

ARCHIE MAFEJE: AN INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY

By

BONGANI NYOKA

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Supervisor: Prof Jimi Adesina

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Declaration

Student Number: 4898-648-8

I, Bongani Nyoka, declare that this thesis, *Archie Mafeje: An Intellectual Biography*, is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bongani Nyoka', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Bongani Nyoka

Date: 27 June 2017

This thesis is being submitted for examination with my approval.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jimi Adesina', with a horizontal line and three dots below the signature.

Supervisor: Prof Jimi Adesina

Date: 27 June 2017

Abstract

This thesis is not a life history of Archie Mafeje. Instead, it is an attempt to grapple with his ideas. This thesis is said to be a ‘biography’ insofar as it is dedicated to a study of one individual and his contribution to knowledge. In trying to understand Mafeje’s ideas and the intellectual and political environment that shaped them, the thesis relies on Lewis R. Gordon’s concept of ‘epistemic possibility’. The thesis comprises four main parts. Part I locates Mafeje and his work within the broader African intellectual and political environment. Part II evaluates his critique of the social sciences. Part III focuses on his work on land and agrarian issues in sub-Saharan Africa. Part IV deals with his work on revolutionary theory and politics. Broadly speaking, this thesis is the first comprehensive engagement with the entire body of Mafeje’s scholarship. Specifically, the unique perspective of this thesis, and therefore its primary contribution to the existing body of knowledge, is that it seeks to overturn the idea that Mafeje was a critic of the discipline of anthropology only. The view that Mafeje was a mere critic of anthropology is in this thesis referred to as the standard view or the conventional view. The thesis argues that Mafeje is best understood as criticising all of the bourgeois social sciences for being Eurocentric and imperialist. This is offered as the alternative view. The thesis argues that the standard view makes a reformist of Mafeje, while the alternative view seeks to present him as the revolutionary scholar that he was. This interpretation lays the foundation for a profounder analysis of Mafeje’s work. In arguing that all the social sciences are Eurocentric and imperialist, he sought to liquidate them and therefore called for ‘non-disciplinarity’. It should be noted that in this regard, the primary focus of this thesis consists in following the unit of his thought and not whether he succeeded or failed in this difficult task.

Keywords: Africa; Alterity; Alternative View; Anthropology; Decolonisation; Epistemology; Methodology; Land & Agrarian Issues; Revolutionary Theory; Standard View

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Where I feel that I am indebted to other authors I have made my acknowledgements in the text. Finally, all remaining errors in this thesis are entirely my own.

List of Acronyms

AAC	All-African Convention
AAPS	African Association of Political Science
AARC	Arab and African Research Centre
ANC	African National Congress
Anti-CAD	Anti-Coloured Affairs Department
APDUSA	African Peoples' Democratic Union of Southern Africa
AUC	American University in Cairo
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CATA	Cape African Teachers' Association
CASAS	Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society
CODESRIA	Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations
IDEP	African Institute for Economic Development and Planning
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISS	Institute of Social Studies
NEUM	Non-European Unity Movement
NRF	National Research Foundation
OUA	Organisation of African Unity
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
SACP	South African Communist Party
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SAPES	Southern African Political Economy Series Trust
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies
SOYA	Society of Young Africans
SWAPO	South West African People's Organisation
UCT	University of Cape Town
UCLA	University of California in Los Angeles

UDF	United Democratic Front
UFH	University of Fort Hare
UMSA	Unity Movement of South Africa
UNCTD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNIDEP	United Nations African Institute for Economic Development and Planning
UNISA	University of South Africa
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
WSU	Walter Sisulu University

Part I: Background and Context

Chapter One

Introduction

1.0 Background and Context

Archie Mafeje's contribution to studies of social, economic and political challenges facing the African continent is widely acknowledged but rarely discussed in any meaningful way. In the South African academy this case is more acute. Although he wrote on a wide variety of topics, South African intellectuals usually put a premium on his life circumstances rather than his scholarship. In the main, his scholarship can be categorised into three broad areas: (i) a critique of epistemological and methodological issues in the social sciences; (ii) the land and agrarian question in sub-Saharan Africa; and (iii) revolutionary theory and politics (including questions of development and democracy). There has been, in the wake of his passing, a great deal of interest in him. His death prompted leftists and liberals alike to contend with his life and work. While such an interest is commendable, certain of the writings on Mafeje leave much to be desired (Bank 2010, Bank with Swana 2013; L Bank 2016; Hendricks 2007a, 2007b, 2008a, 2008b, 2012). This is so because such treatment as he and his writings receives, where it is not merely tentative, is so inaccurate as to mislead. This, in part, serves as a motivation for pursuing a rigorous intellectual biography of Mafeje i.e. a study which seeks to locate his writings within the broader intellectual and political struggles of the African continent.

Generally, this study is located within the current debates (or literature) surrounding the erasures and silences of Africa-centred scholarship in the South African academy (Adesina 2002, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2008a, 2008b, 2010; Hendricks 2006; Mamdani 1992, 1993, 1998a, 1998b, 2008; Lebakeng 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2010; Nyoka 2012a, 2013; Oloyede 2006; Prah 1997a; Seepe 1998, 2004; Sitas 2006; Thaver 2002). Specifically, the study seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and debates around the nature of knowledge and epistemological decolonisation in the social sciences in South Africa. In this thesis, part of what is meant when referring to knowledge and epistemological decolonisation is precisely tapping into the African knowledge archive or African scholarship. In this thesis, knowledge decolonisation is understood in two senses: the narrow sense and the broad sense. The former refers specifically to the question of engaging the works of African scholars. The latter refers to engaging not only the works of African scholars, but also taking seriously what Adesina (2005) calls 'ontological discourses and narratives' of the African people. In other words, generating theoretical insights from the lived experiences of the African people themselves rather than importing theory in order to understand them. Based on these two senses, the thesis

attempts to shift the discussion from merely talking about ‘decolonising’ knowledge to engaging in the actual *process* of decolonising knowledge. This will be done through engaging the works of Archie Mafeje and the African societies he wrote about.

The call to decolonise knowledge has gained a lot of currency in the South African academy. Yet the inability to transcend the call to ‘decolonise’, and getting into the actual business of ‘decolonising’ (however the term is understood), means that the call to ‘decolonise’ has taken on a life of its own. Politically, this is what one might call the ‘politics of suspension’ – talking about decolonisation long enough without engaging in the actual *process* of decolonising so that the term loses its content. The main worry is that talking about ‘decolonising’ without actually doing it renders the process irrelevant and diminishes its importance. Intellectually, it is what one might call ‘epistemic posturing’ – *talking* about the need to engage in knowledge ‘decolonisation’ is not itself the *act* of decolonising knowledge. Nor is talking about knowledge decolonisation in and of itself a break with epistemology. To speak of Eurocentrism and ‘coloniality’ in and outside of the academy is at this point merely to state the obvious. Eurocentrism has long been an object of critical analysis by African scholars. The works of Cheikh Anta Diop on the interpretation of Egyptian civilisation or Kenneth Onwuka Dike on African historiography and several other African scholars point to a longer genealogy of the ‘decolonisation’ discourse and critique of Eurocentrism in the social sciences (see Akiwowo 1980, 1986, 1988, 1991, 1999; Amadiume 1987; Amin 1989; Dike 1956; Diop [1955]1974, [1981]1991; Fadipe [1939]1970; Mafeje 1971; Magubane 1968, 1969, 1971; wa Thiong’o 1972, 1981, 1986). This thesis attempts to leave behind talks about decolonisation. It proceeds to do precisely what is here meant by the concept i.e. tapping into the African knowledge archive. A critique of Eurocentrism or ‘coloniality’ is necessarily inbuilt in the process of tapping into the African knowledge archive and engaging the ontological narratives of the African people.

1.1 Importance and Scope of this Study

In his study of Harold Wolpe, titled *Race, Class and Power*, Steven Friedman points out that the book is a biography just insofar as ‘it focuses on one individual and his contribution to our understanding of our society’ (Friedman 2015: 1-2). Yet in spite of it focusing on one individual, the book is not a life history. It is not an attempt to unearth Wolpe’s experiences, feelings and thoughts but rather his ideas. Friedman’s approach in his book is similar to the one adopted in this study. This study is an intellectual biography of Mafeje insofar as it locates his

work within the broader African intellectual and political environment. Yet although this study is dedicated to Mafeje's work, it is *not a life history* of him. It is, rather, a critical engagement with his work. In J.M. Coetzee's fictionalised auto/biographical novel, titled *Summertime*, Martin says to Coetzee's fictional biographer: 'I repeat, it seems to me strange to be doing the biography of a writer while ignoring his writing' (Coetzee 2009: 218).

Broadly speaking, this thesis is the first comprehensive engagement with the entire body of Mafeje's scholarship. Specifically, the unique perspective of this thesis, and therefore its primary contribution to the existing body of knowledge, is that it seeks to overturn the idea that Mafeje was a critic of anthropology *only*. The view that Mafeje was a mere critic of anthropology is here referred to as the 'standard view'. As an alternative, the thesis argues that Mafeje is best understood as criticising all of the social sciences for being Eurocentric and imperialist. This is offered as the 'alternative view'. It is argued here that the standard view makes a reformist of Mafeje, while the 'alternative view' put forward in this thesis seeks to present him as the revolutionary scholar that he was. This interpretation lays the foundation for a profounder analysis of Mafeje's work and argues that in saying that all the social sciences are Eurocentric and imperialist, he sought to liquidate them by calling for 'non-disciplinarity'. It should be noted that in this regard, the primary focus of this thesis consists in following the unit of his thought and not whether he succeeded or failed in this difficult task.

1.2 Literature on the Question of 'Biography'

Smith (1998) and Merrill and West (2009), respectively, point out that the biographical medium has been on the rise in the social sciences since the early 1990s. Reasons for this increase in popularity vary far and wide. Some reasons are methodologically-driven, while others turn on 'a quasi-political project' (Merrill and West 2009: 38). Suitably understood, the two seemingly divergent reasons for the rise of the biographical medium can be reconciled if one takes seriously the fact that researchers engage in their intellectual pursuits already burdened with their socio-political baggage. This is the sociology of knowledge which takes seriously the fact that ideas are a product of their environment. Swindles (1995) suggests that there is a strong link between biography and autobiography, which means that the two are not distinct 'testimonies of individuals' which are 'separate from their relationship to the social world and its ideological disputes' (Merrill and West 2009: 39).

For Merrill and West (2009: 39), biography is best understood as 'interplay between culture, power and available narrative resources, on the one hand, and individual lives and struggles for voice and story, on the other' (Merrill and West 2009: 39). Invoking Marx, they

argue that ‘we rarely make biographies in conditions of our own choosing’ (Merrill and West 2009: 39). One of the advantages of biographical research is the fact that it places people in context (Chamberlayne, Bornat and Wengraf 2000). Merrill and West emphasise the ‘interplay’ of the macro and micro ‘in change processes’ (Merrill and West 2009: 41). This can be said to be the old dialectic between ‘structure’ and ‘agency’. Correctly, they argue that ‘a dialectic of history and individuality, location and response, is strong in contrast to that of individuality in isolation’ (Merrill and West 2009: 41). Although biographical detail is important, one should caution that since sociological research inclines towards the general, ‘generalisation can be difficult’ when viewed through the lens of the individual. For Andrews (2007), biographical research is such that it transcends disciplinary boundaries. This is necessarily so because people’s lives transcend academic categories and disciplines. Merrill and West seem to suggest that in order the better to understand the individual, one needs first to make sense of the world in which the individual operates. Important to note in this regard is the fact that ‘lives are lived at particular historical moments, shaped by specific social forces and discourses, to which people respond in different and diverse ways’ (Merrill and West 2009: 187).

