

Has Rhodes Fallen? Decolonizing the Humanities in Africa and Constructing Intellectual Sovereignty

Kwesi Kwaa Prah
CASAS
Cape Town

The Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAF) Inaugural Humanities Lecture. HSRC, Pretoria.

Introduction

I have elected to structure my presentation around the wider meaning of the turbulent events that began on the 9th of March 2015, which were initially directed against the presence of a statue at the University of Cape Town (UCT) celebrating the memory of the supreme architect of British colonialism in Africa, Cecil John Rhodes. The campaign for the statue's removal speedily attracted global attention and in its wake led to a more generalized movement to decolonize education across South Africa. On the 9th of April 2015, following a UCT Council vote the previous night, the statue was unceremoniously removed. The movement frequently captured national headlines throughout 2015 and divided public opinion. It also inspired the emergence of allied and sympathetic student movements at other universities, both within South Africa and elsewhere in the world.

Eyewitness News (South Africa) reported that¹; UCT's Student Representative Council's (SRC) Ramabina Mahapa had announced his pleasure with the university management's speedy response. "We thought that this might be take about six months to actually come to a conclusion, but we're very happy that we've been able to speed up the process from our side." Ramabina Mahapa had added that, it was the first step in the process to speed up transformation at the institution. "The SRC will be submitting a comprehensive document that actually outlines the challenges and possible solutions to them."

Writing for the education of a British audience, another observer, the novelist Amit Chaudhuri noted: "Those who are bewildered by the movement should place it in the context of the historic reversals that define our age. The first has to do with apartheid. Not that apartheid has been reinstated in South Africa. But it can hardly be claimed that it led to the opening up that was expected in 1994, given that, 21 years later, a black professor at the University of Cape Town, could tell the *Cape Times* newspaper that only 5 of the university's 200 senior professors were South African blacks."²

¹ Rhodes statue removal 'only the beginning'. <http://ewn.co.za/2015/04/10/Rhodes-stature-removal-only-the-beginning>

² Amit Chaudhuri. The real meaning of Rhodes Must Fall. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/mar/16/the-real-meaning-of-rhodes-must-fall>

The *Eyewitness News* report pointed out that; one of the activist students had observed that, now that the Rhodes statue has been carted off the UCT's campus, the next move is to see to the posting of more black academics at the institution. Chumani Maxwele who had triggered the weeks of protests added that; the statue's removal is only the beginning. "The next move is to ask the vice-chancellor of the university by the end of next year, to have 50 percent of black South African professors and change the curriculum of the university. That for me is the most important thing and is the hardest challenge we're facing."³

Africanism and Africanization

Almost two decades ago in a paper on related matters, I had drawn attention to the fact that in post-colonial Africa the Africanization or localization (as it is sometimes called) of positions which were previously held by colonial personnel does not in itself necessarily translate as outstanding progress. It must be remembered that Africanization wherever it has been pursued on this continent is a policy which mainly affects the fortunes of the elites. Be that as it may, in as far as it is defined by the ascendancy of previously deprived groups and interests, it represents progress; but limited progress which needs to be recognized for what it is. My argument in 1999 had been that; Africanization is a must, if South Africa is to developmentally move forward. A facilitatory principle for Africanization in South Africa is the policy of Affirmative Action. This latter principle is necessary to redress the deliberately constructed historical imbalances of the past, which were purposely built into the development of South African society, by the white minority government. Coloureds and Indians should be integrally included in the implementation of Affirmative Action. This policy would need to be implemented until a demographically representative balance is achieved in the country. Herein lies the connection between Africanization and Affirmative Action. But Africanization in itself is not necessarily a policy which ensures societal development.⁴

Needless to say progress, that is, the emancipation and the development of mass society is not achieved by the mere replacement of white faces by black ones. If this was the case development would have come to Africa soon after the end of colonialism, a half century ago. For practically the whole continent, with the exception of parts of North Africa where over the centuries Arabization has replaced the Amazigh and Old Coptic cultures, everywhere the overwhelming cultural and linguistic base of people (80 percent or more in all instances) is African. For the development of mass society, the centering of African culture at the heart of the development endeavour is crucial. This latter, I describe as Africanism. This means that progress for the overwhelming majority can only be viably constructed on their inherited cultural foundations as is the case for all developing societies in Asia and indeed Europe. The argument runs thus; Africanism requires Africanization, but Africanization in itself without cultural reinforcement would not, on the strength of the evidence of the African post-colonial record produce sustained development, which enlists the creativity of the broader sections of the population. Indeed, "Africanization without Africanism, in as far as the post-colonial record demonstrates leads in all spheres of social life into deeper multi-dimensional dependency or engendered cultural forms derived from the metropolitan centres of culture and power in the contemporary world."⁵

Throughout Africa, in the past half-century of post-colonialism, the elites which inherited the post-colonial states have by and large extended the lease on life of the inherited colonial culture.

³ Rhodes statue removal 'only the beginning'. Op cit.

⁴ K.K. Prah. Africanism and Africanization: Do They Mean the Same Thing? In, Siphon Seepe (Ed). Social Transformation in South Africa. Johannesburg. 1999. See also, Soundings: Studies on African Transformation. CASAS Book Series. No. 79. Cape Town. 2010. P. 64.

⁵ Ibid.

It is these elites which have been responsible for the entrenchment of the “deeper multi-dimensional dependency or engendered cultural forms derived from the metropolitan centres of culture and power in the contemporary world”, I have referred to.

All of this has to be located in a broader and larger ideal of modernity, secularism, tolerance and democracy. The democratic ideals of the post-apartheid state need to practically translate into solutions for the creation of a multi-cultural society with a large communally shared cultural space; a shared culture which tolerates, recognizes and permits the coexistence of cultural differentiation. A society which tolerates and respects cultural differences, treats them equally and maintains socially permeable cultural frames of reference, so that people can move freely in and out of their societal cultural sub-sets. South African society has the ingredients for a truly cosmopolitan culture with contributory derivations from all parts of the world.⁶ The gnawing irony is that presently the culture of the aborigines, who form about 80 percent of the population is the least valued, and is buried underneath a hegemonic mythology of Western universalism propagandized as modernity by the culturally dominant white minorities and those social elements amongst the darker groups which share similar socio-economic interests or are proximate to the dominant classes. All of this has the implication that social change, directed towards the achievement of a society, in which colour is no index of class, or class an index of colour, must work towards a condition in which all colours are, demographically represented throughout the class structure. That is, of course assuming the fact that for the foreseeable future, we have to live within class structures both here and all other parts of the wider world.⁷ The search for a humane universalism, the celebration of tolerance, the permeability of cultural spaces and boundaries, the coexistence of difference and free movement of people and ideas across frictionless cultural boundaries should however not deny the sovereignty of demographics based on democratic principles.

In a recent article (25.9.2016), pondering the continuing turmoil at UCT, its former Vice-Chancellor, Njabulo Ndebele, with perspicacity perceives that; “It is time to recognize that the norm of human presence in South Africa is ‘black’. That recognition is central to understanding where real agency for shaping the future of South Africa is overwhelmingly located, and where ‘blackness’ becomes so normal it ceases to exist.”⁸ The point in its simplicity is that South Africa like the rest of its neighbours, immediate and further beyond, is African. The *leitkultur* in all these countries which are in all instances at least 80 to 90 percent African cultural and language-speaking is African, or should be African, not neocolonial. The acceptance of this reality is crucial for education and constructive societal advancement.

But, the recipes and menus of education are not simply a game of numbers. Much as it is necessary in post-colonial Africa or in our specific instance post-Apartheid South Africa, to have at all levels in the structures of education, a fairer and more balanced demographic representation reflecting the interests of people who were previously largely and purposively excluded from the cadre of lecturers and professors, instrumentally that sort of staffing reorganization and demographic engineering in itself will not resolve the larger and looming issues that face us, if the more substantive areas of education particularly curriculum and what is offered as lectures is not critically examined and revamped to meet the strategic challenges of our times. This I think is a matter of greater concern than the skin colours of people who are lecturers and professors.

Ultimately, what I am saying is that it is possible to have black professors who continue with substantially much of the same or similar pedagogical and epistemologically defective offering

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Njabulo Ndebele. Fire Destroys – but it can also forge tools to build the future. *Sunday Times* (South Africa). Opinion. 25th September 2016. P.21. Edited Extract, 10th Helen Joseph Lecture. September 14th, 2016.

that was extended to students under the settler-colonial system. All said, much of our approaches to education in Africa today continue to be deeply marked by the colonial heritage; with the Eurocentric biases which are made to pass as universal knowledge. Too often, without question, we accept Eurocentric cultural hegemony, and a disconnection between contents and local needs. The intimidating question we face as academics in Africa today is, “how do we decolonize the academic enterprise; how do we indigenize knowledge production; how do we usefully domesticate knowledge and its production?”

