

knowledge production consists in the recovery of the pre-colonial such that the *sovereignty* of the political subject will be reflected in the *autonomy* of the intellectual subject.

This historical a priori of sovereignty is accompanied by its own *aporia of autonomy*. Political and intellectual liberation proceeds through negation – it is the negation of western domination that founded the African state and it is the contestation and subversion of colonialism as *arrangement* or *design* that produced ideologies like African socialism. Both the projects of a political founding and intellectual recollection remain haunted by the aporia of the archive in the sense that both are indebted for their articulation to the very language of western modernity. In other words, the historical a priori at work here – that of a sovereign political subject with autonomous and self-determining will – reflects the founding assumptions of western modernity: politically, in the sovereign westphalian nation-state and intellectually, in the promise of establishing autonomous intellectual traditions of thought whether conceived in the *disciplinary* terms of that modernity (e.g. African Philosophy) or in the notion of indigenous systems of thought. This leads me to the fourth episteme, that of the post-sovereign.

What seems to me most specific about the post-sovereign university is that we have lost faith in the idea that pre-colonial African modes of thinking and being can be usefully invoked in responding to the urgency we have come to associate with the academic project. As far back as 1963 Julius Nyerere eloquently addressed this urgency when, in his Inauguration speech at the University of East Africa (1963), he stated, that "[t]he university must have within itself … the spirit of truth; it must be as objective and scientific as possible … Yet … it must be realized that we are in a hurry. We cannot just think, and debate endlessly the pros and cons of any decision. We have to act".[4]

Action, for Nyerere, was *informed action* characterised by two things: firstly, the recognition that we do not have infinite time to gather all the knowledge we need to make the perfect decision: at some point we must say that in order to act, we have enough knowledge in order to act; secondly, that the knowledge he required to act was of the recollection kind: action needed to be premised on the knowledge of ourselves as the kind of people who know, for instance, that society is conceptually prior to the individual and that modes of thought and practices of resistance that embody this belief can provide a useful foundation for a contemporary politics of development or transformation. But we seem to have lost this belief and perhaps even his sense of urgency and to understand why, we need to understand what is most specific about the fourth episteme of post-sovereignty.

THE POST-SOVEREIGN EPISTEME

Here, I do not mean anything particularly original or novel other than that it signifies an important epistemic break. Depending on context and intent, one can also refer to globalisation, the cosmopolitan or afro-politanism. Because this is such a vast topic, I will use a very specific point of entry to illustrate what is most pertinent to us.

In his book *The University in Ruins*,[5] Bill Readings convincingly argues for the coincidental emergence of two institutions of modernity, the state and the university. From its inception the idea of the university as modern institution was inextricably linked to the nation-state and the relationship has always been symbiotic: the state funds the university which in turn undertakes to reproduce the kind of citizens required by the state. In this sense, the core activities of teaching and research have always derived their meaning from the vision or *telos* that regulated the state's conception of itself. For Readings, there have historically been three of these *teloi*: Reason, culture and now, Excellence. Under the *telos* of Reason, the Kantian university was required to reproduce rational subjects capable of republican politics; a little later, when the nation-state became the explicit bearer of the nation's cultural identity, the *telos* became one of producing knowledge with a cultural imprint, giving us in the process such cultural knowledge constructs as German Idealism, French philosophy, British analytical philosophy and, in Africa's case, the idea of an Africanised curriculum. With the decline in the importance and power of the nation-state this symbiotic relationship has been severed, leaving us with institutions that are, in his words, *post-historical.* By "post-historical" Readings means institutions in which the meaning of teaching and research no longer derive solely or even mainly from the university's participation in the reproduction of the state and its citizenry (whether conceived in terms of reason or culture). In the post-historical university the meaning

of these core activities now derives from the vacuous and malleable *telos* of "Excellence". Elsewhere[6] I have inserted into Readings' conceptual frame the idea of the post-colonial African university, arguing that the *telos* of, first Liberation and now Transformation have played and continue to play the same function of regulative *telos* first for the colonial and later the post-colonial university. The crucial difference between Liberation and Transformation, however, is that the *telos* of liberation was very much a function of what I am calling the "sovereignty episteme" with its emphasis on the negation of colonialism as epistemological and institutional arrangement and its explicit programme of intellectual autonomy and political sovereignty. This is what we may call the enunciative space of counter institutional arrangement such as Centres for African Studies and the idea of an African university with an Africanised curriculum.