Scholars of meta-auto/biography have since established that the lines between fiction, autobiography and biography are often blurred (Merrill and West 2009; Roberts 2002; Stanley 1992/3, 1994; Swindles 1995). Others have gone so far as to question the worth of biography (Rassool 2004, 2010a, 2010b). They argue that biography, especially political biography, has tended to be written through or characterised by ‘overly coherent’ and linear narratives (Bank 2010; Hyslop 2010; Rassool 2004, 2010a, 2010b). Rassool refers to this problem as ‘biographical illusion’ wherein biographies are ‘characterised by an ordered sequence of acts, events and works, with individuals characterised by stability, autonomy, self-determination and rational choice’ (2010a: 28). This problem is ingrained in South African political biographies, many of which are targeted at popular audiences and usually published by popular publishing houses. That they often lack ‘nuance’ and ‘complexity’ should not surprise scholars of meta-biography.

In any event, Rassool and others’ concerns do not necessarily depart from those raised by Stanley and others who view biography and autobiography as necessarily compatible – just insofar as authors of biography usually insert themselves in the narrative (Merrill and West 2009; Roberts 2002; Stanley 1992/3, 1994; Swindles 1995). Stanley observes:

Another way of making this point is to say that telling apart fiction, biography and autobiography is sometimes no easy matter, for these forms of writing a life do not exist

each in a hermetically-sealed vacuum. Rather each symbiotically informs both the form and the content of the other, and they all also inform the living of lives. (Stanley 1992/3: 78)

Elsewhere, Stanley observes:

Unlike oral history, auto/biography has no common method, nor a preferred form of data, nor is it programmatically based in a methodological sense, and nor does it 'belong' to one discipline. Its common focus lies in the notion of auto/biography as an epistemologically-oriented concern with the political ramifications of the shifting boundaries between self and other, past and present, writing and reading, fact and fiction, and with an analytic attention to these within the oral, visual and written texts that are 'biographies' and 'autobiographies' in the widest senses of these terms. The writer or author and the researcher are certainly not treated as transparent or 'dead', but very much as agents actively at work in textual political production. Auto/biography engages analytically with the epistemological problematics. (Stanley 1994: 89)

Stanley's concerns are shared by Swindles (1995) and Merrill and West (2009). No attempt will be made in this study to reopen or revisit these issues. This is so because this study is neither a thesis in meta-biography nor is it a biography in the medium of life history. For Sarimana (2011: 27), 'biographical research attempts to reconcile the object and the subjective, the absolute and the relative, the timeless and the historical through reconstruction whilst trying to avoid over-simplifying complex political, social, moral, theological or psychological issues'. Through studying the individual, biography can be useful in understanding such complex socio-political phenomena as nationalism, ethnicity, identity formation, race and/or generational studies (Cole and Knowles 2001; Elms 1994; Gronn 1993; Kaplan 1998). One of its strengths is the archaeological and genealogical nature which not only helps the reader understand the subject of biography but also the historical and socio-political environment in which the subject lives or lived (McAdams 1988, 1994, 2006; McAdams and Ochberg 1988; Roberts 2002; Simonton 1994). While this may be true, it should be noted that biographies are never complete, exhaustive or entirely objective (Clifford 1962). Although the biographer attempts to present a balanced and 'accurate' portrayal of his/her subject, biography is such that it cannot be a finished product (Maurois 1929). The biographer can only aspire to such.

For Roberts (2002), biographical studies (suitably understood) have the sole purpose of understanding or bringing to life the context and circumstances of an individual. Chiefly,

biographies attempt to do so from the point of view of the subject; by examining their lived experiences and the environment which shaped them. What makes the biographical method appealing to many is its ability to bring about resonance or sense of identification between the reader and its subject (McAdams 2006). While the foregoing statement may be true, biographies tend to ‘focus on the distinct and unique nature of the individual’ (Sarimana 2011: 26). This is primarily so because ‘no two lives are identical and there are numerous ways to reveal or express lived experience...’ (Sarimana 2011: 26). Echoing Stanley (1994), Sarimana (2012: 26) argues that, in the process of biographical research, ‘different interpretations are possible and even desirable and the researcher plays an emphatic, collaborative but reflexive role instead of the traditional objective, detached enquirer, interpreter and presenter of the finished product.’

The abovementioned point is quite crucial and serves as a warning against the fallacies of positivism and ‘value-free’ scholarship – something which has long been criticised by Mafeje (Mafeje 1976a, 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 2001a). It should be mentioned also that biographical research is not without its own problems. For example, ‘the interview relationships between subjects and researchers, the construction and editing of the story, the question of memory and how it is tainted by the passage of time as well as the intergenerational transmission of stories, hidden ideologies in narratives, audience and the researchers’ own biography. There are popular ideological conceptions of lives and life events and how identities are formed and grounded in spatial organisational and other structures’ (Sarimana 2011: 33).

Currently, the dominant mode of biography in South African biographical writing is psychobiography. ‘Psychobiography is a synthesis of psychological approaches and biographical data/sources of personal information’ (Sarimana 2011: 47). This mode of writing seeks to understand the lives of its subjects through such theories as are found in psychology and psychoanalysis (McAdams 2006). The writings of Levinson *et al* (1978) and Levinson (1996) are prototypical in this regard. Many of the proponents of psychobiography argue, rather tritely, that people are multifaceted and adopt their behaviour to various situations in different stages of lives (Carlson 1988; Cole and Knowles 2001; Elms 1994; Gronn 1993; Kaplan 1998; Kets de Vries 1990; Levinson *et al* 1978, Levinson 1996; McAdams 1988, 1994, 2006; McAdams and Ochberg 1988). Psychobiography thus tends to lean on personality, traits and personal development – all of which are told through the prism of psychological theories. The problem with such an approach lies in its tendency to put a strong emphasis on ‘human agency’. The voluntarist nature of psychobiography tends to erect dichotomies which present the reader with either heroic figures or villainous ones. This is usually done at the expense of wider socio-

political issues or structural constraints. Such psychoanalytic and cognitive-developmental approaches have the tendencies to assume that ‘even under the most oppressive circumstances, human agency is a strong force to be reckoned with. Even when situations appear hopeless, people make choices’ (Roberts 2002: 474). ‘Human agency’, understood in collective or societal terms, can indeed be ‘a force to be reckoned with’. But it is quite problematic to assume that individuals act freely without being hindered by the very environment that informs their choices. It is probably for these individualistic and voluntarist assumptions that psychobiography is so popular in South African biographical writing (see for example Bareira 2001; Claasen 2007; Fouche 1999; Green 2006; Jacobs 2005; Kotton 2002; Stroud 2004; Vorster 2003). Even leading political figures are/were not always at the centre of events or free to do as they please at every point in their lives.

While psycho-biographical studies cut across racial lines, where black people are the objects of biography, the said practice tends to take on insidious forms (Gordon 1998; Roberts 2011). Roberts speaks pejoratively of ‘mind-gazing’ or ‘psychobiography’ while Gordon speaks of the ‘fallacy of essentialised experience’. The South African academy is largely untransformed and dominated by white academics. Not only that, it shares cultural affinities with the West. Adesina argues that this phenomenon issues in ‘ontological disconnect’ between white researchers and their objects of enquiry (see Nyoka 2013). Over and above that, Mafeje’s contribution has not only been overlooked but fundamentally erased. In one of his essays, ‘The Problem of Biography in the Study of the Thought of Black Intellectuals’ (1998), Lewis Gordon argues that black authors are seldom engaged at the level of ideas. Typically, what one finds is constant referral to their biographical experiences. The cardinal rule of studying their texts *qua* texts, independently of what the authors may have experienced in their lives, usually does not apply. ‘This rule... has been violated in peculiar ways when it comes to the work of black writers. For them, a different rule, an insidious rule, continues to reign: the fallacy of essentialised experience’ (Gordon 1998: 47). Following Du Bois, Gordon argues that this tendency has led to the unfortunate practice of studying black people not as a people who face problems in their lives but rather as problems in and of themselves. This is so to the point that black people’s experiences are often collapsed into forms of essentialism.

In locking black people to these essentialised biographical narratives, white writers, Gordon argues, engage in ‘epistemic closure’. That is, knowledge of their being black *qua* black forecloses knowledge claims which are to be found in the works of black authors. In this regard, black authors are locked outside of history and thus exist neither as universal nor particular beings (Gordon 1998). Understood dialectically, this practice has for black authors

led to the situation where they usually produce works which are largely dominated by the ‘autobiographical medium’. This is not surprising since superiority complex feeds off inferiority complex. Curiously, however, while the said biographical writings lead to epistemic closures, the converse is true of autobiographical writings in that they carry an ‘epistemic possibility’. Gordon (1998: 48) observes: ‘The black autobiography announced a special form of biography, a text that was read for insight into blackness, which meant that paradoxically some of the problems of epistemic closure continued through an engagement that admitted epistemic possibility. The interest in black autobiography carried expectation and curiosity.’ These issues have, as Gordon points out, played themselves out for quite some time. This is not to suggest, however, that all studies of black intellectuals are through the medium of biography or life history. Nevertheless, Gordon’s ideas are important in helping us understand or appreciate how Mafeje, the subject of this study, has thus far been written about in South Africa. As mentioned earlier on, not only has Mafeje largely been written about biographically, he has also been presented in terms so voluntarist and abstracted that little attention has been given to the wider intellectual and political environment which shaped him. Yet Mafeje took seriously the socio-political dimensions of knowledge production and epistemology, hence his notion of ‘authentic interlocutors’ (i.e. taking your objects of enquiry on their own terms) which serves as a critique of positivism and ‘value-free’ scholarship.

In the South African context, readers have witnessed the epistemic closure in biographical writings on Archie Mafeje (Bank 2010, Bank with Swana 2013; Hendricks 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2012; Ntsebeza 2008). Though acknowledged as a world-renowned scholar, South African academics have tended to shy away from engaging Mafeje’s writings but focus, instead, on his life ‘experiences’. The upshot of these writings comes close to suggesting that Mafeje was not known for what he wrote but for what happened in his life. Following Gordon’s reference to black intellectuals in the diaspora, one might argue that Mafeje and his ‘ideas [are] often absent and, instead, his... biography [becomes] text for political interpretation. The focus [is] on what Douglas, Anna Julia Cooper, Du Bois or Marcus Garvey *did*, not what they *argued*’ (Gordon 1998: 52, emphasis in original). Gordon continues:

The biographical is almost mandatory fare in the order of blackness. The implication – insidious, patronising, and yet so familiar and presumed – has achieved the force of an axiom: white intellectuals provide theory; black intellectuals provide experience. The status of experience is such, however, that it becomes temporally bound, entrapped in historical specificity. Fanon becomes a biographical text because his blackness is such

that few of his critics can imagine otherwise. In spite of the persistence of Fanon's ideas – his effect on generations from the 1950s through to the present – in spite of the growing realisation of the complexity of his thought, more continues to be written about *Fanon* than his ideas. (Gordon 1998: 54, emphasis in original)

The problem of white intellectuals providing theory (the West) and black intellectuals (chiefly from the Global South) providing experience, and the need for alternative discourses, particularly in Sociology, is currently the subject of discussion among writers in Africa and the Global South generally (Adesina 2002, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2008a, 2008b, 2010; Alatas F.S. 2000, 2001, 2003, 2012a, 2012b; Alatas F.S. and Sinha 2001; Alatas H.S 2000; Buhlungu 2006a, 2006b; Hendricks 2006; Lebakeng 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2010; Mamdani 1992, 1993, 1998a, 1998b, 2008; Nyoka 2013; Seepe 1998, 2004; Thaver 2002). One of the major problems with the sociology in (South) Africa, and the Global South, is that it is characterised by West-centred theories and conceptual frameworks. To the extent that these theories explain these societies, they only succeed in presenting them from the perspective of western scholars. This problem has been referred to as 'academic dependency'.