In the vertiginous euphoria of the immediate post-apartheid period we produced a text entitled, *Knowledge in Black and White. The Impact of Apartheid on the Production and Reproduction of Knowledge.*⁹; in which we argued that for too long and too consistently under apartheid in all areas of South African life racism took its pitiless toll. Possibly, in no quarter was this pernicious history more culturally crushing than education; the production and reproduction of knowledge. “Racism affected not only the social, political, economic and other infrastructural bases of knowledge production in South Africa, it also affected the substance of what passed for knowledge itself.”¹⁰ Hall’s position was that, archaeology had been “inescapably bound up with colonialism from its earliest years, and could have hardly been expected to have been immune from the ideology of the apartheid state.”¹¹ Saunders observed that, “Apartheid clearly shaped historical writing ...”¹²

A good example of substantive Apartheid era miseducation which I have on occasion utilized as illustration is from a school book of the period; a history book, first published in 1958, which catered for secondary school pupils. It provides a supreme example of the sort of Apartheid-era knowledge under discussion here. The author wrote that;

The Bushmen, little yellow-skinned people barely 153 cm in height ... the second inhabitants of South Africa, probably having been compelled to migrate from central Southern Asia ... According to one theory, one section, going south-east, occupied the Malay Peninsula, the Philippines and Australia; another section travelling west, entered Spain; while a third found its way into Africa, where they were gradually pushed south by the stronger Hamites occupying the Nile region. In succession other races entered Africa from the east ... The Hottentots, a people a little bigger and a little darker than the Bushmen, probably originated in Somaliland as a result of admixture between Bushmen and Hamites. According to the generally accepted theory, they migrated south-west to the region of the Great Lakes, where they remained for several centuries, then following the Atlantic coast, they eventually crossed the Orange river. By the 16th century they were to be found along the banks of the Orange ... The Europeans at the Cape did not come into close contact with the Bantu-speaking Africans until well into the 18th century, for they like the Europeans were comparative new-comers to Southern Africa. In all probability their original home was Central Asia. They are believed to have entered Africa in large numbers...¹³

This desperate racist attempt to implicitly declare Africa *terra nullius* which is behind this sucked-out-of-the-thumb historiography is with hindsight hilariously remarkable.

The Language of Instruction Challenge

In Africa as a whole, the most striking and debilitating heritage of colonialism in African education is the sustained use of the colonial languages as languages of instruction. In my

⁹ Kwesi Kwaa Prah (ed). *Knowledge in Black and White. The Impact of Apartheid on the Production and Reproduction of Knowledge.* CASAS Book Series No. 2, Cape Town. 1999.

¹⁰ K.K. Prah. *Producing and Reproducing Knowledge in Racist South Africa.* In, K.K. Prah (Ed) ... Ibid. P.4.

¹¹ Martin Hall. *Archaeology and the Legacy of Apartheid.* In, K.K. Prah (ed). ... Ibid. P.54.

¹² Chris Saunders. *History Writing and Apartheid.* In, K.K. Prah (ed). Ibid. P.41.

¹³ M.S. Geen. *The Making of South Africa.* Maskew Miller. Cape Town. 1958. 1971 edition. Pp. 11-12.

estimation this represents the main stumbling block to rolling back the effects of colonialism in African education. This indeed, is precisely where the decolonization of education must start.

Till today, this continues to be the case even in countries like Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Somalia which are nearly monolingual, or places like the Central African Republic (Sango), Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and large areas of the Congo-DRC (KiSwahili) which have indigenous mass-based lingua franca. In this respect, African practice and experience today stands in clear and sharp contrast to most of the former colonies in East Asia and the Arab world. Vietnam was a French colony, Cambodia was also French, Laos was French, Myanmar was British, Indonesia was Dutch, Malaysia was British, Egypt was British and Korea was Japanese. All these countries have moved decisively away from the colonial tongues into their own. This fact, in no small measure, explains why in recent decades they have made developmental strides forward which Africans cannot match.

At the cultural level, especially in the public domain, the use of colonial languages as languages of educational instruction and officialdom remains the most distinctive feature of neocolonialism in contemporary Africa. The observation has been made that, an important factor contributing to the phenomenon called neocolonialism has to be understood in terms of the cultural openness and socio-organizational looseness which is associated with the absence of a strong, written tradition that can culturally resist the forays of the written cultures of the world system.¹⁴ While written cultures strengthened the ballast of resistance and more successfully held the tide against cultural neocolonialism in parts of Asia (excluding particularly Oceania and Micronesia), what has perhaps been most central in this cultural resilience has been the standing of the world religions of the Near East and Asia proper. Western cultural penetration of the non-Western world never successfully undermined the status of the major scripted religions of Asia the way they successfully did in Africa.¹⁵ In Europe and much of Asia literacy-based religious clericalism maintained socio-organizational forms which eventually resisted the cultural denationalization which came with Western colonialism.¹⁶

Here in South Africa, in 1976, the hubristic venality of the Afrikaner nationalist government's attempt to brazenly inflict Afrikaans on the African majority attracted the ire and wrath of African school children in Soweto, who rose up in deafening and strident defiance to the

¹⁴ Jack Goody. *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1986, 1989 edition. P.86. See also, K. K. Prah. *Language, Literacy, the Production and Reproduction of Knowledge, and the Challenge of African Development*. In, David R. Olson and Nancy Torrance (eds). *The Making of Literate Societies*. Blackwell, Oxford. 2001. Pp.125-126.

¹⁵ Gerald Holton suggests three overlapping phases through which modern science has passed, i.e. starting from "the heroic achievement of individuals such as Copernicus – rather isolated, working over decades on one great problem, at most weakly related to other contemporary scientists, or, for that matter, to the individual work. Stage Two, characterized by collegial relationships, came with the rise of the *Accademia dei Lincei* and its cousins, bringing greater interaction with collaborators and with social institutions, greater use of instruments, eventually, a greater flow of fairly direct applications issuing from basic speculations. In Stage Three we have reached 'strong coupling'. ... the intense collaboration in industrial laboratories, and equally of the exhausting and exciting interactions." See, Gerald Holton. *The Mainsprings of Discovery. The Great Tradition*. In, *Encounter*. April 1974. P. 86.

¹⁶ What is important in this periodization scheme is the fact that at different stages of progress and history, effectively, aggregations of people are involved in an integrating and focused manner in the production of a given sphere of knowledge. The literati and cognoscente are trained and schooled in similar and related programmes which allow for cooperative endeavour and in a sense, division of labour. Holton (footnote 13. *Ibid.*) Holton applied his periodization scheme to the Western experience, but it possible to relate the scheme both synchronically and diachronically to traditions as separate as the Chinese mandarin tradition, the Hindu Brahminite, Catholic medieval clericalism and the Ulama of the Timbuktu scholarship tradition. In each case, the role of clerics-cum-literati in the development and the maintenance of the holy script and literacy has been central. See, K. K. Prah. *Language, Literacy and Knowledge Production in Africa*. In, B.V. Street and N.H. Hornberger (eds). *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*. 2nd Edition, Volume 2: Literacy. 2008. Pp. 29 -39.

continued imposition of the “language of the oppressor” on them. The paradox of the situation in terms of Afrikaner history was that their attempts to ruthlessly foist their language on Africans was an act of extraordinary amnesia in view of their own earlier rejection of the imposition of English on Afrikaners throughout most of the 19th century. This latter had indeed been the linguistic and wider cultural dimension of the Anglo-Boer conflict. It must be remembered that, the Treaty of Vereeniging (1902)¹⁷ which ended the 2nd Anglo-Boer war followed a decade later by the Act of Union (1910) opened with speed the door to the emergence of Afrikaans from the shadows, into societal equality with English. The Afrikaans standard orthography was finalized in 1913 and that same year it was introduced to primary schools. It was introduced at university level in 1918. 1925 saw its usage in Parliament. The Afrikaans Bible was out in 1933. Beyond that time, Afrikaans as a language became technically equipped to deal with the production and reproduction of knowledge as any in the world.