But the same – this connection between intellectual autonomy and political sovereignty – no longer informs the *telos* of Transformation, no longer functions as historical condition for the possibility of talk about African Studies. We live in a time when we increasingly no longer consider the nation-state as our primary imagined community; the nation-state has been superseded by facebook, twitter and various other forms of globalised interconnectedness. In this post-sovereign time, the *politics* is no longer one of political and intellectual autonomy but one of *integration*. At the same time, the *object* or aim of knowledge production is no longer liberation – although in my vision of layered epistemic shifts this project continues – but perhaps simply the articulation of *belonging*.

If I have to be honest, it seems to me that contemporary students are less motivated by the ideal of liberation or even transformation than by the notion of *belonging*. What does it mean to understand and articulate a sense of belonging? Perhaps simply this: that I must understand, on the one hand, what is *most particular* about my context and, on the other hand, what is most universal about it. This yields a third and final aporia that I can perhaps best illustrate through the use of an example.

THE QUESTION OF VIOLENCE

I have spent some time researching and teaching on the Rwanda genocide.[7] In terms of a post-sovereign politics of belonging this has meant exploring what appears to be two mutually exclusive imperatives: on the one hand, to bear witness to the absolute specificity and particularity of this event – and for that, Mamdani's work remains an outstanding companion. This bearing witness compels us to consider the colonial politicisation of ethnicity, the post-colonial adoption of performative ethnicity by the Tutsi, the role played in pre-genocidal discourse by the Hamitic hypothesis and so forth. On the other hand, however, I also have to consider the unexceptional or universal nature of that violence: how the genocide represents the form of foundational or perhaps deferred foundational violence that authors like Derrida, Hannah Arendt and René Girard insist is constitutive of the origin of any political community. No doubt, the historical debate on whether violence in Africa represents something exotically different or the banal repetition of the same translates here into the aporetic imperative to bear witness to both the exceptional and unexceptional dimensions of founding violence.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I am suggesting that the study of Africa in the post-sovereign episteme consists of three layered aporias relating to the *archive*, intellectual *autonomy* and *belonging*. It is this layered nature of the historical discourse on and from Africa that makes the question of institutional arrangement such a complex one. Do we want institutions that reflect only the historical a priori of intellectual and cultural autonomy? Is that viable in our post-sovereign world with its relatively post-historical institutions? Will that do justice to the imperative of teaching to articulate a contemporary sense of belonging?

There seems to be something mischievous in the way language compels us to choose between one side of the aporia of belonging: we speak of Thinking *about* Africa, thinking *in* Africa, thinking *from* Africa, thinking *by* Africa and so forth. Which is why, when we founded our African Studies project at Rhodes, we opted to allow it to remain precariously poised in the aporia discussed here, committing us to no more, or less, than "Thinking Africa."

NOTES

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5. B. Readings. (1996). *The university in ruins*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

6. L. Praeg. (2011). Philosophy, and teaching (as) transformation. *South African Journal of Philosophy*, *30*, 343-359.

7. See L. Praeg. (2008). Aporia of collective violence. *Law and Critique*, *19*, 193-223.

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CHAPTER 5

THE COLD WAR IN INTELLECTUAL DISCOURSE: ADVOCACY AND INTELLECTUAL CHOREOGRAPHY IN AFRICAN SCHOLARSHIP

Mpilo Pearl Sithole

This paper is a consolidation of my thoughts on the politics of knowledge production, thoughts that have preoccupied me in the past few years. I regard it as a consolidation of these thoughts because I have for some time now been seeking to persuade fellow scholars (and, to some extent, practitioners) located in various fields within the social sciences and humanities[1] to accept the need for research in this field by first dealing with the conceptual justification as to why we should see the knowledge production field as a politically volatile space. I have started with conceptual issues because there is a lot of work that could mimic being African scholarship merely by virtue of it being done on the African continent and not because it makes any epistemological contribution, which I deem as central to the uniqueness of African scholarship. It has thus been my mission to analyse the conceptual issues in knowledge production so as to highlight what I see as African scholarship in substance and application – not simply in existential or instrumental terms.

Even though this kind of thinking is not one to elicit a lot of debate from the hegemonies that be, since they would rather stifle-by-ignoring (i.e. trivialise the issue), I suggest that there is sufficient basis for future scholars who will not have the same baggage as this generation to advance a liberated conflation of discourses and draw implications for practical social and political issues. The main issues that have been my preoccupation are the following:

- The historical socio-political challenges of the continent have relegated African scholarship to becoming a 'site of operation' inasmuch as scholarship on the continent has become an extension of knowledge developed elsewhere. Is this all that the continent can 'do' in the name of scholarship?
- The debates on the objective nature of science and the interpretative approach have been such that Africa has not demonstrated its own interpretative social science. It has merely been an appendage of the mainstream discourses. This is because in its 'operated-on' mode, Africa has been relegated to the status of a nonentity through some far-reaching theoretical associations of its knowledge with submersion in subjectivity.[2] Hence the civilisation agenda of colonial heritage is integral to the framing of knowledge production. While these debates have been phrased in terms of positivism/interpretative discourse, quantitative/qualitative approaches, evidence-based research/hermeneutics, they have not only been pitting natural science against the humanities, but also a one-dimensional way of doing scholarship against a nuanced multi-pronged approach to scholarship. This is the basis of the marginalisation of African scholarship. It is well-documented that the trajectory of knowledge development in Europe has to some extent shown similar debates (during the emergence of the Enlightenment paradigm for example[3]). However, the deeper entrapment of Africa within the submerged categories of these binaries has a lot to do with the defeatist and patronising agenda over the continent's indigenous consciousness. This defined colonialism and later couched as the modest need to release Africa from bondage through political rhetoric whilst demonstrating its perpetual infancy in knowledge discourses.
- There has been a need to specify what exactly the elements of scholarship are that have been marginalised in the 'greater' scheme of things. These elements involve simultaneously stifling the mapping out of the political imperatives and the hermeneutics of African knowledge construction. I have over the years pointed to these in terms of cosmology, social organisation and existentialism.[4]

Here I wish to venture into a consolidation exercise regarding the question of conceptual issues I have mapped out previously, and forging an agenda for thinking around the African social science for the future. This places me at several crossroads pointing to: the conceptual alternatives; the intersection of intellectualism and advocacy – all of it in addition to pointing at the practical strains of marginalisation of African scholarship by mainstream Western models as well as the internal competition of interest groups within the marginalised.[5] This is why I assert that I write for future generations – the scholars who would have nothing to lose as they read this kind of politics and subject it to genuine critique.

KEY CONCEPTUAL ASSERTIONS

The Fundamental Imperialist Theoretical Flaw

I have previously discussed the dangers of dissociating 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity' of knowledge in an absolutist way, particularly for the social sciences[6], but also for the application of hard science knowledge for the benefit of humanity.[7] To this end, I have argued that science is a human aspiration that exists by virtue of humans being 'essentialising beings' in relation to social reality. In other words, human beings seek to categorise knowledge into definite silos, whilst by nature they are value-attributing beings. These two human tendencies make it problematic to categorise knowledge into silos without making it speak to the socio-political context of its interpretation, i.e. of what it means for the equitable welfare of people (a value we perpetually seek to fulfil). Since it is difficult to think generically about these issues, I have sought to present this argument in a manageable fashion suggesting that knowledge can be presented in a continuum that:

> ...stretches from cause-and-effect rationality, to persona-centred rationality, to an engagement with spirits for those gifted that way. One can only graduate in this continuum; the fallacy often committed is that one at the extreme end does not comprehend the one at the other... This creates false silos of comprehension.[8]

The Marginalised African Paradigms

I have sought to pinpoint quite concretely the element of the dissociation of the objective and the subjective which has translated into the perpetual subjugation of African scholarship. Firstly, 'naturalism'/positivism has been converted into social-scientism (and particularly what is seen as evidence-based science) in a fundamentalist way, in consequence of which it is impossible to recognise that people in different regions do not perceive themselves in terms of the basic atom of human relations – the individual. African social organisation is not simply about aggregating individuals into extended families; in fact it is about fundamentally questioning whether an individual could be essentialised as a self-sustaining unit. The configurations of households into nuclear family, extended families and perpetual lineages are secondary to the answer to this question. African social organisation is about *sociality* of human nature, the moulding of value through human interrelations rather that reifying the individual.[9] This sociality is framed as generational progression and simultaneous interrelations rather than positioning 'a maturing independent individual' at the core of human substance.

Secondly, I have also sought to demonstrate that what is regarded as indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) is not a manifestation of the failure of objectivity, but rather a different way of interpreting reality and conflating its elements. If one were to look at the projection of knowledge in the continuum postulated above, it is not casting any knowledge in its projection as either objective or subjective, but rather, perhaps, as objective and extra-objective. Thus metaphysical and ontological projections of reality should not be attributed with a value descriptor of being 'subjective' (especially if we have not outrightly disproved anything in these spheres). 'Subjectivity' may be a useful descriptor perhaps in relation to preferences of belief. Thus one cannot say 'witchcraft or God does not exist; it is a subjective belief'. Rather, what is subjective about all that is *to act in accordance with* this unproven knowledge, just as much as what we do with proven knowledge is to act subjectively – i.e. in terms of person-centred preferences. *Like science, indigenous knowledge is not infallible,[10] but when one sees it solely as a space for the subjective 'submersion' rather than a way of interpretation of reality that is beyond the objective – there begins to be a patronising element unleashed towards it.*