This problem has to be understood globally in the context of 'growing antagonisms and gulf between Africans and Africanists in the study of Africa [and the Global South]' (Zezeza: 1997: i) generally, and the silencing and erasure of black writers specifically. Rabaka has, in the American context, written about the erasure of the writings of black thinkers such as Du Bois, CLR James, Cabral etc. (see Rabaka 2010a, 2010b, 2014). About American Sociology, Rabaka (2010a: 2) argues: 'To say that sociology has a long and shameful history of excluding women and non-whites' (which, of course, includes non-white women's) contributions from its developmental and intellectual history is, quite simply, to say nothing that has not already been repeatedly said time and time again...' Therefore, one has to 'interrogate *what was included* versus *what was excluded* in the first history or, rather, the first series of histories of the phenomenon in question' (Rabaka 2010a: 2, emphasis in original). For Zezeza (1997), this widening chasm has 'discursive practices' as well as 'political processes'. Writing about the silencing of the works of Bernard Magubane in the South African academy, Adesina had this to say:

The deafening silence within the social science establishment to such a scholar might be understandable but undermines the post-Apartheid intellectual project in a triple sense. First, silence of this kind is censorship. It is deployment of erasure as an

intellectual strategy. Immanently, it degrades the intellectual climate of the country. Second, it sustains Eurocentric scholarship and denies young generations of South Africans being trained in the country's higher education sector alternative narratives of history, politics, and society. Third, it functions to deny the new generation of South Africans a sense of their intellectual heritage and patrimony. It is in this sense that such strategies of denial and silencing represent a fundamental violation of academic freedom – the free exchange of ideas. Colonialism functions not merely as physical violence but more fundamentally as violence of memory. (Adesina 2013: 3)

It has been pointed out, for example, by various authors that the writings of black sociologists hardly feature in the reading material in many departments of sociology in South Africa (Adesina 2005, 2006a; Jubber 2006; Nyoka 2012a, 2013). Alatas (2012a) argues that standard sociology textbooks, when referring to thinkers of the 19th century, make no reference to sociologists outside of Europe. The upshot is that the history of sociology is equated with the history of western modernity. This is what Alatas calls the 'New Orientalism' (Alatas 2012a). In doing so, he departs from the standard Edward Said's notion of Orientalism. Alatas transcends the Orient/Occident dichotomy and points out that academics not only write pejoratively about the Orient, but also marginalise writings and writers from the Global South. The Global South, Alatas (2012a) argues, is not seen as a source of ideas/theory – but a place of data gathering.

Consequently, this marginalisation leads to 'Hidden Eurocentrism' (Alatas 2012b): (i) the desire to universalise categories which come from Europe and North America to the rest of the world; and (ii) internalisation, on the part of the Global South scholars, of ideas which are superimposed on them by an academic orthodoxy – something which leads to lack of 'self-understanding'. The critical issue, therefore, is for the Global South sociologists to put scholarship outside of the West on a par with western scholarship – through research and teaching. This is what Alatas (2012a) calls a 'sociological fusion' e.g. just as we borrow and domesticate art, cuisine, music etc. we can do the same with ideas. This is clearly no invitation to parochialism. It is, Alatas argues, one of the ways of transcending 'academic dependency' or the intellectual 'division of labour' between the North and the Global South.

This problem, it has been argued, has two interrelated features. These are what Mafeje terms, respectively, 'negations' and, following Hountondji, 'extraverted discourses' or 'extraversion' for short. In addition, while western scholars engage in meta-theoretical and theoretical research, African scholars tend to engage in empirical research. This in turn entails

global intellectual division of labour in the social sciences. African social scientists, so it is argued, export empirical data to the North and then simply import theories to the continent without due regard to whether such theories fit or not. Conversely, western scholars tend to conduct studies both of their own countries and of other countries while the Global South scholars tend to limit their studies to their countries. Yet in spite of being confined to their locales, the Global South scholars have no problem importing theories instead of generating their own. This notwithstanding, Mafeje's (1976a, 1991a, 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 2001a) and Magubane's (1968, 1969, 1971, 2000) attempt, along with Adesina and others, is to build a case for a 'home-grown' approach to sociology in South Africa. Correctly, they do so in an attempt to do away with the practice of importing theories from the North and using them uncritically to analyse local data and conditions. The practice of academic dependency, it has been argued, has the unintended consequence of producing graduates who have no critical understanding of their own societies (Adesina 2005). Further, as Mamdani (1998a) points out, it encourages the idea that Africa has no intellectuals or that it has produced no scholarly work worth reading.

It can be seen from the foregoing that there are parallels to be drawn from the biographical ways in which white writers write about black intellectuals, and the division of labour about which the Global South sociologists speak with regards to their field of study. The call is not for inclusion and recognition by the West as such. It is, rather, a call for taking the local seriously enough to see it as a source of theory/knowledge. Puzzled by the said lingering biographical accounts of black intellectuals, Gordon (1998, 2000) proceeds to ask why it is that, for example, theorists do not take Fanon at the level ideas as they do theorists like Michel Foucault. Why it is that Foucault could use and re-use Nietzsche without being Nietzschean and out of date, yet Fanon is continuously locked in biography and dismissed as a product of the 1950s and influence in the 1960s? Similar questions may be as to why Mafeje continues to be viewed as a product of the 1968 'Mafeje Affair' (see Hendricks 2007a, 2007b, 2008a)?

Gordon should not be taken to mean that there is no place for biographical writing where black people are concerned. On the contrary, his question turns on why this seems to be the dominant mode of writing where black thinkers are concerned. Gordon's insights are, on the whole, well taken and appreciated. They do, however, merit further interpretation. At least two observations ought to be made: (i) The question he asks as to why black authors are never taken on their own terms, in ways that, for example, European thinkers are, has the unintended and unfortunate consequence of being a cry for incorporation and recognition. That is to say, it does not bode well with his otherwise sophisticated structural reading of black suffering and

oppression. It would seem peculiar that one would expect that demands for black intellectuals be met while black people generally operate, structurally, in an environment which Gordon himself describes as 'anti-black'.

Doubtless this argument seems unfair to Gordon whose pioneering work challenges resilient racism which issues in 'epistemic deafness'. Not only that, much like the argument raised in this study, Gordon has been at pains to show how these problems serve only to ignore the works of black scholars – in Africa and in the Diaspora. However, to object to this by pointing out that Gordon's (1998; 2000) argument does not have the abovementioned slippage i.e. 'cry for recognition', because he 'is a leading philosopher of Existential Africana Philosophy' is not only to state the obvious point about his stature, but really to commit the logical fallacy of 'appeal to authority'. The critique advanced here against Gordon's (1998) piece on 'biography', which he reproduces in his collection of essays, *Existential Africana* (2000), is akin to his own critique of the 'problem of philosophical anthropology' or 'imperial significance of standards' in which he argues: 'Simply demonstrating that one group is as human as another has the consequence of making one group the standard of another. In effect, one group seeks justification while the other is self-justified' (Gordon 2011: 100). A simple yet far-reaching slippage such as the following is a case in point: 'the dualism of black experience and white theory has to be abandoned here for the recognition that black reflections also are theoretical and informative of the human condition' (Gordon 1998: 59).

Again, it seems counter-intuitive for Gordon to expect that such demands be met when he himself acknowledges that the world is fundamentally 'anti-black'. Indeed, in the concluding section of the essay, which he (Gordon 1998: 60-61; 2000) published in at least two outlets, Gordon goes on at some length to make a plea for Africana Philosophy which he says just as European Philosophy has progenitors in the form of philosophers like Kant, Hume, Rousseau etc. which is later taken up by philosophers like Rawls, Habermas etc. so too Africana philosophers have progenitors in the form of Anna Julia Cooper, Du Bois etc. On its own, such an argument is valid and innocent enough. But it does have the unintended effect of saying 'we are just as good'. In this regard, it would seem that Gordon hoists his argument with its own petard. The point of the argument advanced here works in similar ways to what Adesina (2006a) calls 'pursuing sociology beyond despair' free of 'status anxiety' or worrying about what the academic orthodoxy thinks of black people.

The contributions of Du Bois, Mafeje, and Magubane etc. are well-known, the point is to take them up and build on them because to expect conservative intellectuals to take black scholarship seriously is not only to ignore the wider structural issues such as racism, but, as

Mafeje once said, to expect them to be ‘something other than what they [are]’ (Mafeje 1976a: 309). In other words, the onus is on black intellectuals to take their progenitors seriously as theorists in their own right. (ii) The second issue with Gordon’s critique of biography relates to the latent assumption of positivism which permeates his narrative. There is a sense in which Gordon assumes that texts are external or independent of their authors’ socio-political experiences. This assumption, made by Gordon, of ‘textual independence’ becomes an ‘epistemic closure’ all of its own, just insofar as it inadvertently assumes that one’s lived experiences have no bearing on their thoughts. This is a peculiar slippage on Gordon’s part, something which may come across, even in highlighting it, as uncharitable to him given the fact that his work is intrinsically about how lived experiences of black people influence their thinking.

But as argued above, Gordon’s work on auto/biography merits further interpretation. As such, the point is to transcend or expand his understanding of auto/biography and see it not in the narrow sense of a ‘detailed description of someone’s life’ – but rather, as a reckoning not only with one’s personal experiences but with society more broadly. That is to say, biographical writing goes beyond writings on the persons of Du Bois, Mafeje or Magubane but their socio-political environments. Thus to speak of an ‘intellectual biography’ of Mafeje is not simply to speak of *his* lived experiences but also to reckon with his environment. Gordon (1998: 51, emphasis in original), for example, argues: ‘My aim is not to discount autobiography nor biography in the study of black intellectuals or black intellectual production. What I would like to raise here is the question of *relevance*.’ In the light of the argument that the notion of auto/biography should be expanded, the slippage in the foregoing quote consists in the implicit assumption that there are instances where ‘biography’ (read: ontological narratives) is irrelevant. Yet, Mafeje argues, ‘there are no texts without context’. Such a Mafejean view ‘is a refutation of any suppositions about a “value-free”, neutral positivist social science... Far from this being the case, one’s intellectual work becomes part of current social struggles’ (Mafeje 2001a: 64).

It is in taking into account the said ‘social struggles’ that this work wishes to engage Mafeje’s work – hence an intellectual biography. In this regard, it invokes Gordon’s notion of auto/biography as an ‘epistemic possibility’. This notion is in any case quite consistent with the sociology of knowledge. It consists in taking seriously Adesina’s maxim that ‘scholarship is biographical’ i.e. our ontological narratives weigh heavily on our intellectual and epistemological pursuits. This takes cognisance of the view that intellectual and epistemological pursuits are deeply embedded in socio-political milieus. For example, in the

case of Mafeje, the subject of this study, it seems impossible to write about him without making mention of the environment which shaped his ideas. Mkandawire (1995: 75) argues that ‘since independence there have been at least three generations of indigenous researchers in Africa. Each has witnessed changes in their countries’ economic fortunes and political trajectories, as well as cultural and societal transformation. All of these factors have impinged on the nature of their academic careers’. Mafeje is no exception. The nature or character of his work, while always in search of an ‘epistemological break’, is a reckoning with the ‘economic fortunes and political trajectories’ about which Mkandawire speaks. Mafeje, along with Mkandawire himself, belonged to the ‘first generation’ of African scholars, many of whom ‘went to some of the best universities in North America and Europe’ (Mkandawire 1995: 75). A significant number of these scholars returned to their countries usually after completing their post-graduate studies. These scholars ‘were to provide the first set of indigenous scholars in the “indigenisation” of African universities’ (Mkandawire 1995: 75). Adesina (2008c) writes about the influence which some of these scholars had, through their sociological writings, on their succeeding generations. It is not necessary at this point to mention the nature and composition of the other generations. Suffice it to say, as Mkandawire (1995: 81) does, that ‘academic “generations” are not... neatly separated into such discrete groups as I have suggested here.’