Based on an experience in teaching and researching at the tertiary level in nine African countries, in my estimation the most constraining problem African students are camped with in their studies derives from having to learn in these colonial languages. Too many, indeed the majority of African learners at all levels of education first and foremost battle with the problem of learning in languages which are not their home-language or mother-tongue. It leads directly to what Birgit Brock-Utne has aptly described as “the stupidification of African children.”¹⁸

There is an important relationship between language facility and school success. Students who write well are also generally above average in speaking and reading. Some years ago the present author undertook a study in the University of the Western Cape (UWC), Cape Town, which under apartheid had been in the forefront in the struggle to ensure that superior education reaches as many of the formerly deprived as possible.¹⁹ This latter object earned for the university the sobriquet “people’s university”. While the idea of a “people’s university” was apposite and the doors of learning opened to large numbers of African-language-speaking students, this was not effectively matched by infrastructural expansion or innovations in teaching methods and curricula. The basic assumptions of which languages to teach in, course structures and course content lagged behind. Of these basic assumptions, the most vexatious and intractable has been the issue of language of instruction. Initially, the university, created under apartheid for “coloureds”, was supposed to cater for courses taught in both English and Afrikaans. By 2013, Afrikaans had been almost eliminated as language of instruction. The dominance of English had become supreme, and African languages have hardly been under consideration as languages of instruction. But, if English has assumed centrality as medium of instruction, at the same time, the English communication skills of students have barely improved. Indeed, arguably, this has over the years further deteriorated. This is a phenomenon,

¹⁷ The significance of the language question for the Afrikaners was underscored by the fact that, urging his fellow Afrikaner leaders to accept the terms of the peace, Louis Botha argued: “Terms might now be secured which would save the language, our ancient customs and national ideals. The fatal thing would be to secure no terms at all and yet be forced to surrender.”

¹⁸ Birgit Brock-Utne. *The Adoption of a Western Paradigm in Bilingual Teaching*. In, Kwesi Kwaa Prah and Birgit Brock-Utne. *Multilingualism; an African Advantage. A Paradigm Shift in African Languages of Instruction Policies*. CASAS Book Series No.67. Cape Town. 2009. P.19. Brock-Utne observes that; “... We Norwegians study in our own language, in Norwegian, the Greeks study in Greek, the Finns in Finnish, and so on all over the developed Europe, but we do learn English well. We study it as a subject and are taught by people like you, teachers who know how to teach a foreign language. Even though Norwegian youngster speak and write English with more fluency than our students here, we do say that they are bilingual. I actually do not think anybody can become bilingual just through school learning. I used examples from Europe as it was the continent I was most familiar with, apart from Africa, at that time. Later I could have used examples from Korea, Mongolia and Japan, where children also study through the language they speak outside of school ...” Ibid.

¹⁹ K. K. Prah. *Studying in the Queen’s Language*. The Working Group on Educational Research in Africa - Conference of German Africanists. Bayreuth. 8th-10th October. 1998. Mimeo. 1998.

which is noticeable in other English and French-based universities in post-colonial Africa. The inability for students to cope with studies in English, French and Portuguese is beginning to trigger fresh thinking on the issue.²⁰

The ramifications of the language problem in schools remain singularly intimidating. In an interview granted to the author by a senior official of the secondary school system of the Western Cape on Thursday, 28 September 2010, information was provided regarding pass and failure rates in the rural schools of the Western Cape. At that point in time, of the 50 best performing schools in the Western Cape Province only one was a Xhosa-speaking school. There were 47 Xhosa-speaking schools in the Province, of the 60 worst performing schools in the Province 44 were Xhosa-speaking. These statistics revealed the depth of the problems facing South African education. Apart from the wider problems of inadequate infrastructure and resources, the foundations of this problem are premised on the language problems of school children. These problems are carried over, *mutatis mutandis*, into the university system.²¹

Discussions about the above problem were, during the time I was on the staff of the university (UWC), an abiding feature of staff meetings in various departments of the university. These departments felt the need to initiate wider discussion within the university, with a view towards meaningful and attainable amelioration. Over the years, these difficulties have hung like brooding shadows over the educational objectives of the University of the Western Cape. As compared with Afrikaans-speaking students, poor English communication skills are particularly noticeable amongst African language-speaking students. However, these constraints are by no means exclusive to them. Some lecturers have also pointed out that, the quality of written Afrikaans is also deteriorating. This is happening in a society in which the governmentally engineered supremacy of Afrikaans under Apartheid has over the past twenty years been popularly reversed. Noticeably, in post-apartheid South Africa, English is fast gaining ground over all other languages. Although the government on paper has elevated the status to equality of all eleven official languages, in practice there appears to be little use of the African languages for official tasks.²² One of the most consistent voices on the language question has been Harry Nengwekhulu. Recently he observed that, in South Africa, “the large majority of students attend lectures and write exams in a ‘foreign language’. Students first have to understand the meaning of words before they can answer the content of the question. The obligation is not just on government, but on universities to introduce more indigenous languages, and to develop them technically. Afrikaans is one of the youngest languages in the world, but we can now teach science and engineering in this language. But you can’t do that in Tsonga or Zulu. ...Afrikaans has produced engineers and doctors ... But we can’t produce doctors in Xhosa, Zulu, Venda?”²³

With the spread of the social ferment arising out of the, “Rhodes must fall” campaign, at Stellenbosch University the protracted tussle took a linguistic turn. Many African students were protesting in favour of a dual-track language of instruction policy which would allow the fuller installation of English in addition to Afrikaans, as languages of instruction. Remarkably, African languages as languages of instruction, were not in demand. A call for African languages usage as languages of instruction was figuratively, “beyond imagination.” This showed the extent of African cultural immobilization and sterility; the absence of a fully-fledged language consciousness among African students. An inability to link the challenges they face in education

²⁰ K. K. Prah. The Role of Language and Literacy in the Acquisition of Knowledge. The African Context. In, Shi-Xu, K.K. Prah and Laura Pardo. Discourses of the Developing World. Cultural Discourse Studies Series. Routledge. Abingdon. 2016. Pp. 94-95.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid

²³ Quoted from Karen Lombard. Call a thief a thief. Higher Education should be subject to the same scrutiny as Matric. UNISA/M&G Critical Thinking Forum. *Mail and Guardian* (South Africa). September 30th to October 6th, 2016. P. 29.

with the language question. It is a cultural barrenness which in effect posits the crisis as a race/colour phenomenon and forgets that the real challenge revolves around culture. The deficiency of this consciousness is observable throughout Africa. It is the reality of an elite which basically accepts the heritage of a colonial culture and simply wants to be accepted and find home in the culture of the erstwhile master. In this instance the preference is for the Englishman not the Afrikaner; in contemporary Rwanda again it is the Englishman in the place of the French or Belgian. In Angola today, after a long anti-colonial struggle, Portuguese culture is more entrenched, thanks to the elites, than it was under colonialism. The realization has still to come to us that, in every society in which the language of a minority or minorities serve as the language or languages of power, education, enlightened culture and leadership you have a colonial, neocolonial or internal-colonial situation.

The language of instruction problem in Africa has history. In a recent paper, Brock-Utne explains that the Partition of Africa into colonial domains meant that, each territory was administered by a particular European power and assigned a particular European language. African countries, as colonies and even today as so-called “independent” countries, came to be defined and to describe themselves in terms of the languages of Europe; Anglophone, Francophone or Lusophone. These colonial languages became the official languages of the state and of formal schooling.²⁴ She goes on to point out that in Africa, Portuguese missionaries were the first to offer formal Western education. Compared with the French and English they were most set against African mother-tongue education. The French who started later than the Portuguese were equally dismissive about African mother-tongue language of instruction. Joseph Jules Brévié, Governor General of French West Africa, in 1930 wrote that; “the natives’ mind can become disciplined by the mastering of spoken French”. The entire curriculum was French-based. The British left much to the missionaries in the beginning. Later, as mission schools were taken over by the British government, they also introduced English at an earlier stage and relegated the vernacular languages to totally inferior positions.²⁵

Today, the intractability and endurance of the language of instruction anomaly can be laid at the door of contemporary African elites. Unable to learn from the comparative historical experiences and records of former colonial Asia, the African elites that inherited the colonial or settler-colonial states and which with the years have successfully reproduced themselves in subsequent generations remain wedded to colonial solutions for the language of instruction conundrum. The elites remain mesmerized and addicted to the voice and language of our erstwhile masters. Effectively, the leading classes in Africa today are alienated from their roots and the recognition of their own interests, beyond their narrow elitist securities. They are trapped in the imagination of themselves, as doppelgängers of their former masters. For this reason, we would argue that the decolonization of culture in Africa has still to be set on its self-conscious course as a cultural renaissance process, if emancipatory progress is to come to Africans. Education should be a prime tool for this.