Thirdly, what I say about preferences here must be extended to what I have argued about African existentialism. This refers to the patron-clientalism Africans have been subjected to for centuries, as a result of which their local, regional and international experience has involved being judged, assisted and provided for. Assistance would not be problematic if it did not degrade the assisted to the position of a vulnerable beggar without much contribution to the terms of their assistance. With regards to culture we have thus seen Africans being taught human rights. Politically, they have been taught democracy and security of tenure and internationally, they have been assisted to deal with poverty, war and financial strains in terms they do not prescribe. In *Unequal Peers*[11] I describe how those who pursued a scholarship highlighting the plight of African people and associated themselves with those experiences (such as Bernard Magubane and Archie Mafeje) were academically persecuted.

This kind of historical paternalism in relation to Africa is also found both among governments and humanitarian organisations that actually operate within the jargon and rhetoric of social justice and human rights. It is a graduation of colonialism into a milder form of patronage which I call 'knowledge inequality', a relationship in which certain groups of people can only receive and translate packages of knowledge generated elsewhere for application in their own needy context.

Intellectual Choreography

The above analysis of the issues relating to knowledge politics with respect to Africa has led to a realisation that social reality is much more complex than is usually presented in the traditional social science analytical paradigms rooted in Western science. I understand Western science here not as the ontology of data, but as the influence of existential realities of the West on the human bid to analyse and essentialise. I have argued that 'science' is a term describing the quest of all human beings to essentialise and find generic categories for accounting for and analyzing reality; thus it is not proper to equate science with only the Western endeavours of doing so.[12]

The impulse to essentialise knowledge has been useful as it has highlighted the various typologies and binaries of knowledge constitution. However, there is a sense in which if left unto itself, this impulse tends to downplay the need to conflate knowledge in a way responsive to situations and leads to scientific valorisation (*ukudlebeleka kwesayensi*[13]). The binaries that have resulted from a mild-to-valorising impulse to essentialise are: objectivity and subjectivity; data collection and analysis; quantitative research and qualitative research; theory and practice; intellectualism and advocacy. Because of scientific valorisation it is unfortunately difficult to make science responsive to people's situations or circumstances. Even applied science predicated on evidence-based research seldom comes back to the articulation of case-specific applicability of its tools and the design of appropriate measures for intervention. Generism and specificity are perpetually at odds with each other.

It is this situation which I propose needs to be addressed with a notion of "intellectual choreography." In a recent article, I provide the following definition: "Whereas 'choreography' is often associated with the aesthetics of dance, an art form, 'intellectual choreography'... refers to the freedom of the intellect to use the various conceptual tools at the disposal of a knowledge producer to interpret social phenomena and social reality whilst striving to be objective".[14] Here I wish to charge that this is not simply about the conflation of different elements of binaries as outlined above. Intellectual choreography is rather about mapping out existential issues and forming *interpretative maps* from social realities analysed; interpretative maps being an acknowledgement that there may be more than one consciousness to take into account in the relevance of the analysis – the analyst is not the only thinker of relevance.

The traditional way of handling the study of human beings and social issues is a linear progression from data collection to analysis and formulating conclusions (the latter sometimes rather mechanically slotted into chosen theoretical paradigms). What is proposed here is not an abandonment of a clearly articulated research process but the addition of an acute sense of conflation of data collection and interpretation in a way that also vindicates the positivist-interpretative binary. No scientific reality exists outside of an angle of interpretation, especially in the social science arena. Even discoveries and creations of the natural sciences, which are more mechanistic, require distillation of implications of these discoveries for the political arena of equitable social welfare, i.e. issues of deployment of resources and impact on the social environment.

Thus to pretend that any scientific conclusion is self-evident and does not require an interpretative angle – acknowledging factors, the environment in which factors are read, and the values held or aspired to by various stakeholders – is to tone down intellectual honesty. Intellectual and scientific conclusions require not only the evidence base but also the interpretative mapping. This is at the core of the qualitative approach which is unfortunately misunderstood by the objectivity hardliners. *Intellectual choreography is thus an ability to be mindful of objective fundamentalism and ensuring that once all the knowledge essentialising has been done there is a deliberate scoping of the existential and interpretative issues*. The process of distilling the grand conclusions of research should be guided by interpretative mapping, showing how the adoption of a stance or the denunciation of an alternative (possible or minority) stance has been possible.