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Most tributes to, and appreciations of, Mafeje have largely been about him as a person rather than his writings. Those who have attempted seriously to grapple with his work include Samir Amin (2008), Jimi Adesina (2008a, 2008b), John Sharp (2008), Helmi Sharawy (2008), Dani Nabudere (2011), Nyoka (2012b), and Lungisile Ntsebeza (2016). On the other hand, Andrew Bank and Fred Hendricks have, each independently, attempted to explore the link between Mafeje’s life (personality) and his work (see Bank 2010; Hendricks 2007a, 2007b, 2008a, 2008b, 2012). The problem is that both Bank’s and Hendricks’ works seem too tentative to give insight into the professed nexus between Mafeje’s life (personality) and his writings. Moreover:

- There seems to be a general paucity of scholarly/intellectual biographies of African intellectuals by African researchers;
- There seems to be lack of depth and complexity in current writings on Mafeje’s life and work;

- There appears to be an attempt to focus solely on the politics of his life experiences rather than a scholarly engagement with both his environment and work;
- Some writings on Mafeje tend to reduce him to Monica Wilson's Understudy rather than a scholar in his own right (see Bank 2010, Bank with Swana 2013); and
- Others tend to psychoanalyse rather than place Mafeje in his wider socio-political context (see Hendricks 2007a, 2007b, 2008a, 2012; Sall 2008)

The undue focus on Mafeje's personality is borne out of what Mathebe (2001: vii) calls, in his book on Mbeki, 'the behaviourist model' 'which focus on the personality of the subject'. For example, Hendricks (2007a, 2007b, 2008a, 2012) tends to present a somewhat voluntarist account of Mafeje which is abstracted from the African community of scholars specifically, and African socio-political struggles generally. For Mathebe (2001: viii), 'This approach has deep roots in journalism. Journalists examine how the psychological properties of people or their states of consciousness influence the way they act in a particular situation. The basic assumption underlying this model is that individual actors have the capacity to act independently of their institutional constraints'.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

In the main, this study seeks to:

- Attempt to bring to life the story of Archie Mafeje both as a man and an intellectual;
- Investigate the significance of his contribution to the social sciences; and
- Investigate the nexus between his socio-political environment and his writings.

1.5 Research Questions

In furthering the objectives of the study, the research questions are as follows:

- To what extent did Mafeje's socio-political environment shape his writings?
- What is the significance/impact of his writings in the three broad areas of his scholarship? (i.e. (a) a critique of epistemological and methodological issues in the social sciences; (b) the land and agrarian question in sub-Saharan Africa; and (c) revolutionary theory and politics)
- How useful are current writings on Mafeje's life and work?

1.6 A Note on Method

As noted above, Stanley argues that: ‘unlike oral history, auto/biography has no common method, nor a preferred form of data, nor is it programmatically based in a methodological sense, and nor does it “belong” to one discipline.’ (Stanley 1994: 89). This is echoed by Merrill and West (2009). Yet the present study falls within the discipline of sociology not interdisciplinarity. As such for the purposes of this study, the interpretive paradigm was deemed suitable. The advantage of the interpretive paradigm is that it ‘draws on numerous definitions, concepts, methods and grand narratives or theories to explain social phenomena and human behaviour’ (Sarimana 2011: 28). Though this is true, biographical research draws from several other paradigms such as social-constructionism, post-modernism and the narrative paradigm – across the social and human sciences. It should be noted that because of its orientation or inclination towards the individual, biographical research is often criticised for lack of statistical sampling and lack representativeness, generalisability and comparability (Roberts 2002). Some critics worry about ethical issues relating to truth telling, reliability, evidence and fabrication (Barber 2006). One of the biggest criticisms also centres on the question of memory and remembrance on the part of interviewees or the subject (if s/he is still alive) (Paris 2001; Robert 2002). In spite of its problems, the biographical method enables us the better to understand the lives of individuals/subjects, their environment and milieus. Further, the interpretive paradigm, *apropos* biographical research, has the potential to be contaminated by the biases of the researcher something which may impact negatively on the value of the study. But it should be noted that researchers cannot, as positivists assume, be proverbial flies on the wall.

The study adopted a qualitative approach. The study proceeded as follows: First, the author carried out archival research and collection of documentary material by Mafeje and about him. This material was subjected to critical content analysis. As Zhang and Wludemuth: (nd, 1) argued, ‘qualitative content analysis goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts to examine meanings, themes and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text. It allows researchers to understand social reality in a subjective but scientific manner’. Specifically, this author spent time at the Archives & Manuscripts Department and Administrative Archives at the University of Cape Town. Formally, this was done for a period of a month for the purposes of this thesis. This was to aid the author to fill gaps on missing information. This is so because, although the author formally began his doctoral programme in September of 2014, he has been a frequent visitor at the said archives to collect material relating to Mafeje as far back as 2011. The author also made contact with the Senegal-based Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa

(CODESRIA) to solicit inaccessible papers by Mafeje which he had published with CODESRIA's publication outlets over the years. The author also visited the Africana & Special Collections of the Sasol Library, at the Walter Sisulu University (Mthatha Campus), where Mafeje donated his personal library. Finally, the author also visited the Western Cape Archives & Records Service.

Second, the author conducted in-depth interviews with individuals who knew Mafeje either personally and/or professionally – family members, friends, his former students, and colleagues. These interviews were conducted in Pretoria, Johannesburg, Cape Town and Cairo, Egypt. This meant purposive sampling of 'strategic informants' or 'respondents'. The criteria was that respondents needed to have been Mafeje's family members or have worked with him in some capacity or another in order to have sufficient professional knowledge about him. The information gathered from the archives and the respondents was used based on its relevance to this study – as various scholars of biography attest (Cole and Knowles 2001; Elms 1994; Gronn 1993; Kaplan 1998). Purposive sampling was deemed relevant because it allowed this author, as the literature on research methods suggests, to 'select cases with a specific purpose in mind' (Neuman 2000: 198). On the basis of the abovementioned criteria, purposive sampling was deemed suitable because it enabled the author to select a 'particular type of individuals for in-depth investigation' (Neuman 2000: 198). Initial contact with respondents was made via email and telephone. From then on, the author used 'snowball sampling' when initial respondents referred the author to other respondents who had relevant information about Mafeje.

Third, the author also relied on Mafeje's curriculum vitae (CV). This proved invaluable when conducting interviews with the respondents. This is so because Mafeje's CV details his employment history, research interests and areas of specialisation, the courses he taught, his extracurricular activities, as well as his publication record. This author has had a sustained interest in Mafeje's life and work as far back as 2006. As such, he is in possession of a sizable collection of his publications (as they are listed on his CV). Although this study is not necessarily about Mafeje's private life or his life history, it should be noted that there are ethical issues to consider when carrying out biographical research. In the archives and in in-depth interviews, one encountered personal information which require a good deal of integrity – all the more so when dealing with a deceased person. This is possibly the major limitation of this study because the fact that Mafeje is no longer alive, meant that the author could not interview him and get a deeper insight into his ideas. If Mafeje were alive, the author would also avoid what Lewis Gordon calls 'the fallacy of intentionality' i.e. confusing 'the intentions of an author with the object of his or her production' (Gordon 1998: 47). For all we know, 'the author

has a problem of interpretation similar to that of the reader or other interpreter' (Gordon 1998: 47).

1.7 Ethics Statement

Fieldwork for this study was conducted following approval from the Department of Sociology Research Ethics Review Committee in the University of South Africa. For full approval, application for ethical clearance was reviewed in line with Unisa Policy on research ethics. The author adhered to the following ethical rules: (i) Participation in this study was voluntary, with no form of coercion used against participants; (ii) Participants reserved the right to withdraw from the study at any stage and for whatever reason; (iii) The author pledged to meet all the other legal and ethical requirements of the University of South Africa and adhered to other applicable national legislation; and (v) Also undertook to submit this study and make it available to the thesis repository of the University of South Africa.

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis comprises four main parts, each of which contains various chapters. The first section of the thesis contextualises Mafeje's work by discussing his intellectual and political environment. The second section focuses on his critique of the social sciences. The third section explores his work on land and agrarian issues in sub-Saharan Africa. The fourth section discusses his work on revolutionary theory and politics (under which is included his work on development and democracy). The present chapter constitutes chapter one. The rest of the chapters are as follows:

Chapter Two: This chapter is not meant to be a life history of Archie Mafeje. Instead, it is an attempt to locate him within his intellectual and political environment in order to have a better understanding of his writings. In this regard, the chapter should be understood as an attempt to contextualise his work. Every attempt will be made not to present a linear narrative. Insofar as this chapter attempts to understand Mafeje's intellectual and political environment, it relies mainly on archival resources and in-depth interviews with Mafeje's family, friends and former colleagues. In this regard, lengthy quotations are used in order to present a fair and accurate account of the issues involved. The first part of the chapter deals with Mafeje's background and early political and intellectual development. The second part deals with his intellectual training at the University of Cape Town, his political interaction within the (Non-European) Unity Movement and his time at the University of Cambridge. The third part of the

chapter deals with his intellectual and political environment in exile and his return to South Africa.

Chapter Three: To a great extent this chapter focuses on Mafeje's critique of the concept of 'tribalism' and its counterpart, 'ethnicity'. This is so for two at least two reasons: First, his essay on tribalism seems to be the one that effectively establishes a clear radical break with Mafeje's early liberal functionalism, although it constitutes a thematic critique of anthropological categories rather than a programmatic critique of the social sciences. Second, Mafeje's handling of the concept tribe led to misinterpretation, on the part of his readers, which are here clarified. Mafeje does not reject the entity or the institution of tribe as having been non-existent, but rather rejects it for being anachronistic. What he rejects, fundamentally, is the ideology of tribalism. Over and above that, this chapter is intended to demonstrate Mafeje's thematic critique of anthropological categories, while the next two chapters are intended to demonstrate his programmatic critique of the social sciences proper.

Chapter Four: This chapter is concerned to dispel the standard view or the conventional view that Mafeje critique of the social sciences was limited to a critique of anthropology only. The chapter seeks to demonstrate that such a view is a partial reading of Mafeje's work in that the latter was quite clear that all the social sciences are Eurocentric and imperialist. Importantly, the chapter attempts to show that the claim that Mafeje's critique centred on anthropology only, turns Mafeje into a reformist rather than the revolutionary scholar he was. Equally, the object of this chapter is to emphasise the fact that his critique of the social sciences is best understood as 'programmatic' rather than his 'thematic' critique of anthropological categories such as the ideology of tribalism etc. as discussed in chapter three. This chapter proceeds as follows: (i) it underlines Mafeje's serious treatment of the sociology of knowledge and his totalising critique of social change; (ii) it offers his critique of positivism and functionalism in anthropology; (iii) it re-centres his notions of idiographic versus nomothetic enquiry in the social sciences; and (iv) it underlines his search for an epistemological break and the critique of the lingering problem of alterity in anthropology.