Decolonizing the Humanities

In 2016, the student movement morphed into a “fees must fall” campaign which has also changed face into the more recent consistent call for the decolonization of education. Education is meant to inculcate habits of mind and activity which enable us to adapt to societal norms and equip us with skills and techniques which meet societal needs and enable us to live fulfilling lives. Education therefore is in the first instance societally focussed and addresses issues which are pertinent to the society in question.

²⁴ Birgit Brock-Utne. The Ubuntu paradigm in curriculum work, language of instruction and assessment. In, *International Review of Education*. No. 62. Pp. 29-44. DOI 10.1007/s11159-016-9540-2. 2016.

²⁵ Birgit Brock-Utne. The Ubuntu paradigm ... Ibid. For a fuller quotation of Joseph Jules Brévié see also, B.W. White. Talk about School; education and the colonial project in French and British Africa (1860 – 1960). *Comparative Education*. No. 32(1). 1996. Pp. 9-25.

Our universities first emerged out of the hothouse of the colonial educational experience. They were introduced by the Western colonial powers in their attempts to fashion educational products in their image and conceived to serve their purposes. In the process, consequentially, it removed the native from his or her inherited cultural familiarities and moorings. The classic formulation of the object of colonial education was provided by Thomas Babington Macaulay in his 1835 *Minute on Indian Education*, that; "... We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect."²⁶ This was the gist of the object of the colonial project in education which in the far-flung outposts of the British empire was pursued to great effect and varying degrees of success.

Possibly, the single most disastrous epistemic effect of colonial tutelage and experience on our thinking and education, which nomothetically and systematically strait-jackets our basic assumptions along intellectually colonial and neocolonial lines, is the historical periodization schema which runs from; precolonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. It was towards the interrogation of this issue that I was in 1980 awarded a Nuffield Foundation Fellowship at Cambridge University. The implication of this periodization scheme is that, the whole of African history is compartmentalized into three periods; all of them dominated conceptually and revolving around the colonial interlude. The Western encounter in general and colonialism in particular are treated as the most determinant features in the hundred thousand years of the history of *homo sapiens sapiens* in Africa. This periodization schema makes Africans and African history adjuncts of Western history. It places Africans at the margins of Western history as circumstantial appendages and inherently justifies Western dominance and superiority. It is actually a schema of Western history in Africa. Africans are through this periodization outline made unwitting creatures of the West. This representation is so powerful that it completely disables Africans of any possibility for free historical agency. Apart from its unambiguous Eurocentric bias, it has also serious scientific discrepancies.

The only period in this tri-layered history which can in some form be given authentic chronology, is the colonial period. The precolonial period which accounts for over 90% of African history is fossilized and rendered analytically inert. For now, it is cognitively unyielding and devoid of any attempt or possibility for further detailed chronological differentiation. When reference is made to the precolonial period in African history, we do not know where we stand, it could be a hundred years, two hundred years, a thousand years or ten thousand years. The construction of an "ethnographic present" – the putative description of a culture to establish its features prior to Western contact – in fact only invents an ahistorical image of the past where socio-cultural realities with diverse depth in time are treated and regarded without historical differentiation. It implicationally assumes a static, "pre-contact/precolonial" view of African societies. The cultural traits which were found on the eve of colonialism are treated as if they were timeless and reified phenomena that have no origins in specific periods or junctions in African history. How do we methodologically negate this ahistoricism embedded in this Eurocentric periodization scheme? We must in the first instance conceptually place Africans in the center of history in general and African history in particular.

Dating institutions and societal relics and revealing their relative ages in cross-cultural comparisons is within guarded reason possible. The approach I am referring to is not historiography which focusses on a chain of episodic events, personages, intrigues, dynastic feuds, "great men", Carlyle's heroes and hero-worship, glorification and psychologism. This latter type of history leaves out by default the dynamics of the broader and wider stream of

²⁶ Bureau of Education. Selections from Educational Records, Part I (1781-1839). Edited by H. Sharp. Calcutta: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1920. Reprint. Delhi: National Archives of India, 1965, 107-117. http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00generallinks/macaulay/txt_minute_education_1835.html

humanity; the tensions and contestations of collective, social and shared existence; that is, the real drivers of the historical process. Individualized history requires more individualized testimonies and literary records. This sort of history is therefore not particularly divulging and intellectually beneficial for Africans. This history is at best embellishment which can serve, in my view only limitedly as dressing and finery for the more substantive explanation and broad outlines of historical markings.

The favoured methodology which I describe as “substantive peoples’ historiography” can be found in the tracing of social formations, identifying historical trajectories through the audit of the dynamics of the transformations of forces and relations of production; the application of identifiable historicity to social institutions and the sequencing of institutions on the basis of social evolutionary yardsticks.²⁷ The idea is well-expressed in the argument that; “... The archaic or primary formation of our globe itself contains a series of layers from various ages, the one superimposed on the other. Similarly, the archaic formation of society exhibits a series of different types (which together form an ascending series), which mark a progression of epochs.”²⁸ Such analytical historiographical procedures will provide us with the broad outlines of African history; they will offer the large expansive sketch in which with time and slow incremental additions more detailed perspectives can be revealed.

The Nile valley area of Africa, in part, has literacy and scripts which are older than whatever comparative records there are in Europe. In Ethiopia and the rest of the Horn historical testimonies using Semitic scripts go back to biblical times. Ethiopic, the old Semitic script from antiquity, is still used to write Geez, Amharic, and Tigrinya, and the Greek alphabet in a revised and adapted form was used for writing Coptic and Nobiin (Old Nubian). The Arabic *Ajami* script tradition in the Sahel to which the Timbuktu tradition belongs goes back a thousand years. They include languages like Swahili, Hausa, Wolof, Ffulfulde, Kanuri, Bambara and others. In all these cases, in more recent times, Roman letters have replaced the Arabic script. The earliest Afrikaans scripts (South Africa) were written as *Ajami*. This goes back to the historical record of the early Malay Moslem slaves who were brought into the Western Cape of South Africa from Java and neighbouring locations by the Dutch colonists. Mansa Musa the best known ruler of the Mali empire returned from pilgrimage to Mecca in 1325 and ordered the construction of the Great Mosque of Timbuktu. With the completion of the great mosque Timbuktu’s status as an Islamic city was established. It consolidated the integration of the Sahel into the Muslim world. Over the next two centuries, it became a magnet for Muslim scholars, so that by the mid-15th century Timbuktu had become a major center of Islamic learning under African cultural conditions. Timbuktu’s most celebrated scholar Ahmad Baba (1564 – 1627) claimed that his library contained 1600 volumes, and that it was the smallest library of any of his family. Libraries supporting the Timbuktu manuscript tradition have for centuries been numerous. There are in Timbuktu alone today some twenty private manuscript libraries and about one hundred in the sixth region of Mali. In effect, “Arabic was to Muslim Africa what Latin was to medieval Christian Europe.”²⁹

²⁷ For example see the approach of; D. D. Kosambi. *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*. Popular Book Depot. Bombay. 1956.

²⁸ K. Marx - Vera Zasulich Correspondence (The “Second” Draft) February/March 1881. Quoted here from; Late Marx and the Russian Road, Marx and the “peripheries of capitalism”, Teodor Shanin (ed). Monthly Review Press. New York. 1983.

²⁹ John Hunwick. The Timbuktu Manuscript Tradition. In, *Tinabantu*: Journal of African National Affairs, 1, 2, CASAS. Cape Town. 2003. Pp. 2-3. See also; K. K. Prah. Language, Literacy and Knowledge Production in Africa. In, B.V. Street and N.H. Hornberger (eds). *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*. 2nd Edition, Volume 2: Literacy, Pp. 29 -39. 2008.