THE PRACTICAL CONTEXT

The Dilemma of Higher Education in South Africa

As argued above, knowledge can be presented in the form of a continuum that "...stretches from cause-and-effect rationality, to persona-centred rationality, to an engagement with spirits for those gifted that way. One can only graduate in this continuum; the fallacy often committed is that one at the extreme end does not comprehend the one at the other .... This creates false silos of comprehension".[15]

The classification of humanities, social sciences, and professional disciplines is constituted in the thin lines within the progression along this continuum or at times the conflation of elements within this continuum in creating the utility status of the disciplines. Thus the humanities are closer to understanding of persona-centred realities. Social sciences balance this with understanding the broader societal patterns and mapping out typologies of human behaviour in the world; whilst professional disciplines seek to use that base from social sciences to design models of intervention in social situations. However, there are jealousies in all this, which are rooted in the overall prioritisation of pragmatism (especially economic pragmatism in the world where capitalism dominates) that leads to destructive competition whereby some disciplines are overrated in relation to their pragmatic orientation. This 'dry objectivism' is at the core of the higher education blunders in recent years that witnessed a downgrading of the arts, philosophy, classics, music and humanities in general. We have also seen the social sciences increasingly coming under pressure to show their connectedness to economic productivity and utility more than demonstrating their political sharpness and providing insight into the packaging of all other utilitarian/objective elements of the natural sciences and professional disciplines for a humane society (see also the discussion of the Department of Science and Technology's Ten Year Innovation Plan below).

The higher education transformation disaster[16] in South Africa is underpinned by ignorance of conceptual issues informing existing centres of knowledge production in Africa. The current ranking of institutions is no different from those before 1994 (except that they now have different names and embrace all races in their general pursuit of dry objectivity, which is what is measured as 'excellence'). Some of those propounded as the best examples of transformation have practically collapsed campuses into specialisations making it difficult to forge links between the hard and the soft sciences – each specialisation rather trying to prove its relevance to the economic model of the day. This is indeed a subjugation of Africans into 'intellectual separate development' tantamount to apartheid. Several initiatives now lament (and are geared to address[17]) the 'crisis in the humanities' which is in fact a structural crisis. Unless those commissioned to address it take into consideration its underlying issues, an uncritical approach of putting pressure on the humanities to demonstrate their contribution to the knowledge economy will persist.

Science and Technology's Relationship with the Social Sciences in South Africa

Such mechanistic linkage of the social sciences with economic determinism is clearly visible in the Department of Science and Technology's (DST's) Ten Year Innovation Plan that presents the country's five grand challenges. These are (in the order of their articulation):

1. The Farmer to Pharma value chain to strengthen the bio-economy;
2. Space Science and Technology;
3. Energy Security;
4. Global change Science with a focus on climate change;
5. Human and social dynamics.[18]

Firstly, the articulation of these grand challenges is grounded in a knowledge economy "in which economic growth is led by the production and dissemination of knowledge for the enrichment of all fields of human endeavour".[19] This linkage between knowledge and economic growth ultimately subtly subverts the variables such that knowledge becomes important only in so far as it contributes to the economy. The use of knowledge to reach human values of social welfare seems to compete uncomfortably with the mechanistic projection of knowledge as a tool for growth. The fifth grand challenge is articulated in very generic terms and not rooted in the political challenges of a South African society afflicted by social inequalities:

> The fifth grand challenge is to increase our ability to anticipate the complex consequences of change; to better understand the dynamics of human and

> social behaviour at all levels; to better understand the cognitive and social structures that create and define change; and to help people and organisations better manage profound or rapid change.[20]

Why is it that a knowledge-based economy is defined only in terms of empirical/mechanistic science and not also in terms of humanistic issues of ethics, equal social integrity and pursuit of generic and specific moral welfare? 'Science' and 'technology' (drawing from the name of the department and therefore its mandate), does not take place in a socio-political vacuum. However, it seems that the chosen important issues are space technology, energy security, biotechnology and climate change. There is no doubt that these are important, but these empirical issues also need a socio-moral and intellectual base rooted in human experience. A balance needs to be struck by developing a 'human and social dynamics challenge' that requests observation of the issues of ethics, social equity, intellectual property, and other social concerns in the focus and implementation of the chosen four grand challenges.

Why is the DST's angle prioritising 'economic growth'? Good economy as defined in terms of 'economic growth' seldom results in the social welfare of citizens. Very often the problem lies in the assumption that 'national economic growth' is 'good' for all and the lack of attention paid to redistributive aspects or the decentralisation of economic potential to all citizens. If DST insists that the economy is its chosen priority area in the next ten years, giving precedence to the notion of a 'knowledge-based economy', then it must be made clear what 'economic growth' means for purposes of this strategic focus. National economic growth, distribution, decentralisation, etc. must be explored such that it becomes clear what 'good economy' is for DST and what 'knowledge-based economy' means more precisely.