Chapter Five: Together with chapter four, this chapter can be considered part of Mafeje's programmatic critique of the social sciences. Significantly, however, this chapter is meant to show how Mafeje sought not only to break with epistemology but also to demonstrate what he meant when he spoke of non-disciplinarity and the search thereof. The approach adopted in this chapter is to discuss in detail his *magnum opus*, *The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations*. This book is not only Mafeje's epistemological and methodological statement on what he meant when he spoke of an epistemological break and

non-disciplinarity, but also his attempt to make good on his claims. The chapter can be summarised as follows: it outlines the matrix of the problem and Mafeje's theoretical and conceptual clarifications. Second, it gives an overview of the ethnography and social formations of the interlacustrine. Third, it gives an account of the mode of political and economic character of the interlacustrine kingdoms. Fourth, it offers a reconsideration of the mode of production in Africa. Lastly, it underlines the fact that Mafeje does not offer a negative critique of the social sciences but that in the wake of his deconstruction of the social sciences, he sought to reconstruct something – hence non-disciplinarity.

Chapter Six: This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section sets the scene by discussing the intellectual matrix of the problem of land and agriculture on the African continent. The second section uses the case of Buganda in Uganda in order to get a deeper understanding of the evolution of the agrarian revolution and the land question in Africa. The third section is concerned to understand the agricultural crisis in African agriculture and its causes. The fourth section discusses the dynamics of African land tenure systems. Finally, the remainder of this chapter discusses government responses to the agrarian question.

Chapter Seven: This chapter is the second and final offering in the thesis's exploration of Mafeje's contribution to the land and agrarian question in Africa. The chapter discusses the following issues: (i) Mafeje's understanding of the African small producers or peasants and their role and responses in sub-Saharan Africa; (ii) it deals with the agrarian question, food production and food security issues in Africa; (iii) prospects for agrarian reform; and (iv) Mafeje's critique of the liberal notion of poverty alleviation and his emphasis on poverty eradication instead. The issues raised in this chapter and chapter six, can be said to be diagnostic. It is the object of the following chapters of the thesis to discuss Mafeje's prognosis via his work on revolutionary theory, development theory and democracy.

Chapter Eight: This chapter examines Mafeje's (i) struggle for 'authenticity' in social scientific writings, (ii) the role and responsibility of the African intellectual, (iii) the question of Africanity, and (iv) prospects and projections for the indigenisation of political and intellectual discourse. This chapter prefaces the following chapters on Mafeje's revolutionary theory and politics.

Chapter Nine: This chapter is part one of two chapters on revolutionary theory. The first part of this chapter is devoted to issues in the post-independence period such as neo-colonialism and underdevelopment. The second part of the chapter is concerned to understand the notion of state capitalism in the post-independence period. The remainder of the chapter gives a careful exposition of Mafeje's critique of the notion of dual economy. The following

chapter discusses part two of Mafeje's contribution to revolutionary theory and politics with specific reference to South Africa and Southern Africa.

Chapter Ten: This chapter is the second of two chapters on revolutionary theory and politics. It focuses on Mafeje's contribution to revolutionary theory and politics, such as it relates to the context of South Africa and Southern Africa. Although in 1978 he published a paper on the Soweto uprising, much of his work on South African politics appeared in the mid-1980s up to the late 1990s. This chapter comprises two main parts: The chapter gives a theoretical overview of South African politics and conceptual issues in the struggle for black liberation.

Chapter Eleven: Of Mafeje's writings, the question of development and social/new democracy is possibly the least developed. Although he wrote about development theory as early as the 1970s, the bulk of his work on development and social/new democracy appears mainly in the 1990s and the early 2000s. What is noteworthy in this aspect of his work is his restless engagement with the concepts of social democracy and new democracy. This chapter comprises two main parts: The first part focuses on the purported link between ideology and development. The second section discusses the question of social/new democracy and the African discourse.

Chapter Twelve: The concluding chapter comprises three main parts: The first section of the concluding chapter provides a detailed summary of each chapter of the thesis. The second section of the chapter locates Mafeje and his work within the African intellectual and scholarly community. The third and final section provides a detailed discussion of the scope and importance of this thesis and therefore its contribution to the existing body of literature or knowledge.

1.9 Summary

The main purpose of this introductory chapter was to furnish the reader with the general introduction to the thesis. In doing so, the chapter proceeded in this order: the first section of the chapter provided background and context to this study. The second section stated the importance and scope this study. The third section provided a detailed discussion of the literature on the question of biography. The fourth section of this chapter states the problem at hand. The fifth section outlines the objectives of this study. The sixth section provides the research questions. The seventh discusses the methods of the study. The eighth section deals with research ethics. The last section outlines the structure of the chapters of the thesis.

Chapter Two

Archie Mafeje: His Intellectual and Political Environment

‘There are no texts, without a context’. – Mafeje 2001a: 62

‘...while we are free to choose the role in which we cast ourselves as active agents of history, we do not put on the agenda the social issues to which we respond’. – Mafeje 2000a: 66

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is not meant to be a life history of Archie Mafeje. Instead, it is an attempt to locate him within his intellectual and political environment in order to have a better understanding of his writings. In this regard, the chapter should be understood as an attempt to contextualise his work. Every attempt will be made not to present a linear narrative. Insofar as this chapter attempts to understand Mafeje’s intellectual and political environment, it relies mainly on archival resources and in-depth interviews with Mafeje’s family, friends and former colleagues. In this regard, lengthy quotations are used in order to present a fair and accurate account of the issues involved. The first part of the chapter deals with Mafeje’s background and early political and intellectual development. The second part deals with his intellectual training at the University of Cape Town, his political interaction within the Unity Movement and his time at the University of Cambridge. The third part of the chapter deals with his intellectual and political environment in exile and his return to South Africa.

2.1 Mafeje’s Background

In 1935, the Afrikaner regime which governed the Union of South Africa under the leadership of Prime Minister J.B.M. Hertzog, whose deputy was J.C. Smuts, a pro-British politician, introduced the notorious ‘Native Representation Bill’ and the ‘Native Land and Trust Bill’ (the so-called ‘Hertzog Bills’). The sole intention was to abolish what little voting rights African people had (Jordan 2008; Mqotsi 2008; Magubane 1979). One of the leaders of the All-African Convention (AAC), which had met in Bloemfontein on 16 December 1935, remarked that black people had never witnessed such apathy and inactivity on the part of black leaders since 1912 (Jordan 2008; Mqotsi 2008). Consistent with the moderate outlook of its leaders, the AAC conference elected a delegation who would present its demands to the government of the day. They began lobbying parliament on 10 February 1936 and, predictably, were unsuccessful. They agreed to a compromise which meant that the African voters of the Cape and Natal ‘would

be removed from the common voters' roll, to be placed on a separate roll on which they would be eligible to elect three white representatives to the House of Assembly' (Jordan 2008: 22).

Parliament passed the Hertzog Bills in 1936 – the Representation of Natives Act and the Native Trust & Land Acts. Effectively, this took away the franchise of black people in the Cape Province. What happened, instead, was that the governor-general became the supreme chief of all black people and they were given three white parliamentary representatives as agreed to by the AAC deputation (Magubane 1979). The Native Trust & Land Act not only 'extended the Native Service Contract to the Cape and the Orange Free State' but also went far beyond the principles of the 1913 Land Act 'which forbade sale or lease of land outside the scheduled areas to Africans' (Magubane 1979: 85). Instead, it established 'that the conquered land could not be acquired by Africans either by commercial purchase or political means' (Magubane 1979: 85). Not only did this signal the end of a three-century long struggle for land, but also meant that the white settlers had won. Black people were dispossessed. The Hertzog Bills not only deepened racial inequality but also institutionalised it (Jordan 2008). Significantly, the 1930s were the decade of the Great Depression, a severe economic depression that affected the world over. 'During the 1930s depression, conditions worsened across the Transkei' (Drew 2011: 69).

Archibald Boyce Monwabisi Mafeje (he would be known to many as Archie) was born in Gubenxa in the Engcobo District on 30 March 1936, not only during the Great Depression but also in the same year that the notorious Hertzog Bills were passed into law effectively to dispossess his people. He was born to Bennett Mafeje and Frances Lydia Mafeje (née Qambata) who were married in Cape Town in 1934. Although both Bennett and Frances were school teachers, the former had initially come to Cape Town to work as a chauffeur for a wealthy white family.¹ This job meant that not only did he drive for the said family, but also was able to travel with them on their overseas trips – Australia, Europe and North Africa. When talking about her husband to their grandchildren, Frances would jokingly refer to him as '*irhumsha*' (a street-smart person). This was due to Bennett's exposure to the world and his cosmopolitan outlook. Bennett's father was a rich peasant from whom he inherited family fortune. The Mafeje 'clan name' (*isiduko*) is Ndobé, Majola, Qengeba, Mphankomo, Thole loMthwakazi and they come from the sub-ethnic group of amaXhosa known as amaMpondomise. Frances, who was five years Bennett's junior, had taught in King William's Town before marrying and settling with the latter in Langa township in Cape Town (Bank 2010). By then, Bennett had left

¹ Interview with Sandile Swana in Johannesburg on 31 March 2017

his job as a chauffeur and had also been teaching in Langa. Later on, they moved to Gubenxa, a fairly remote and mountainous village surrounded by three other villages, all four of them fall under a single administrative unit called eSitholeni, in the Engcobo District. Years later, detailing the history of Gubenxa in his MA thesis, titled *Leadership and Change: A Study of Two South African Peasant Communities* (1963a), Archie records that:

The first group to settle in the Gubenxa area was the Vundle, a break-away group from Stokwe Tyali's followers. After them came the Gcina, a lineage group which had left its chief, Gacelo, in search of new pastures. Their fellow-clansmen are still found in the Cala district, and are counted among the Thembu sub-chiefs though they are of Mpondomise origin. There came Qwati. This group, though belonging to the same clan as the Qwati chiefs, was not affiliated to the lineage in power. So they were never recognised as chiefs by the Gubenxa people and the people on the mountain tops in general. After them came the Mvulane, a group of Sotho origin. Later on, there came other minor groups such as Nxxhongo, and Zima. These last three were Thembu by origin. None of the groups that settled over the mountains were accompanied by their chiefs. It, therefore, became necessary that headmen be appointed among them to facilitate the work of the colonial government. (Mafeje 1963a: 53)

Both Bennett and Frances were members of the Wesleyan Methodist Church – *amaWisile*. Archie's nephew, Sandile Swana, describes his maternal grandmother Frances as 'a woman of very high standards in everything – cleanliness; cuisine; dress; spirituality and in favour of the best education and academic excellence' (Swana 2017: 2).² Swana says if you wanted to do something for Frances you had better do it well and do it right the first time around or you will be made to do it again. If you did something wrong she would tell you forthrightly and completely without rancour. To the extent that Archie had all of these qualities, he took after his mother, Frances.³

From Gubenxa, the Mafejes moved to Ncambele village in the Tsolo, where Archie Mafeje's body was buried years later, on 07 April 2007, next to his parents. One of the reasons they moved from Gubenxa was precisely because of its remoteness, isolation and distance from national roads.⁴ But that was not the only reason. Bennett felt that Gubenxa was not a 'progressive' area. There were no good schools for his children and his fellow-villagers

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

themselves were not quite educated, something which saw some of them ignoring the importance of schools in the region. Indeed years later, Archie would re-visit Gubenxa as one of the research sites for his MA thesis. He describes the community as ‘conservative’ and its members ‘predominantly “red”’, while ‘clan and lineage affiliations are still primary in it’ (Mafeje 1963a: 55). Archie uses the term ‘red’ advisedly, hence it is in inverted commas. He used it heuristically in line with anthropological language of the time. To see this, one need only look at his critical review of Philip Mayer’s book, *Townsmen or Tribesmen* (1961).⁵ In preparation for the manuscript of their book, *Langa: A Study of Social Groups in an African Township* (1963), Monica Wilson had asked Archie to review Mayer’s book, perhaps in order to avoid duplication or making the same mistakes. Archie wrote in longhand a 55-page review of the book. Although he thought ‘the book is well written and its style is very lively’, and ‘its description of specific cases is very exact’, he nevertheless found that ‘the theoretical analysis of the same cases is not as good’. In his concluding remarks, he concedes that ‘in some cases I might have been ruthless but in all cases I tried to be objective. Despite my criticism of the book, I still think it’s a good attempt and the material in it will be very useful more especially the descriptive side of it’.⁶ It can be gleaned from these remarks that theoretically he did not think highly of the book and had found its conceptual scheme wanting. It is a question as to why he never considered publishing his excellent review of the book.