In the light of Africa's sheer size (the second biggest continent in the world), the historical depth in time of the human experience on the continent, the preliterate nature of much of African history; written and processed evidence is for many areas and periods scant and patchy. In turn, the relative absence of written records has fed Western ignorance, prejudices and imperial superciliousness. From Hegel's 19th century anthropogeographical suppositions about Africa and Africans³⁰ to Hugh Trevor-Roper's admitted Eurocentrism; "It is fashionable to speak today as if European history were devalued: as if historians, in the past, have paid too much attention to it; and as if, nowadays, we should pay less. Undergraduates, seduced, as always, by the changing breath of journalistic fashion, demand that they should be taught the history of black Africa. Perhaps, in the future, there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none, or very little: there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is largely darkness, like the history of pre-European, pre-Columbian America. And darkness is not a subject for history."³¹ With imperial certitude and "high-Tory" aplomb he added that; "I do not think we need make any apology if our study of history is Europa-centric."³² Trevor-Roper was shooting rather carelessly from the hip to announce that Africa has no history, actually he was in effect saying that, humanity has no history since over 90% of human history is African history. He was blinded to this truth by his self-congratulatory intoxication with late-imperial Western triumphalism.

In as far as African history is concerned, the point that needs stress is that, increasingly from different disciplines as archaeology, linguistics and genetics we are beginning to account for much of what has been created by humans on this planet by way of culture in a broad historical sense of the word; that is, culture as the footprints and ingenuity of *homo faber*. There is still so much to be put together and in my estimation what appears to be areas of total darkness will in coming decades be more illumined.

In the contemporary academy in African countries, the reality of cultural alienation lives on in various other manifestations. For example, throughout Africa, our universities house in intellectually quarantined corners "African Studies" centres; institutes and departments, where exotica for Western tastes and sensibilities, like African traditional dance, music and other art forms and whatever in the areas of the humanities and social sciences are regarded as "surplus" to the preoccupations of the mainstream departments are accommodated and pursued. The question is; if what is called "African Studies" is a segregated intellectual domain, what does the rest of an African university busy itself with? Are our universities engaged more with realities outside Africa? Difficult as this may ring in the ear, its truth stares us resolutely in the face. It is easy to understand the rationale behind them. Universities elsewhere in the world have enclaves for African Studies, or for that matter any other "Area Studies" (as they are sometimes called) within their systems. But "African Studies" in an African university is patently absurd. In the same way, a diminutive enclave for Chinese Studies in the University of Beijing is beyond imagination. African Studies in African universities were created by Westerners bent on faithfully replicating their home institutions in Africa. What experience and the records show is that, these African Studies centres originally were primarily meant to cater as research homes/bases for

³⁰ G.W. F. Hegel. *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Jibree. New York: Dover, 1956, p.99. Hegel asserted that Africa is; "At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it — that is in its northern part — belong to the Asiatic or European World. Carthage displayed there an important transitional phase of civilization; but, as a Phoenician colony, it belongs to Asia. Egypt will be considered in reference to the passage of the human mind from its Eastern to its Western phase, but it does not belong to the African Spirit. What we properly understand by Africa, is the unhistorical, undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World's History."

³¹ Hugh Trevor-Roper. *The Rise of Christian Europe*. Thames and Hudson. London. 1965. Pp. 216.

³² Hugh Trevor-Roper. ... Ibid.

foreign, mainly Western, researchers with little or no immediate interest in teaching, but needing bases in African universities for their research and training purposes. With independence, the inheriting elites took over without much thought or alteration, the structures and purposes for which they were initially intended.

Another example of this neocolonial cultural conditioning is provided by the existence of what passes as “African literature” in the African post-colony. “African literature” today, in and out of universities, is English, French and Portuguese literature written by Africans.³³ Such literature is essentially part of Western literature, but at the margins of the cultural world of the owners of the language in which it is cast. The African elites with the implied connivance of their metropolitan Western cohorts are ensuring the continuation of neocolonial culture in Africa. What is mind-boggling is that, for so long, without question or challenge, what is popularly conceived as African literature, until the arrival on the scene by Ngugi Wa Thiongo, was exclusively colonial language-based literature.³⁴ Ngugi has with courage, sound argument and relevantly accompanied practice broken the mould with his work in Gikuyu. I am sure in due course others, particularly in the younger generation, will follow. The colonial languages in Africa today are indeed the umbilical cord for the gestation and sustenance of neocolonial culture in Africa, and the African elites are the agents through which this subordinate culture is dispensed.

Epistemological Universals

Knowledge is doubtlessly in its production and reproduction universally pooled, if not by express purpose then certainly in effect. In each instance, its point of departure and developmental trajectory may derive from different societal, geographical, thematic, traditional, collective or individual sources of endeavour, or differing combinations of these categories, but its ultimate destination is a universal fund which, tools permitting, is accessible to all. These tools prominently include relevant languages and metalanguages and also acquired procedural skills or methodologies for accessing the specific epistemology. *Ab initio*, the ultimate destination is not in most cases, purposively conceived. But, all languages are potentially capable of performing the procedures necessary for knowledge production. Languages are deliberately intellectualized for knowledge production. In other words, no language is from Adam particularly endowed to the exclusion of others. All languages have the inherent capacity to develop as languages of science and technology. Where necessary and when needed translations are always possible. The Afrikaner leader D.F. Malan observed that; “lift the language and you lift the people.”

Because of its inherently aggregative nature, the development of knowledge proceeds as an expanding pool, a universal fund to which continuous contributions are variously and vicariously made. Thus, knowledge in its growth and development advances as additions, elaborations and critique, made incrementally in the construction of areas of knowledge. These areas may commence as isolated, but expanding epistemological fields which inevitable flow into each other and oftentimes suddenly reveal and produce monumental insights with implications far beyond the original points of departure. Effectively, in dribs and drabs, epistemological nuggets accumulate and acquire complexities of form and content which achieve a *gestalt*, qualitatively distinct from a simple sum total of the contributing units or fragments of knowledge.

It has been argued since the 1920s that, it is impossible to fully grasp or understand scholastic traditions outside the social and historical contexts from which they emerge. They always stand squarely in the periods as products and representations of their times. An allied point which has come to our understanding through the sociology of knowledge is that the foundations of

³³ Alastair Niven more appropriately describes such writers as, “African novelists in English”. See, Elechi Amadi obituary. *The Guardian* (UK). 22nd August, 2016.
<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/aug/22/elechi-amadi-obituary>

³⁴ Ngugi wa Thiong’o. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. London: Currey; Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1986.

thought, ideas, concepts, and belief systems can only be fully understood with reference to the social environments in which they originate. In the analysis of ideas, knowledge, ideology or worldview, sociological and historical contextualization are relevant. It implies that, there are social and cultural foundations of cognition and perception which must not be missed in our attempts to understand and explain them. The socio-structural locations of theory and or the theorizer are crucial for an appraisal of the idea. Its obvious proximity to Marxian antecedence is obvious, but was spelt out in more specific elaborations by Scheler and Mannheim.³⁵ These findings and arguments are *mutatis mutandis* relevant to considerations of knowledge production in Africa.

The distinction between the *Naturwissenschaften*, or natural sciences, and the *Geisteswissenschaften* (literally “sciences of spirit”) received its classical definition in the work of Wilhelm Dilthey and has continued to shape our thinking about the sciences.³⁶ In comparison with the social and human sciences, because of their precision in description, prediction, and understanding of phenomena based on observation and empirically testable evidence, the natural sciences are freer of subjectivist factors and idiosyncratic considerations. But, this is more a matter of degree than sharp distinction. Be that as it may, the inexorable process of pooling knowledge proceeds, at different speeds, more neatly and recognizably in the natural sciences than in the social and human sciences. The demarcation of territory into the natural sciences, humanities and social sciences has been a slow and deliberate process, determined by tradition, history and argumentation. Till today, there are variations in the approach to where demarcation lines lie between the social sciences and humanities.

Intellectual Traditions

As earlier said, in knowledge production the developmental trajectory may derive from different societal, geographical, thematic, traditional, collective or individual sources of endeavour. They may also be mixes of these categories. It is indeed difficult to typify epistemological representation as completely unique, independent or individual expression. There are always precursor, related or intellectually and historically proximate minds in knowledge production. Knowledge and its producers almost always have pedigree, schools, traditions and intellectual habits. This latter is represented through methodologies and analytical procedures, similarities and cognates in the issues under consideration. It infers historical intellectual interrogation, intersectional narratives, references and cross-references.