Development discourse is littered with questions on: equitable livelihoods, global trends in knowledge paternalism, historical resource inequalities (currencies, colonially-derived economic privileges), global political patronage (and global trend-setting) and the interests of Bretton Woods Institutions, as well as the instrumentality and humanism of nationalism. Why is the DST Innovation Plan located in the African continent not raising these as major questions of concern?

One would have thought that areas of focus of these grand challenges (the analytical , financial and resource focus) would be accompanied by justification, illustrating why these have been chosen as starting points in the bigger scheme of things. The object should be to arrive at scientific advancements that are ethically thought through for all, development of legal instruments underpinning social fairness (not just legality established only on the basis of processes followed), and articulation of social nuances of these grand challenges in different communities. Africa may continue to be the site of experimentation on bio-technology without the concomitant research and negotiations on pricing of the gains of pharmaceutical discoveries, which are issues of access often posed at the end in terms of how Africa can afford gains for its population.

Other Practical Impacts of Dry Objectivity

Generally, in society at large other practical ramifications of a dry objectivity can be seen in, for instance:

- Poor quality of journalism and political analysis that is geared to power issues (related to a fight over positions) rather than deep political and socio-economic contestations;
- Social cohesion understood as engineering of 'political love' between social groups rather than a balanced orientation to sense of community, belonging, economic development and cultural freedom;
- Professional specialisations that do not see the holistic picture of their 'cases' (i.e. doctors who have a scornful attitude to traditional healing systems as a matter of general rule; lawyers who do not understand the subtle contradictions of '*custom*ary *law*' and have an enforcement approach to law in a generic way; architects and planners who see the social aspects of planning – such as community participation – as an additional expensive strain; accountants and financial specialists who can only design rigid ways of accountability with no flexibility and discretion possible for responding to unforeseen disaster and genuine unforeseen project needs).
- Feminism has been perpetually trapped in unhelpful theoretical deadlock because of dry objectivism. It has avoided seeing social value and placement of gender as negotiated in various social contexts and it has been fluctuating between critiquing essentialised cultural knowledge and objective elements of subjugation – theory and advocacy – in an indecisive manner hoping to arrive at generic solutions to gender imbalances.

CONCLUSION

Knowledge production has been characterised by subtle and yet damning ideological battles for Africa, particularly placing Africa in a subservient position in the knowledge production arena. This is observable at a practical level when one sees Africa continuing to be the site of research plundering, the importation of knowledge from elsewhere to be uncritically implemented on Africa, and the self-subjugation of African systems of measuring scientific excellence to international models. Higher education as a whole is corporatized as per the Western-rooted trends, and science and technology in Africa are defined in relation to capitalist imperatives. Engineered knowledge inequality is a mild form of colonialism and imperialism keeping Africa in a subservient position even in the context of the tame rhetoric of humanitarianism.

The necessary sophistication and political consciousness is missing in paradigms imposed on Africa (this being assisted by the gate-keeping of excellence by hegemonic forces) in that science valorisation has excluded an awareness of the intertwined nature of the notion of *value* into science: the need to contextualise the cause-and-effect science within socio-political questions; the need to liberate indigenous knowledge from relegation to mysticism; and the need to assert integrity of different 'ontologies of data' by making science acknowledge the social units of African context and the extra-objective knowledge.

It is these challenges that have led me to a call for intellectual choreography, a system of analysis in which data and interpretation would be related through interpretative mapping of arguments and conclusions emanating from social research. Intellectual choreography is about the recognition that science is the bid to essentialise within bounds of constantly negotiated values. The valorisation of science through dry objectivity that has traditionally been inherited from hard sciences is limiting and has served hegemonies well in terms of maintaining their dominance in the knowledge production scene and imposing their generic models on Africa – all this through expropriation of the notion of science to the West.

Intellectual choreography distances itself from two paradigms: primordialism and post-modernism. It is important to state this since apologists for the hegemony of Western knowledge production often deliberately confuse any attempt to point at exactly what is unique about African scholarship with primodialist arguments. If there is anything primordial about the knowledge production battles, it is the expropriation of the whole notion of 'science' by the West and enforced relegation of other scholarship forms to mysticism. Intellectual choreography furthermore cannot be equated with post-modernism as it builds on the assumption that one can understand the different social realities and socio-cultural scenarios and also embark on a quest for interpretative mapping that is transparent with regard to the political, the ontological and the material aspects of actors and situations. This is not the same as suggesting that the only authorities on specific social circumstances are those inside those circumstances. Intellectual choreography also encompasses more than mere reflexivity as it makes all actors in the research process politically and intellectually equal, even if it leaves the analysts to their own declared conclusions.