At any rate, his second research site for the MA was All Saints (an Anglican mission station founded in 1859), another village in Engcobo District. Bennett was one of the founding teachers, eventually becoming the principal, of Umditywa High School in Ncambele. In total, Bennett and Frances had seven children. Their first born was Archie, the second born was Vuyiswa (1940) (she and Archie were the closest of friends), the third was Keke (also known as Mbuzeli) (1942), the fourth was Sikhumbuzo (1944), the fifth was Mlamli (1947), the sixth was Thozama (1949) and the last born is Nozibele (also known as Nandipha) (1954).⁷ The Pan-African anthropologist Kwesi Kwaa Prah, a close friend of Archie’s for many years, says the latter was cousins with the well-known commander of the Azania Peoples Liberation Army (APLA), Sabelo Phama (real name Victor Gqwetha).⁸ Archie’s nephew, Sandile Swana, confirmed this and says Sabelo/Victor was the son of Bhut’ Thozi.⁹ Of Bennett’s and Frances’

⁵ University of Cape Town, UCT Libraries Manuscripts and Archives Division, Godfrey and Monica Wilson Papers, BC 880, Correspondence with Archie Mafeje 1960–1979

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Interview with Sandile Swana

⁸ Interview with Kwesi Kwaa Prah in Cape Town on 15 July 2015

⁹ Sandile Swana email to the author, 10 April 2017

seven children, Keke is the only one who was never raised by his parents. He was adopted by Bennett's friend who had no children of his own. The man lived with his wife and Keke in Mafikeng in what is now known as the North West province. It is not unusual among isiXhosa-speaking families to entrust a close family friend with one's own child if they are in need of one.

In 1951, Archie was sent to Nqabara Secondary School in Willowvale. There, he befriended Hudson Matebese and his namesake Archie Nkonyeni (the now prominent East London-based businessman). Among Archie's teachers was the principal of the school and leader of the Cape African Teachers' Association (CATA) and the Non-European Unity Movement (renamed Unity Movement of South Africa in 1964), Nathaniel 'Tshutsha' Honono. Nqabara Secondary School, under the benign leadership of Honono, is where Archie cut his teeth on politics. He and his friends received political education from Honono and others. Honono had been editor of the CATA political magazine which carried articles against Bantu Education and apartheid. It is said that as principal of the school, Honono attracted some of the best teachers in the country, so that Nqabara Secondary School was seen as the leading black secondary school in South Africa (Bank 2010). 'Honono would get pupils to put the Teachers' Association's monthly magazine in envelopes as a way of encouraging them to read and engage with Unity Movement literature. He would engage them in debate and discussions if they happened to have any questions about the magazines they were packaging' (Bank 2010: 16). Important to note is the fact that at Nqabara, Archie was promoted to the next class in June of the year of his arrival, 1951. This was due to his excellent academic performance. Among other subjects, he took Mathematics, Physical Science, Biology and History.

Along with Archie Nkonyeni and Hudson Matebese, they were some of the brightest pupils in Nqabara. Due to the political education imparted to them by Honono, the trio would later join the Society of Young Africa (SOYA), which was formed in December 1951, when they enrolled at Healdtown College in 1953. SOYA was the youth wing of the AAC within the Unity Movement. Healdtown College, established in Fort Beaufort in the eastern region of the Cape Province in 1855, was a Wesleyan Methodist missionary boarding school. The school was later taken over by the apartheid government in 1956 following the Bantu Education Act of 1953. At Healdtown, Archie was taught by yet another Unity Movement leader, Livingstone Mqotsi, who was there from 1952 to 1954. Archie's years at Healdtown were formative intellectually and politically for a variety of reasons. First, his arrival at Healdtown in 1953 coincided with the passing of the Bantu Education Act. Although Bantu Education did not affect his studies, since Healdtown College was an independent missionary school until 1956,

his mentor and teacher Livingstone Mqotsi was one of the fiercest critics of Bantu Education and apartheid policies. Second, although Healdtown was a Wesleyan Methodist boarding school (and Archie himself being from a Wesleyan Methodist family), it is at Healdtown that Archie renounced religion and adopted radical atheist-materialism in the manner of Marxists.

Healdtown College, together with Lovedale College in Alice, Clarkebury Boarding Institute in the Engcobo District and Welsh College in East London, were some of the most prestigious boarding schools for the black elite in South Africa. Back then, transition from these schools to Fort Hare University College was akin to the transition from Eton College or Westminster School to Oxford or Cambridge universities in England. Some of the notable alumni of Healdtown include Robert Sobukwe and Nelson Mandela. As did most children of the small South African black petty-bourgeoisie, Archie received the best education – from Healdtown to UCT and Cambridge. He matriculated with a Senior Certificate at Healdtown in 1954. In his matric year, he had taken and passed the following subjects: English, isiXhosa, Latin, Physics, Chemistry, Zoology and Mathematics.¹⁰

From Healdtown, Archie enrolled at Fort Hare University College in 1955 and took a BSc degree with the hope of becoming a chemist or a physician. As result, he earned himself the nickname ‘the flying physician’ (Bank 2010). At Fort Hare, he was heavily involved in student politics. Political strikes on campus disrupted his studies in mid-1955. Unlike other students, he would return to Fort Hare in 1956 only to be expelled for political activism immediately after the mid-year exams (Bank 2010; Nyoka 2011). Ntsebeza’s (2016: 919) claim that ‘Mafeje left Fort Hare in 1956 after an unsuccessful academic performance’ is spurious to put it mildly. In 1957, Mafeje moved to the University of Cape Town to read for a BSc degree. On the university registration form no. 2849 he registered his ‘Christian names’ Archibald Boyce Monwabisi Mafeje, and ‘place of birth’ is Engcobo. His postal address then was: Box 45, Ugie, Cape Province. Ugie is a small town in the Eastern Cape south of the Drakensburg Mountain 18 km south-west of another small town, Maclear. The Ugie postal address was his father’s, Bennett N. Mafeje. Archie’s first address in Cape Town was ‘Methodist Manse, P4 Langa’. Telephone number: 61269. He writes on the form that he lives with a relative but then scratches this information with a red pen.¹¹ He writes under ‘previous university attended (if any)’: Fort Hare University College. His registration status was ‘full-time’ and he signed up for five courses: Mathematics 1A, Chemistry 1B, Physics 1B, Zoology 1A and Botany 1A. He

¹⁰ University of Cape Town, Administrative Archives, HR Personnel File, Mafeje, Location 4.3.3 Box no 366

¹¹ Ibid.

was to begin lectures in the second semester. On the registration form he writes the date: ‘29th February 1957’ but scratches it to write the correct date ‘1st March 1957’.

The following year, 1958, Archie had changed his Cape Town address from Langa to ‘63 Covendon Road, Lincoln Estate, Crawford Cape Town’. He wrote that he was ‘boarding and lodging in a private house’. At 63 Covendon Road, he shared a flat with his friend and comrade Fikile Bam. In 1959, they moved to Searle Street in District Six so that they could be closer to campus. At all times, ‘Archie was the main cook. He became known for his omelettes and soups. They would usually discuss politics around the dinner table, where Archie was always keen to test his political theories’ (Bank 2010: 20). It is important to remember that during this period black students were not allowed to stay in residence.¹² Hence Archie stayed off campus. This gives the lie to UCT’s and other white liberal institutions’ narcissistic or vainglorious notions of being ‘open’ or ‘racially integrated’.

By 1960, not only had his address changed from 63 Covendon Road, Crawford to 144 Rochester Road in District Six, but academically he had been switching from the natural sciences to the arts/social sciences. At 144 Rochester Road, Archie stayed with the Hendricks family (not related to the South African sociologist Fred Hendricks). Although he rented a room in their home, he was ‘soon regarded as a much beloved family member’ (Bank 2010: 21). In 1960, on the registration form no. 3987, under the heading ‘degree for which you are registered’ he wrote ‘BA BSc’ – status ‘full-time’. Apart from Botany 3 and Zoology 3, he had enrolled for Social Anthropology 2, Comparative African Government & Law 2 and English 1 (‘to complete language requirements for BA’).¹³ It is not entirely clear how UCT degrees were structured at the time, but ultimately Mafeje left the natural sciences and obtained a BA with majors in Social Anthropology and Psychology in June 1961. He began BA Honours in the second semester of the same year, and completed it in the first semester of 1962.¹⁴ In the Honours programme, he had taken courses in ‘Urban Sociology’, ‘Theories of Social Change’, ‘European Peasant Societies’ and an elementary course in French. He then began his MA in the second semester of 1962.

From 08 December 1962 to 28 February 1963, he carried out fieldwork for his MA thesis in the two villages of Gubenxa and All Saints in the Engcobo District. Effectively, his fieldwork took him three months and he confesses that it is ‘an unusually short period by

¹² Interview with Philip Kgosana in Pretoria on 22 September 2015

¹³ UCT Administrative Archives op cit.

¹⁴ In the South African university system, the ‘Honours’ degree is the fourth year of study. It is not only separate from the standard three-year South African bachelor degree, but also constitutes a one-year postgraduate programme – usually a prerequisite for the master’s degree.

modern anthropological standards' (Mafeje 1963a: ii). Yet, he says, 'the brevity of my intensive field work was, however, compensated for by the fact that in addition to being Xhosa-speaking, I had a previous knowledge of the two villages' (Mafeje 1963a: ii). By the time Archie submitted his MA thesis in December 1963, he had been staying at Stakesby-Lewis Hostel, Canterbury Street in District Six. His telephone number was 2-4252. Stakesby-Lewis Hostel was well-known for being the hotbed of searing political discussions in District Six particularly and Cape Town generally. This is where the Unity Movement president, I.B. Tabata, had lived with his partner, Jane Gool, for many years. Although Stakesby-Lewis Hostel continued to be a gathering place for Unity Movement and SOYA members, Tabata and Gool had moved out of there by 1953 when the section accommodating black people was shut down by the apartheid government (Rassool 2004). It is possible then that Archie would have stayed in what was a 'Coloured' section of the hostel. When the Unity Movement split in the late 1950s, Mafeje aligned himself with the Tabata faction (Ntsebeza 2016).

The preceding section marshalled facts about Archie's early life and student days. Insofar as this is true, the preceding section is descriptive rather than analytical. The section that follows adopts a much more analytical approach with a view to understand Archie's early intellectual and political environment. Specific reference will be made to his time at UCT and Cambridge.

2.2 From Cape Town to Cambridge

As noted above, Archie came to UCT in 1957, after having been expelled at Fort Hare for political activism in 1956. At UCT, not only did he reconnect with his Nqabara and Healdtown friend, Archie Nkonyeni, but also he met new friends and comrades like Fikile Bam and Welsh Makanda (all of them were fellow SOYA members) and Francis Wilson (the son of his future mentor and supervisor, Monica Wilson). From Francis Wilson's recollection, he was introduced to Archie, around 1957, by AC Jordan, the prominent isiXhosa writer, novelist and linguist, who was then teaching at UCT along with Monica Wilson.¹⁵ AC Jordan was, of course, a member of CATA and the Unity Movement and Francis surmises that Archie would have met Jordan through Livingstone Mqotsi. According to Francis, Mqotsi was not only a big influence on Archie but that it is very likely that when the latter ran away from the authorities at Fort Hare, Mqotsi would have been the one who put him in touch with Jordan.¹⁶ Barney

¹⁵ Interview with Francis Wilson in Cape Town on 25 July 2015

¹⁶ Ibid.