The intellectual tracing of traditions is of two main types. On one hand, there are those that are represented mainly through chronologies of historical interrogation of leading and selected or related issues, and secondly those that concentrate on methodological similarities, divergences, and analytical synergies. The other way of making this difference would refer to synchronic and diachronic categorizations, respectively longitudinal and vertical analyses of reality. These two types are not polar or neat binary manifestations. Many traditions are indeed varying combinations of these, with societal, geographical, thematic and collective or individualized

³⁵ *Wissenssoziologie* (sociology of knowledge) was developed as an approach and method for comprehending the origins and social locations of nomothetic social ideas in the post-World War 1 environment. See, Max Scheler. *Problems of a Sociology of Knowledge*. (Trans. M. S. Frings). Routledge & Kegan Paul. London. (First published 1924). 1980 edition. Karl Mannheim. *The Problem of a Sociology of Knowledge*. In; K. Mannheim. *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*. P. Kecskemeti (Ed). Harcourt, Brace, & World. New York. (First Published 1925). 1952 edition. Pp. 134–90. Karl Mannheim. *Ideology and Utopia*. Harcourt, Brace, & World, New York. (First published 1929) (1936 edition).

³⁶ Dilthey subsumed in the notion “humanities” the Hegelian idea of spirit, referring to the “spiritual life” of a group, a people or a culture. Until today the idea of *Geisteswissenschaften* remains contentious. Corresponding equivalents are the “liberal arts” in the United States; *sciences humaines* in France, and the Oxbridge usage, of “moral sciences”. Max Weber’s equivalent was *Kulturwissenschaft*.

characteristics. The diachronic may facilitate more easily thematic cross-cultural methods while synchronic procedures may better elaborate chronological narratives.

The study of African society has never been a universally homogeneous process. Distinct schools or traditions are recognizable. The British, French, Russian/Soviet, Japanese, US and German schools are singularly recognizable.³⁷ These traditions, in as far as their constituent contributors are concerned speak to each other within their traditions and also out of them.³⁸ It is this latter process of responding to each other, reading, referencing, interrogating and discoursing outside the narrow confines of their traditions and engaging in what Gabriel Tarde described as “logical duels” that engender the epistemic universal pooling processes.³⁹

In spite of the universal pooling processes in knowledge production, the significant point is that in most instances, we do not deliberately start by directing our efforts self-consciously at creating a universal fund. We mostly insentiently/reflexively register contributions into the universal fund. We tend to be national, individualized or unique before we become international. We are apt to respond to immediate or local circumstances in the initial instance, rather than engagement with extraneous intellectual considerations. This localist focus, understanding and point of departure is not necessarily inspired by ruling or administrative fiat, but more often by time-tested and accepted practice. I shall provide a few examples for this.

Regarding German historiography, Mommsen suggests that; “German historical scholarship ... had long understood its own social role as a loyal supporter of Germany’s national goals and a provider of political legitimacy to the nation-state.”⁴⁰ The French Annales School shifted the focus of historical research in France stressing long-term (*la longue durée*) approaches to social history, rather than eventful, political or diplomatic concerns. It became the leading formula in historical production at the summit of scholarship in France and the school was the pace-setter for historiography in France for much of the 20th century.⁴¹ Marxist social science and historiography has been over the last century epoch-making. Although Marxism emerged in the West, in the hundred years after Marx and Engels in its various elaborations, it became the most globally influential philosophical theory of social dynamics and transformation. There is hardly a country in the world today where its legacy has not been felt in and out of the academy. Away from Europe, local concerns and the quest for intellectual sovereignty are discernible from the Chinese experience. Before the inauguration of the Four Modernizations (1978 onwards) and the emergence of Deng Xiao Ping’s leadership, the Chinese approach to disciplinary compartmentalization and research was borrowed from the Soviet-model. The sciences were located for coordination and supervisory purposes within the state apparatus and were closely monitored. Turning scientific institutions away from close governmental direction into

³⁷ See, K. K. Prah. African Scholars and Africanist Scholarship. In, Soundings: Studies on African Transformation. CASAS Book Series. No. 79. Cape Town. 2010. Pp.1-18.

³⁸ K. K. Prah. North/South Parallels and Intersections: Anthropological Convergences and Divergences in the Study of Africa. *Critique of Anthropology* 17(4):439-45.

³⁹ See, Gabriel Tarde. The Laws of Imitation. (Chapter 5). Translated by Elsie Clews Parsonic with an Introduction by Franklin H. Giddings. Henry Holt & Co. N. Y. 1903. Pp. 140-188. Digitalized Version; <https://archive.org/details/lawsOfimitation00tard>

⁴⁰ Wolfgang J. Mommsen. The Return to the Western Tradition. German Historiography since 1945. German Historical Institute. Occasional Paper No. 4. Washington, D.C. 1991. P.6.

⁴¹ Founded in 1929 in Strasbourg by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre. This school accentuated the relevance of social science methods in historical research. It was never averse to Marxist approaches. It welcomed quantification and human geography. The Annales School approach was to move French historians away from simplistic idiographic approaches, narrow political, eventful and diplomatic studies towards social and economic history, geography, material culture, and what the younger members of the school called *mentalités*, or the recognition of characteristic psychology or *zeitgeist* of the periods studied. Fernand Braudel became the dominant figure of this school between the 1960s and 1970s.

autonomous institutions has not been easy. Indeed, it is an evolving process that till today continues.⁴² As an emergent global power, China insists on drawing on its own historical civilization to achieve modernity.⁴³ To the early Chinese anthropologists, what was important was the question of how to apply anthropological knowledge to the analysis of China's poverty and undeveloped social conditions.⁴⁴ From the start of the People's Republic of China, attempts were made to nativize (*bentu hua*) the social sciences.⁴⁵ Hongling Liang argues that "after relocating to a Chinese context, anthropology inevitably went through a process of domestication: successive initiatives have been undertaken to make the discipline Chinese."⁴⁶ Making the discipline Chinese means driving the methodologies of the discipline to adapt to Chinese perceived needs, objectives and intellectual traditions.⁴⁷ For the Chinese, the logic of the need for *bentu hua*, i.e. sovereignty/nativization/indigenization/domestication has been taken for granted. It has been self-evident. Another example of the intersection of academic endeavours and larger societal interests and concerns refers to the USA. Years ago, David Johnson drew attention to the fact that; the convergence and overlap of competitive Cold War considerations with the African political independence process accentuated the importance of Africa in American governmental circles. This in turn favoured the cultivation of African Studies in American universities. Private and public money started pouring into African Studies programmes; graduate student numbers increased; teaching and research staff establishments prospered with journals and other publications resulting from the feverish academic activities which ensued. This was in the late 1950s and 1960s. "This was the golden age of African studies in the United States."⁴⁸ In Lome, December 1975, I together with the Kenyan anthropologist Abdullah Bujra, had the opportunity to interview the then elderly Meyer Fortes, amongst other things, about the role anthropologists played in support of colonial administration in his earlier years. He explained that they were willing to answer questions which colonial administration posed to them and which required responses, but they also saw themselves as people who protected native interests in administrative circles. Above all, he agreed that the data they had assembled and produced could be reinterpreted to serve contemporary interests and objectives.⁴⁹ What the above examples imply is that knowledge production is almost always closely advised by societal agendas and perceived needs.

Knowledge production and the education which goes with it, is not advised by abstract, universalistic ideals, but socially defined and perceived needs. A great deal of attention has in the past been directed to the issue of values in social research suggested that the dismissal of the value-free principle in social science does not nullify the expectation and possibility for scientific objectivity. Indeed, by understanding that scientific research is value-prone, we can better appreciate the nature of scientific disputation; we can step back and identify value-laden baggage

⁴² Frank N. Pieke. Anthropology, China, and the Chinese Century. *Annual Review of Anthropology*. October 2014. Vol. 43: Pp. 123-138.

⁴³ Frank N. Pieke. Anthropology, China, and the Chinese Century. *Annual Review of Anthropology*. Vol. 43: 123-138 (Volume publication date October 2014). First published online as a Review in Advance on July 14, 2014. DOI: 10.1146/annurev-anthro-102313-030149

⁴⁴ Zhou Daming. Anthropology in China Takes Practical Approach. <http://www.china.org.cn/english/2002/May/32689.htm>

⁴⁵ Naran Bilik. The Ethnicity of Anthropology in China. *Critique of Anthropology*. 2002. Vol. 22. (2). P.133-148.

⁴⁶ Hongling Liang. Chinese anthropology and its domestication projects: de-westernisation, *bentuhua* and overseas ethnography. *Social Anthropology* No. 0, 01–14. 2016 European Association of Social Anthropologists. doi:10.1111/1469-8676.12307

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ David Johnson. Drawing a Curtain on African Studies. In, *Bulletin of the Association of Concerned African Scholars*. Winter. 1996. No. 46. P.31.