NOTES

1. History – through and oral history project (see T. Magwaza, Y. Seleti, & M.P. Sithole. (2006). *Freedom sown in blood: Memories of the Impi Yamakhanda*. Thohoyandou: Ditlou.); Planning through a nuanced consideration of notions of tenure and social security (see M.P. Sithole, & S. Mbokazi. (2010). Grappling with voice through research: The Commission at sunset. In KwaZulu-Natal Planning and Development Commission (Ed.), *Planning and development in KwaZulu-Natal: The legacy of the Provincial Planning Commission* (pp. 208-183). Pietermarizburg: KZNPPDC.); Social Theory generally through a consideration of paradigms of thinking that are missed in the dry theories extended from the Western theoretical machinery (See M.P. Sithole. (2005). Science versus indigenous knowledge: A conceptual accident. *Alternation: Journal of the Centre for the Study of Southern African Literature and Languages*, *2*, 438-444; M.P. Sithole. (2009). *Unequal peers: The politics of discourse management in the social sciences*. Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa; M.P. Sithole (2011). Wrestling with intellectual hegemony: The dwarfed status of knowledge production in South Africa. In K. Kondlo, & C. Ejiogu (Eds.), *Africa in focus: Governance in the 21st century* (pp. 81-89). Cape Town: HSRC Press.); and to some extent even professional disciplines rooted in the Natural Sciences through a consideration of the indispensability of political questions around their so-called 'objectivity' of their disciplines (See M.P. Sithole 2006) The elitism of evidence: A paradox of human rationality. In J. Jansen, W. Gevers & X. Mati (Eds.), *Evidence-based practice: 'Double symposium' proceedings on problems, possibilities and politics* (pp. 23-31). Pretoria: Academy of Science of South Africa.). I have also recently argued that the one area that shares the same predicament as African scholarship generally is the area of gender studies which has lapsed into a space of deep theoretical/approach squabbles on matters clearly pertaining to 'negotiated rationality' as is also demonstrated in African scholarship (See M.P. Sithole (2010). Gender, research and knowledge: The struggle ahead. Paper presented at the Women in Research Forum, University of South Africa, Pretoria.). The area of religion has received attention in relation to my mission to caution against over-exertion of African subjectivity through excessive judgementalism (See M.P. Sithole (2006). Has social science been a religion?: The dilemma of sociological analysis of religion. *South African Review of Sociology, 37*, 308-320.).

2. Firstly, I am not elaborating on this here; suffice to say that while disciplines like Anthropology have been important in emphasising the view of the researched, in the context of colonialism they have projected 'the African' as an exotic subjective being whose thought processes are different. Secondly, I am not looking down on the fact that there is a lot of academic activity in the African continent, most of it quite self conscious of excellence (Universities, research institutes and research funding bodies abound). What I am rather questioning is the framing of all that activity within 'excellence' defined elsewhere.

3. See P.W. Preston. (1996). *Development theory: An introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

4. See Sithole. (2009). *Unequal peers*; Sithole. (2011). Wrestling with intellectual hegemony; Sithole. (2006). Rebellion of uprising? A reinterpretation of Impi Yamakhanda. In T. Magwaza, Y. Seleti & M.P. Sithole (Eds.), *Freedom sown in blood: Memories of the Impi Yamakhanda*. Thohoyandou: Ditlou; Sithole. (2005). Science versus indigenous knowledge.

5. ...stark in terms of gender; as is seen in marginal role of Black women in knowledge production.

6. See Sithole. (2005). Science versus indigenous knowledge.

7. See Sithole (2006). The elitism of evidence.

8. Sithole. (2005). Science versus indigenous knowledge, p. 443.

9. See Sithole. (2009). *Unequal peers*, pp. 19-20.

10. ...and perhaps it is more prone to abuse by crooks, but this is not to say that all it is is about being 'the opium of the less objective'.

11. Sithole. (2009). *Unequal peers*, pp. 6-8.

12. Sithole. (2005). Science versus indigenous knowledge.

13. The isiZulu notion of *ukudlebeleka* describes more precisely the tendency to overdo something almost in a self-perpetuating and uncontrollable fashion.