Pityana, however, submits that Mafeje and Mqotsi fell out in London years later.¹⁷ This, however, did not stop the two of them from working together when Mafeje came back to South Africa. Mqotsi contributed a chapter to Mafeje's edited book, *The Disenfranchised: Perspectives on the History of Elections in South Africa*, which was published posthumously in 2008. In Mafeje's personal library, which he donated to the Walter Sisulu University, there is Mqotsi's novel, titled *House of Bondage*, which the latter signed and inscribed: 'To Archie, a dear comrade in this never-ending struggle for human equality and decency, 2002'. Mqotsi also attended Mafeje's funeral. Around 1957/58, Francis taught Archie how to drive on lower campus at UCT. Francis had, in fact, taken Monica's car without permission. Monica Wilson knew Archie well before she actually taught him in Social Anthropology. Francis, Fikile and Archie would frequently interact and hold political discussions with other students at what was then called 'the Freedom Square' on upper campus at UCT (the area below the Jameson Hall steps). Francis says their interaction went beyond talking about politics of the day. They became close friends.

Outside the UCT setting, Mafeje was heavily involved in the politics of SOYA and the Unity Movement. The Non-European Unity Movement, an organisation of mainly Marxist intellectuals and revolutionaries, was formed in 1943. It was meant to be a unification of two federations, the AAC and the Anti-Coloured Affairs Department (Anti-CAD), to form a super-federation. Based on its Ten-Point Programme, the Unity Movement fought for full democratic rights for all oppressed peoples and put forward a policy of non-collaboration with the oppressor (see Tabata 1974). It placed the question of land firmly at the centre of the South African liberation struggle. 'It characterised the greater majority of the black population as a "landless peasantry" whose support it held to be indispensable to the success of the liberation struggle' (Kayser and Adhikari 2004a: 5). Importantly, the Unity Movement considered the potential alliance between the workers and the peasants to be indispensable to South Africa's revolution. Although this position was not necessarily shared by all leaders and members of the Unity Movement, it remained foundational to Mafeje's revolutionary theory. One of the Unity Movement leaders, Mqotsi, saw no such revolutionary potential on the part of the peasantry. He relegated this social class to the background and, unlike other Unity Movement leaders, was not convinced that the peasantry formed the backbone of the revolution.¹⁸ 'It is true that I, unlike Dr [Limbada] and others, do not make a fetish of the peasantry. I do not have

¹⁷ Interview with Barney Pityana in Pretoria on 05 November 2015

¹⁸ Mqotsi, L. 1966. Speech delivered at meeting of HUC members. Lusaka, Zambia: 26 April

to be nice to the peasantry'.¹⁹ Historically, classical Marxists underestimated the peasantry as a creative and progressive actor, seeing it instead as a source for other classes or as an audience to whom benefits are given, e.g. land reform. Trotsky ([1932]1950) spoke of a 'dual nature of the peasantry'. Yet there is an indication that Trotsky carefully applied Marxism as a mode of analysis to the particular conditions of Russia, which was an overwhelmingly peasant society. He agreed with Lenin that the working class backed by the peasantry could produce a radical democratic revolution in Russia, but he rejected Lenin's claim that this could be a stable resting point. Elsewhere, he argues that 'all historical experience... shows that the peasantry are incapable of taking up an independent political role' (Trotsky 1962: 204-205). While accepting that the Russian peasantry would support a government that broke up the large estates, he questioned whether the peasantry would remain long-term supporters of a socialist regime concerned with urban working class priorities. Once the implications of a socialist agenda became evident in the country side, he argued, peasants would very likely become hostile to it (Trotsky [1932]1950). Although Mafeje does not endorse this position, he did not take the potential alliance between the workers and peasants as a given. For him, this potential alliance was itself an object of enquiry. Indeed, he considered it a 'perennial problem'. 'While in theory the alliance between peasants and workers may be seen as "natural", in practice the uneven development and the social differentiation between the two classes may prove extremely refractory' (Mafeje 1978a: 41). Nevertheless, if successful, it would be 'the ultimate antithesis to petty-bourgeois hegemony and the contradictions of state capitalism' (Mafeje 1978a: 40).

The question of the alliance between workers and peasants in Mafeje's revolutionary theory explains an important issue. Much has been said about the Unity Movement and Mafeje respectively being 'Trotskyites' (Adesina 2008a, 2008b; Magubane 1989, 2010; Mbeki 1964; Nabudere 2008). Yet a careful study of Mafeje's work on revolutionary theory and politics reveals that he actually held Lenin and Mao, rather than Trotsky, in great esteem (Mafeje 1978a, 1992). There are no traces of Trotsky in Mafeje's work. In fact, Mkandawire admits that he never heard Mafeje mention Trotsky. Mkandawire says he was just being 'nasty' when he called Mafeje a 'Trotskyite' and he called him that by virtue of being a member of the Unity Movement.²⁰ In his book on revolutionary theory and politics, titled *In Search of an Alternative*, not only does Mafeje reject the label 'Trotskyite', but problematically accuses Trotsky of 'Eurocentrism'. Mafeje makes the following illustrated observation:

¹⁹ Ibid, p.2.

²⁰ Interview with Thandika Mkandawire in Cape Town on 15 July 2015

It would have been possible to excuse Trotsky for this piece of Eurocentrism in his time, if it were not for the fact that his followers carried it into the Fourth International. There, his European proletarianism created a predisposition towards discounting revolutions in the Third World, only because they were not led by a proletariat proper. Secondly, Trotsky, unlike Lenin, can be accused of having attached no importance to the peasantry as a potential revolutionary class in countries that are subject to imperialist domination and exploitation. This militates against the development within his perspective of a theory and strategy for agrarian transformation in such countries. These are three basic points – a Eurocentric viewpoint, proletarianism and the role of the peasantry in the revolution – on which I could not be accused even by my worst detractors of having ‘Trotskyite’ inclinations. If anything, I could accuse those who so speak of imposing on me European stereotypes. For instance, bearing in mind that important departures have been made on these questions by great revolutionaries from the East, e.g. Mao Tse Tung and Ho Chi Minh, who were Trotsky’s contemporaries in the Comintern, why is the possibility of being a Maoist or a Ho Chi Minhist ruled out *a priori*?’ (Mafeje 1992: 66)

Far from being Eurocentric, Trotsky was making a considered judgement of the Russian peasantry’s political potential. He actually condemned Eurocentrism in Africa on at least two occasions. The first was at the Comintern’s Fourth Congress in November–December 1922, where he criticised the role of European communists in Sidi-bel-Abbes, Algeria. The second occasion is his ‘Letter to South African Revolutionaries’ where he talks about ‘the complete and unconditional right of the blacks to independence’ (Trotsky 1933: 158). It would seem that Mafeje’s critique of Trotsky’s alleged Eurocentrism is unjustified.

Although Adesina (2008a: 28; 2008b: 149) says, following Mkandawire, ‘Mafeje moved from being a proto-Trotskyite (in the tradition of South Africa’s Non-European Unity Movement) to being Afrocentric’, this label is neither applicable to Mafeje nor the Unity Movement. To begin with, the Unity Movement was never self-referentially ‘Trotskyist’ or ‘Trotskyite’ (Kayser and Adhikari 2004a, 2004b). Pejoratively, it was said to be ‘Trotskyite’ because it was supposedly ‘ultra-left’. This was an unwarranted insult and generalisation which failed ideationally to grapple with the theoretical postulates put forward by the Unity Movement. Significantly, this label is belied by the fact that although the Unity Movement was critical of other liberation movements in South Africa, it is to its credit that its leaders tried by all means to set their differences aside and called for organisational unity of all the South

African liberation movements. I.B. Tabata reached out to Mandela.²¹ Not only did Livingstone Mqotsi accommodate Chris Hani the leader of the SACP/ANC in his home in Lusaka, but also he edited a Unity Movement journal, titled *Unity*, whose *raison d'être* was organisational unity among all the South African liberation movements (see Magubane 2010). Intellectually, the Unity Movement was said to be 'Trotskyite' because of its adherence to the notion of a 'permanent revolution' (Trotsky 1962). As will be shown in chapter ten, Mafeje (1992) did not credit the theory of permanent revolution in any case. According to him, once the revolutionary movement takes over the state, it attempts to consolidate its power. Insofar as this is true, it ceases to be revolutionary but becomes progressive.

Logically, a government or a state cannot mount a revolution on itself. It will take classes outside of the state to mount the revolution – 'permanent' or not. In any case, the idea that the Unity Movement is 'Trotskyite' was largely an insult deployed by members of the Communist Party of South Africa (later South African Communist Party). In turn, the Unity Movement accused the latter of being 'Stalinists' or 'Tankies' because of its support for the Soviet Union.²² Mafeje observes: 'Although it earned a reputation, fostered by its Stalinist adversaries in the South African Communist Party, of being "Trotskyite", in fact, its leadership was a mixture of Trotskyists, Leninists, Maoists and democrats, especially school-teachers from the countryside. Nonetheless, it could be said that the dominant element within the leadership was decidedly Marxist and committed to a socialist transformation in the "long run"' (Mafeje 1992: 81). Significantly, Mafeje became a member of the Tabata-led African Peoples' Democratic Union of Southern Africa (APDUSA) which was formed in 1961. APDUSA was one of the main affiliates of the Unity Movement – together with AAC and Anti-CAD. Mafeje's view is that insofar as APDUSA emphasised the revolutionary potential of an alliance between workers and peasants, it is best understood as Leninist rather than Trotskyist (Kayser and Adhikari 2004a, 2004b).

Nabudere remembers a day in 1992 when he had invited Mafeje for lunch. In their discussions, Nabudere made the mistake of referring to Mafeje's alleged 'Trotskyism'. Mafeje retorted by rejecting this label as well as calling Nabudere 'cantankerous' (Nabudere 2011: 9). Cantankerous? It may be said, not unfairly, that Mafeje had in this instance committed the *tu quoque* fallacy since he was the one known for being 'cantankerous'. Significantly, however, Mafeje's sympathy with Lenin rather than Trotsky has a long history which goes back to his

²¹ I.B. Tabata, Letter to Mandela, 'On the Problem of Organisational Unity in South Africa', 16 June 1948

²² Interview with Gavin Williams in Pretoria on 06 May 2015

student days as a member of SOYA and the Unity Movement. Fikile Bam once recalled that although they were required to read Lenin and Trotsky, in their theoretical and political debates it is to Lenin that Mafeje would frequently turn. Not only that, ‘he would be able to quote the pages of Lenin verbatim including the page numbers’ (Bam quoted in Bank 2010: 20). Insofar as the young Mafeje had the ‘ability to quote Lenin chapter and verse’, Lenin was his Bible. Bank attributes this ability to memorise and recite Lenin to the values Mafeje acquired from missionary education (Bank with Swana 2013: 276). Indeed, later on in his career, he would speak about classical texts ‘which I have no problem in decoding having wasted my youth learning classics in a missionary boarding school’ (Mafeje 1997a: 14). In the final analysis, whether the Unity Movement was ‘Trotskyist’ or not, Mafeje distanced himself and his ideas from such a label.