⁴⁹ K. K. Prah and A. Bujra. In Retrospect. A Conversation with Meyer Fortes. *PULA*. Vol 2. No 1. With A Bujra. 1978. See also; An Interview with Meyer Fortes by Kwesi Prah and A. Bujra. *Cambridge Anthropology*. Vol 24. Issue 2. 2004. Pp. 1-17.

from cognitive gold. This means that we should in as far as possible exclude ideological or non-scientific suppositions from research. We should avoid value judgments. We should put our own values on the table openly and clearly and refrain from proffering particular values as universals. In short, social researchers must be aware of their own prejudices and biases, and acknowledge them while researching. We must also studiously avoid incorporating personal values into the conclusions we draw. The two areas; fact and invention, is and ought, science and values, should be treated as separate and demarcated realities.⁵⁰

Intellectual Sovereignty

As a condition, the nativization, domestication and creation of intellectual sovereignty in knowledge production requires that autonomy and the degree of self-sufficiency necessary to actualize independent knowledge production is put in place. Human capital and infrastructural scope for sovereignty is indispensable. Education is socio-economically an investment in human capital that should eventually pay off, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in higher productivity. The domestication of knowledge production also requires that the process of production or adaptation is home-grown.

If as African academics we seek legitimation for our work on non-African, particularly Western platforms, institutions and journals, there is little real chance of gaining or creating sovereignty in knowledge production about our societies. Intellectual sovereignty means a free, liberated and self-determining agency in knowledge production, which answers firstly to societal particularities while contributing secondarily and almost inadvertently to universal knowledge. Currently in Africa, predominantly, we continue to append our production to external traditions in a subsidiary fashion and effectively entrench intellectual neocolonialism in Africa.

Terms like decolonizing knowledge and education, nativization, domestication, de-westernization and indigenization all imply “bringing home”, rehabilitating, and making knowledge part of your own belongings. Belongings you feel comfortable with and understand. They have direct cultural bearings.

I have elsewhere argued that: in the African experience, since the beginning of the colonial era, there are existent two parallel histories of knowledge and knowledge production. The first of these is what is generally described in the literature as indigenous knowledge - knowledge that is built into African cultural thought and practice, whose origins predate Western presence and which in steadily modified forms is generationally transferred. It is possible to say that this sort of knowledge is generally endangered and dying out as a reproduced genre, as it is superseded by the parallel colonially received knowledge. This latter body of knowledge which has been received through the Western encounter and which is also reproduced to narrower sections of the African population goes in the first instance into the creation of the modern elites in African societies.⁵¹ Very prominently, these two histories are fundamentally divided by the different languages in, which they are cast. Indigenous knowledge comes with African languages while the received knowledge is based in the colonial languages. We describe these histories as parallel histories because hitherto there has been no sociological or educational mechanism, which enables them to meet or converge.

Generally, the social process in Africa has tended to devalue indigenous knowledge systems. The basis of contemporary economic advancement both at the individual and collective levels, are grounded in the knowledge culture of the colonially installed knowledge systems. Little benefit in

⁵⁰ Max Weber. Max Weber on the Methodology of the Social Sciences. (Trans. and eds). Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch. Glencoe, IL: Free Press. 1949.

⁵¹ K. K. Prah. Thinking African: Reflections on Language, Indigenous Knowledge and Development. Lecture 3, (20th May 2016). Presentation made to; The Annual School of Human and Social Sciences Lectures. University of Venda. 18th – 20th May, 2016.

the order of neoteric knowledge accrues to those social elements, which form the overwhelming majority, who are located within the cultural orbit of indigenous knowledge systems. Most perceptive observers and students of African society and history suggest that if education and development in Africa is to take place in a sustained fashion which guarantees the socio-economic prosperity of mass society, it will, as of necessity, have to be built on what the masses already know, what they have inherited, what they have created and not bypass such knowledge.⁵² In other words, the received knowledge would profitably have to be indigenised as adaptations to the indigenous.

The process of marrying received and indigenous forms of knowledge poses many challenges and intrigues the imagination and creativity of interested parties. The first issue to be recognized is the fact that, in Africa, traditionally, indigenous knowledge has been orally developed and constructed. Knowledge, which is orally generationally handed down is, limited in serious educational potential. Orality as a basis for memory leaks. Orally constructed memory is permanently unstable. Orally stored knowledge cannot be permanently preserved the way literate cultures preserve memory. If indigenous forms of knowledge are to be strengthened and developed they need to be rendered in written forms so that the scope for consolidation and advancement is assured. The upshot of my argument is that wherever extraneous knowledge is rendered in indigenous languages, it becomes part of indigenous knowledge.⁵³ The point is that knowledge has ultimately no hermetically sealed boundaries. The confinements that exist are fundamentally linguistic, in other words, they are cultural.

The decolonization of knowledge and education does not and should not mean the facile rejection of Western-derived epistemologies and their modes of construction. It means stripping Western specificities from our modes of knowledge construction and the production of knowledge to suit and speak to our cultural/linguistic particularities. It means in short societal relevance. It means in practice shifts in the class basis of knowledge production and deposition.

In the West, the demystification of the mythologies of Otherness and the Othering of non-Western societies and peoples grinds inexorably on. Between the late 1950s and 1960s, Physical Anthropology lost considerable standing in continental European universities and gave way increasingly to Cultural Anthropological approaches.

When early in the 1960s, I went to study in Leiden University, the department in which my first two degrees were done was called; Department of Cultural Anthropology and Non-Western Sociology. Conceptually and broadly, on the European continent, the societies of the non-Western world were understood to be sufficiently different from the West to warrant disciplinary sub-division in the area of sociology. Furthermore, previously, sociology was seen as relevant to the Western world and anthropology to the non-Western world. But the socio-demographic shifts and realities of post-2nd World War Asia, Africa and Latin America had created conditions in which purely anthropological analytical categories (for the non-Western world) or sociological modes (for Western societies) which had hitherto been essentially Eurocentric or Western in focus were seen to be inappropriate in the analysis of the contemporary Afro-Asian and Latin American worlds. Sociology came late to the analysis of African societies. In the West, arguably Balandier was the pioneer of sociological approaches to African societies. Busia was the African pioneer in this field.

It was also around this period, in the end of the 1950s, the 1960s and 70s that a number of social scientists from “the South”, the “Third World”, started questioning the place and status of their endeavours as social scientists in the global division of labour and the role of anthropology in the

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

dying colonial structure. The decade running from 1960 to 1970 saw colonial freedom for about two-thirds of Africa. Colonized peoples whose voices had for centuries been silenced suddenly found their voices. For the Afro-Asian and Latin American worlds this was when the ideas towards the decolonization of social science in the Third World emerged. With them appeared categorizations as “indigenous anthropologies,”⁵⁴ “world anthropologies,”⁵⁵ “peripheral anthropologies,”⁵⁶ “anthropologies of the south.”⁵⁷ Development and Under-development, revolution and national liberation became celebrated ideas.

Since the 1960s, African philosophers have also been wrestling with similar concerns; redefining their fields of engagement and epistemic relevance. They have been preoccupied with reformulating and asserting the African’s place in the global cultural and social order seen as a historical product. In the face of the classical and continued Western representations of the African as a parvenu, African thinkers have affirmed African credentials as a distinct but historically eminent component in human records.⁵⁸

The present has history. From the 1880s, the period of the high-noon of imperialist rivalries for colonial territories in Africa which historically panned out as the scramble for Africa, Africans started articulating their rejection of unbridled Westernisms. “Gone Fanti” or “going native” became the description of the African who was prepared to assert his/her African cultural roots and belongings in the face of Western cultural deprecations. This strand of Africanism has persisted. Nearer our times, it reaffirmed itself in the form of the Black Consciousness Movement/Bikoism in the 1960s and early 70s. From the early 1930s when Aimé Césaire, together with Gilbert Gratiant, Leonard Sainville, Paulette Nardal, Léon-Gontran Damas and Léopold Sédar Senghor founded the review *l’Etudiant Noir*, the foundations of the Negritude Movement were secured. Senghor suggests that Claude McKay was the intellectual god-father of the movement; he intellectually demarcated the tentative borders of what was to become the most empowering cultural movement of African intellectuals in the twentieth century. In late life, Aimé Césaire declared that: “... the question he and his friend Léopold Sédar Senghor came to raise after they first met was: ‘Who am I? Who are we? What are we in this white world?’ And he commented: ‘That’s quite a problem’... their encounter as people of African descent regardless of where they were from would lead to the transformation of their individual feelings of revolt into a concept that would also unify all Black people and overcome the separation created by slavery but also by the prejudices born out of the different paths taken”.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Hussein Eahim and Katherine Helmer (Eds.). *Indigenous Anthropology in Non-Western Countries*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press. 1982.