14. Sithole. (2011). Wrestling with intellectual hegemony, p. 82.

15. Sithole. (2005). Science versus indigenous knowledge, p. 443.

16. This is bound to be a sensitive statement to both the managers of higher education and politicians alike. But there are clear signs of a resounding failure to higher education transformation in South Africa. 1) South Africa has incorporated the global corporatism towards Higher Education quite uncritically in a continent that requires serious insights merging the social, political and technical imperatives with socio-economic gaps. 2) Higher education has transformed faces to be both white and black but it has not transformed the knowledge production scene – the materials of tutelage remain rooted in Whiteness and are expatriate in a significant measure. 3) Higher education did not open up space to interrogate the packaging of knowledge/disciplines as has been adopted historically and colonially. The excuse to this will indeed be a need for alignment with the international scene which is itself not engaged in dialogue about customisation of knowledge to Africa. This is seen in the mystification of indigenous knowledge and in the lack of creativity in reclassifying disciplines and the knowledge within the disciplines. It would be interesting to ascertain another perspective more positively appreciative of transformation of higher education and compare notes.

17. The Department of Higher Education has commissioned a team of academics to deal with this; the Academy of Sciences in South Africa (ASSAf) is also doing a consensus study of this phenomenon with the view to ultimately address it.

18. Department of Science and Technology. (2008). *Innovation towards a knowledge-based economy: Ten-year plan for South Africa (2008-2018)*. Pretoria: Department of Science and Technology.

19. DST. (2008). *Innovation towards a knowledge-based economy*, p. 1.

20. DST. (2008). *Innovation towards a knowledge-based economy*, p. 20.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Harry Garuba is Associate Professor in the Centre for African Studies at the University of Cape Town and has a joint appointment with the English Department. He has been scholar-in-residence at Western Illinois University and a research fellow at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin and the WEB DuBois Institute at Harvard. He has published widely on African literature and as a poet has authored the collection *Shadow & Dream and Other Poems*. His research interests include African literature with a special focus on the practices and paradigms informing disciplinary knowledge production in this field, African modernities, the logics of animist thought and postcolonial theory and criticism.

Lungisile Ntsebeza is Professor and Acting Director in the Centre for African Studies at the University of Cape Town. He is also the holder of the National Research Foundation (NRF) Research Chair in Land Reform and Democracy in South Africa. He has conducted extensive published research on the land question in South Africa around themes such as land rights, democratisation, rural local government, traditional authorities and land, and agrarian movements. His book, *Democracy Compromised: Chiefs and the Politics of Land in South Africa* was published by Brill Academic Publishers, Leiden in 2005 and the HSRC Press in 2006. Professor Ntsebeza has also co-edited two books: *The Land Question in South Africa: The Challenge of Transformation and Redistribution,* HSRC Press, 2007, with Ruth Hall; and, with Thembela Kepe, *Rural Resistance in South Africa: The Mpondo Revolts after fifty years,* Brill Academic Publishers, Leiden, 2011 and UCT Press, 2012. His current research interests, apart from land and agrarians questions, include an investigation of African Studies at the University of Cape Town and a related project on the political and intellectual history of the late Archie Mafeje.

Adebayo Olukoshi is currently the Director of the United Nations African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) and Interim Director of the African Governance Institute. He is Research Professor of International Economic Relations and current Director of the United Nations African Institute for Economic Development and Planning headquartered in Dakar, Senegal. He has previously served as the Executive Secretary of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA). He has published widely on the structural adjustment programmes in Africa and on the social sciences and trends and challenges in higher education in Africa.

Leonhard Praeg is Professor in the Department of Political and International Studies at Rhodes University. He has an active research interest in African Philosophy, Complexity Theory and Continental Theorists and is the author of *African Philosophy and the Quest for Autonomy: A Philosophical Investigation* (2000) and *The Geometry of Violence: Africa, Girard, Modernity* (2007). He is currently working on a book with the working title *Thinking Africa: A Report on ubuntu*, which will be published as part of the Thinking Africa book series.

Mpilo Pearl Sithole is Associate Professor in the Community Development Programme at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Professor Sithole earned her MPhil and PhD in Anthropology from the University of Cambridge, England (2001). These qualifications were preceded by undergraduate studies at the University of Durban-Westville, and Bantu Education in various KwaZulu-Natal schools. Sithole is a contributor to social science theory – particularly breaking new ground in analysis of qualitative and interpretative approaches in social science, and focusing on marginalised schools of thought in the scientific arena. She writes on the politics of knowledge production, the analysis of intellectual hegemonies, and analysis of subtle marginalisation of regional endeavours (especially African scholarship) towards scientific discourse. She has recently invented the notion of 'intellectual choreography' as a means to advocate liberated crafting of social science interpretations relevant for the African context, exemplified in her book *Unequal Peers: The Politics of Discourse Management in the Social Sciences* (2009). She was a Senior Research specialist at the Human Sciences Research Council and has wide research experience in rural development, land use and governance structures in rural KwaZulu-Natal. Her academic research is on skills, issues of identity, heritage and social change, policy and public interest, anthropological theory, kinship studies and indigenous knowledge systems.

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