⁵⁵ “The World Anthropologies Network (WAN) collective is in the process of creating a self-organizing world anthropologies network that will constitute a dialogic space for discussing anthropology in relation to a multiplicity of world-making processes and events. The network should contribute to a plural landscape of world anthropologies less shaped by metropolitan hegemonies and opened to the heteroglossic potential of unfolding globalization processes”. See, http://ram-wan.net/old/documents/05_e_Journal/journal-1/2.wancollective.pdf See also; Eduardo Restrepo, and Arturo Escobar. 2005. Other Anthropologies and Anthropology Otherwise’: Steps to a World Anthropologies Framework. *Critique of Anthropology* 25(2): 99–129. 2005. Gustavo Lins Ribeiro. 2006. World Anthropologies: Cosmopolitics for a New Global Scenario in Anthropology. *Critique of Anthropology* 26(4): 363-386.

⁵⁶ Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira. ‘Peripheral anthropologies’ versus ‘central anthropologies’. *Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 4-5: 10-30. 2000

⁵⁷ Esteban Krotz. Anthropologies of the South. Their rise, their silencing, their characteristics. *Critique of Anthropology*. 17(3): 237-51. 1997.

⁵⁸ Ademola Kazeem Fayemi. A Critique of Cultural Universals and Particulars in Kwasi Wiredu’s Philosophy. *TRAMES*, 2011, 15(65/60), 3, 259–276. P.260.

⁵⁹ Aimé Césaire. *Nègre je suis nègre je resterai. Entretiens avec Françoise Vergès*. Paris. Albin Michel. Quoted here from Souleymane Bachir Diagne. *Négritude*. 2014. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 24 February. Stanford [online]. Available at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/negritude/> [Accessed 7 May 2014]. The movement’s best known critic is the Nigerian Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka, who argued that the self-assertion of colour puts black people on the defensive. “A tiger doesn’t proclaim its tigeritude; it pounces on its prey”. See also, K. K. Prah. *Tracings. Pan Africanism and the Challenges of Global African Unity*. CASAS Book Series, No. 107. CASAS. Cape Town. 2014.

The Mbari Movement of the early 1960s in Nigeria reflected the *zeitgeist* of the early years of colonial independence. Inspired by Ulli Beier it effectively assembled creative and eclectic energies for sculpture, painting and literary performance of persons as diverse as; Christopher Okigbo, J. P. Clark, Wole Soyinka, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Frances Ademola, Demas Nwoko, Mabel Segun, Uche Okeke, Arthur Nortje and Bruce Onobrakpeya. In the late 1960s, Marxian and neo-marxian debates consumed the University of Dar es Salaam campus. Students and lecturers, alike, were volubly deciding where they stood with regards to the populism of “African socialism” called *Ujamaa* by Nyerere and his ideological acolytes. In many parts of Africa and beyond African students and intellectuals flirted with Marxism in a period when globally in years of relative prosperity in and out of the academy the legacy of Marx was being variously celebrated.

In the quest for African self-identity and self-definition, the late colonial or early post-colonial thinkers like Tempels, Mbiti, Kagame, Mveng who stressed African civilizational non-inferiority based on holistic and totalized, but ahistorical reconstructions of African societies and cultural systems led the way into ethno-philosophy. Later minds like, Hountondji, Appiah, Towa, Gyekye, Ramose, Oguah and Wiredu stress universals in their African cultural reference points and derivations. They have tried to locate African scholarship in academic philosophy more squarely within universal assumptions. Arguably, we can say that, both generations of African philosophers are struggling to come to terms with the Western encounter. We have not yet started to distance ourselves sufficiently from the historical burden of the West; in other words, we have not started looking at ourselves from inside, autonomously with intellectual sovereignty, but with universal tools, methodologies and concepts which are universally recognizable.

Very recently, in the *Mail & Guardian* (South Africa), the Philosophical Society of Southern Africa (PSSA) was described as “facing an existential crisis amid claims of racism”.⁶⁰ The association was reported to be on the brink of collapse over allegations of racism. Michael Cloete, at their last meeting, asked: “Does the PSSA have the moral legitimacy to take us into the future? Given its history of complicity in everything that’s gone wrong (for) black people in this country over many, many years.”⁶¹ The author pointed out that “current calls for a ‘decolonized education’, at the core of the black philosophers complaint is the charge that Eurocentric philosophy has been given supremacy over African philosophy.”⁶² These are not matters of philosophical disputation, they are complications of institutional racism deeply embedded in South African society; it is the obstinacy of an affliction which has for very long affected the fabric of South African social life. Another member of the society, Ndumiso Dladla explained that African philosophy has been marginalized. “African philosophy is not simply an exotic option that should be included in a menu of assortment of things,” he said. “We are in Africa. If you study philosophy in Germany, German philosophy is the very basis of philosophical training. But when you come to Africa, we have this anomalous situation where African philosophy is an exotic option which is offered to justify the complaints of some irritating little Oompa Loompas.”⁶³ Events at the meeting were charged with searing emotions. John Lamola expressed shock to, “observe that there is still a dominant inclination among members of the PSSA to protect and nurture their racially defined and class-defined position of privilege as both controllers of the producers of philosophical knowledge and dispensers of economic largesse to the ‘under-privileged’ ”.⁶⁴ Abraham Olivier

⁶⁰ Govan Whittles. Philosophers at war over colonial bias. *Mail & Guardian* (South Africa). February 10th to 16th, 2017. P.6

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

added that; “I cannot with any good conscience stay in a society that black colleagues and friends experience/d as racist to the extent that they see no other way than to leave it ...”.⁶⁵ The key features of the country-wide debate and its evolution continues to unfold.

Many of the charges which are being made can be laid at the door of the academic enterprise in South Africa. They are daily and regular manifestations that are dealt with in wider society in the country. Issues of racism, marginalization and cultural hubris are hardly new. What is important for us to note is that these issues which have hitherto been confined to the non-academic dimensions of social life have entered open discussion in academia with a vengeance. The emerging disputes and discussions should lead to progress. But progress will only come if the challenges to the status quo are formulated and argued in such fashion that there is argumentative substance beyond one-liners and slogans. We must be able to detail out in each discipline and what is offered in our universities for each discipline the colonial vestiges we want to see challenged or abandoned. What items or components of academic discourse specifically constitute unacceptable colonial residues? We should be more exhaustive in our delineations so that our discussions yield more benefits.

As earlier indicated, traditions are created by scholarship which speak in voices and methods within a specific, relatively defined, geographical, thematic and philosophically united history of discourse; which cite and cross-reference within a set of related arguments and which share or dispute a recognized conceptual arsenal. In addition, but as a subsidiary addition, it also invariably speaks to trends and ideas outside the tradition. The first level of scholastic legitimation is sought within the tradition in such a way that it is possible to say that scholarship becomes in most instances local before it becomes universal, national before it becomes international. The problem of African scholarship is that it does not cultivate or intellectually respect its antecedents. It is more *an sich* (on itself) than *fur sich* (for itself). It is more concerned about “international respectability” than its historical pedigree and national baggage. It tends to be intellectually more imitative than original. The result is that it is generally developing as accessories to Western paradigms, depending often on whether the scholars are francophone, anglophone, or lusophone. The social thought of for example Sarbah, Danquah, Biko, Busia, Diop, Molema, Asiwaju or Kenyatta and many more, remain blindspots in the construction of a tradition or traditions of formal African scholarship. I have in the past insisted that much exists by way of recognizable epistemic endeavours of Africans. These efforts however remain essentially scattered and disjointed. In this respect, the challenge we face are for works of critical synthesis, nomothetic approaches which unite and differentiate forms and substances of social thought. We must make our voices heard as a distinct but recognizable part of the universe of human reflection.

In a globalizing world in which we all have become in word and deed near neighbours, in order to achieve a universalism which has equal space for all voices, and not a universalism under restrictive Western hegemony, African academic endeavours must realize and accept the fact that ultimately the centre of gravity of knowledge production about Africa and Africans must be situated in Africa, so that the “otherness” of the subject of scholarship which Western hegemony has imposed on Africa and Africans is eliminated.

I end by emphasizing that, this journey of a thousand miles must start with the first and decisive step, which is the relocation of African languages at the centre of our march forward.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