What emerges from the preceding paragraphs is that Mafeje’s revolutionary theory and politics stems from his training in the Unity Movement – although he would later become critical of it (Mafeje 1992; Nabudere 2011). It is important to note, however, that although he became critical of it, his widow Shahida El-Baz insists that Mafeje never left the Unity Movement.²³ Ntsebeza (2016: 925) says ‘there is no evidence of Mafeje’s independent contribution to the debates that led to a split in the late 1950s. Indeed, there is no evidence that Mafeje played any leading role in the politics of the NEUM while he was a student in Cape Town from the late 1950s to 1964’. If one is reluctant to endorse this statement, it is not because one takes it to be wrong, it is simply that it makes the mistake of reading Mafeje’s intellectual and political trajectory from back to front. In other words, its implication is that because Mafeje was a revolutionary scholar of note, it must follow that he was always revolutionary. Ntsebeza’s argument, and in spite of itself, not only freezes Mafeje in space and in time, but also it does not allow for intellectual growth and development. Apart from that, it focuses excessively on individual achievements at the expense of institutional constraints. If Mafeje was an intellectual hero to at least two generations of Africa scholars, it cannot be assumed that he would have always been a hero. Or that his path to the scholar he became was always clear. Some ideas are a product of their time and are usually owed to interaction with others or to the environment from which they emerge. Indeed, Ntsebeza (2016: 925) concedes to this view when he says ‘I will show that Mafeje would draw from the tradition of and his experiences in the NEUM as he pursued his academic endeavours’.

²³ Interviews with Shahida El-Baz in Cairo on 04 and 11 September 2016

Ultimately, Ntsebeza proves incapable of understanding Mafeje's theoretical work. He simply does not understand it. What is deeply problematic is his relentless attempt to turn Mafeje into a mere South African from the Eastern Cape who studied and lived in Cape Town. What Ntsebeza refuses to acknowledge is the fact that Mafeje was not only a Pan-Africanist, but also an internationalist. This is not to deny Mafeje's origins, but rather to question Ntsebeza's parochial reading of Mafeje. It is a lack of theoretical sophistication on Ntsebeza's part to think that one can localise a Pan-Africanist and an internationalist like Mafeje. What is ironic is the fact that Ntsebeza traces Mafeje's political roots to the Unity Movement, yet he does not take seriously the fact that this was an internationalist political organisation. So even as a student, Mafeje would have been trained in this internationalism of the Unity Movement. Thus his Pan-Africanist and internationalist outlook is not something that Mafeje would have learned in exile. This is something Ntsebeza does not grapple with in his attempt at localising Mafeje.

Yet in spite of the foregoing, Mafeje's contemporaries in SOYA and the Cape Peninsula Students' Union (a student movement of the Unity Movement) have no qualms about his active role in the movement. In CPSU and SOYA Mafeje interacted with the likes of Fikile Bam, Neville Alexander, Welsh Makanda, Nina Hassim, Archie Nkonyeni (who was the Secretary of SOYA) and others. They used to hold debates at the 'Unity Movement corner'. Bam remembers that 'Archie was a lot more advanced in theory than the rest of us. He read a lot. ...He was very argumentative... Our common opposition was NUSAS which was led by Norman Bromberger and Neville Rubin. Our concern was to put the liberals in their place' (Bam quoted in Bank 2010: 20). In his critique of Rassool's work on I.B. Tabata, Kader Hassim (2010: 33), who was part of SOYA and the Unity Movement, writes about 'the heart of the young leadership of the age group represented by people like Archie Mafeje, Neville Alexander and Nina Hassim'. The point here is not to vindicate Mafeje's 'leadership role' or anything of the sort. But rather, it is to locate him in the context of the political movement that moulded him. On accounts given about Mafeje, such as his aforementioned love for theory, and the way he carried himself as an intellectual, it is inconceivable that he would be at the podium delivering fiery speeches either to the Unity Movement or 'the masses'. Indeed, a UCT alumnus, Philip Kgosana, remembers Mafeje in their student days as playing the role of an intellectual more than anything else.²⁴ At any rate, he would not know about Mafeje's role in SOYA since Kgosana was in the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). 'Archie was a regular

²⁴ Interview with Philip Kgosana in Pretoria on 22 September 2015

member of the Cape Town SOYA study circle that used to meet every weekend. Some of these meetings were held at the house of I.B. Tabata' (Bank 2010: 20).

Kgosana remembers Mafeje as somewhat reserved and not the sort of person 'who could just start addressing a political gathering of students. He seemed like somebody who was concerned with his studies'.²⁵ Kgosana qualifies this statement by saying that in any case 'the environment on campus dictated that you focus on your books'.²⁶ There was not much interaction with the rest of UCT community on the part of black students, except those moments of political discussions at 'the Freedom Square'. Yet, Mafeje's comrades remember that his 'intellectualism and taste for theoretical debate annoyed some members of the SOYA circle, who felt he spent too much time "hobnobbing with whites"' (Bank 2010: 20). Strictly speaking, this is a *non sequitur*. Mafeje's love for theory does not follow from spending too much time with whites. Anyway, Francis Wilson's observation is that black students from the eastern region of the Cape Province such as Mafeje and Bam had no problem interacting with white students. He remembers that it would have been members of SOYA and Unity Movement from Cape Town who were a bit prickly on the question of interacting with white students. Ultimately, however, it is the question of Mafeje's independent thinking that would have led him to do as he pleased rather than the fact of being from the eastern region of the Cape Province. If one were to confront him for having interacted with white students he or she would be put in his place. Wilson says Mafeje would say, in isiXhosa, '*sukuthetha amatswele apha* [don't talk rubbish]'.²⁷ Not only was Mafeje an independent thinker, but also he could be extraordinarily difficult.

Throughout his political activities outside the classroom, Mafeje never took his eyes off the ball in terms of what he went to UCT for. Hence he was able to leave Cape Town at the beginning of 1964 not only with an MA in social anthropology but also with a co-authored book and a journal article, 'A Chief Visits Town' (1963b). As Monica Wilson's student, he had to undergo exacting and demanding standards of research and intellectual integrity. Apart from being Wilson's student, Mafeje worked as her research assistant. He worked as her research assistant in the study of Langa from November 1960 to September 1962. Extensive studies have been conducted on Mafeje and Wilson's working relationship and the production of their book *Langa: A Study of Social Groups in an African Township* (1963)²⁸ (see Bank

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Interview with Francis Wilson in Cape Town on 25 July 2015

²⁸ As an aside, the man wearing an apron and a sunhat on the cover of the book is the father of the well-known South African academic and clinical psychologist, Prof Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela. When the picture was taken,

2010; Bank with Swana 2013; Sharp 2008). No attempt will be made to repeat the nuts and bolts of the said working relationship and production of the book, except to focus on those salient features which proved formative for Mafeje's intellectual development. The difficulty experienced by a good number of black students in South African universities lies in the difficult attempt to bring to bear their lived experiences on their intellectual pursuits. This is due largely to the alienating and Eurocentric nature of the university curriculum which does not take seriously their ontological narratives and discourses (see Adesina 2005; Nyoka 2012a). This has a long history which one need not get into here.

What is important, however, is that this problem seems to have impacted Mafeje most acutely. For example, although outside the classroom he was involved in the intellectual and political activities of arguably the most theoretically sophisticated leftist political organisation in South Africa, the Unity Movement, he was unable to reconcile what he learnt from it with what he had to learn in the classroom. This issue is not as ironical as it appears. Academically, he was engaged in liberal functionalist anthropology. Yet politically, he was a theoretically sophisticated Marxist in the manner of a Unity Movement cadre. John Sharp mentions this difficulty in his paper 'Mafeje and Langa: The Start of an Intellectual's Journey' (2008). Bank repeats it in order to advance the strange and inconsequential idea that Mafeje was not radical in his student days (Bank 2010; Bank with Swana 2013). Ntsebeza (2016) takes it as a starting point but he does not problematize it at all. He takes it as established that Mafeje was unable to 'counter the liberal "interpretation"'. The problem is that Bank's (2010, 2013), Sharp's (2008) and Ntsebeza's (2016) argument proceeds from a faulty premise which lays a societal problem at the door of its casualty.

Mafeje's harsh critique of Noni Jabavu's book, *Drawn in Colour*, is of relevance in this regard. In his comments on a draft manuscript of *Langa*, Mafeje says to Wilson: 'You describe Noni Jabavu's book *Drawn in Colour* as admirable. From what point of view is it so? One critic, an African writer and nationalist, remarked that the book is "thoroughly drenched with snobbery". ...I also do not like the tone of the book. It is riddled with sentimentalism, and its condescending attitude is simply nauseating'.²⁹ Having made this scathing comment, Mafeje goes on to praise the *Langa* manuscript: 'I am particularly pleased about this because I look at

he was a shopkeeper in Langa where Gobodo-Madikizela was raised. Francis Wilson says as a result of that, Gobodo-Madikizela thought it appropriate to expropriate without compensation his (Wilson) precious copy of the book!

Interview with Francis Wilson in Cape Town on 25 July 2015

²⁹ University of Cape Town, UCT Libraries Manuscripts and Archives Division, Godfrey and Monica Wilson Papers, BC 880, Correspondence with Archie Mafeje 1960–1979 (Comments on the manuscript)

this study as purely scientific work which has nothing to do with what white or black nationalists feel or think'.³⁰ John Sharp notes the contradiction between Mafeje's sharp criticism of Jabavu's *Drawn in Colour* and his subsequent praise of the *Langa* manuscript. Both books are written from a liberal perspective. Sharp persuasively argues that this contradiction could not be traced to Mafeje's fear of criticising Wilson. He argues that the explanation lies in Mafeje's comment that *Langa* is 'purely scientific work' which has nothing to do with what white or black nationalists think. Sharp argues that this was not an attempt to impress Wilson but a statement of Mafeje's 'personal position' because the latter was not a 'narrow African nationalist'.

Yet suitably interpreted, Mafeje's inability to reconcile his political views with his intellectual pursuits is traceable to the alienating and Eurocentric UCT intellectual and political environment in which he found himself. Although Sharp believes that this is one of the 'admirable characteristics' of Mafeje, this actually reveals a positivistic slant in Sharp's argument. It was a serious folly on Mafeje's part to believe that the book had nothing to do with race. It is equally a serious mistake on Sharp's part to think that in discounting the question of race, Mafeje was advancing an 'admirable' argument. Read uncharitably, Bank, Sharp and Ntsebeza can be accused of reading Mafeje as a problem himself rather than somebody who was faced with a problem. That the young Mafeje set aside his political convictions in order to pursue intellectual preoccupations is itself the problem of the positivistic and liberal functionalist intellectual tradition in which he was trained – the idea that knowledge production is 'neutral', 'value-free' and therefore should not be burdened with political issues. In fact, in their book, Wilson and Mafeje (1963: 11) say explicitly that they did not ask political questions to their participants. Neither Bank nor Sharp or Ntsebeza seem to problematize this issue. Specifically, the trouble with Bank's attempt to prove that Mafeje was 'not radical' when he was a student is that in the process of doing so, he (Bank) does not cover the entire spectrum of Mafeje's work. As such, Bank misses the fact that Mafeje was much more self-reflective about his intellectual trajectory. In an essay titled 'Religion, Class and Ideology in South Africa', which is an auto-critique of the book he co-authored with Wilson, Mafeje has this to say:

...when I went to Langa to do fieldwork in 1961, I was armed with an essentially ahistoricist and overly functionalist question: Why and how do social groups cohere or

³⁰ Ibid

split? Historically, it is necessary not to accuse me of inanity but simply to acknowledge the fact that I should have known that ebbs and flows are the very movements of which the dialectic of history is made, and, as such, are permanent features of collective existence. (Mafeje 1975: 167)³¹

In a brilliant but underrated essay, titled ‘The Problem of Anthropology in Historical Perspective: An Inquiry into the Growth of the Social Sciences’, Mafeje says:

... ‘cohesion’ of social groups on which I collaborated with Monica Wilson, were liberal functionalist preoccupations valid in their own right. They were even progressive insofar as they created grounds for their own negation. Historically, we had to be a partial affirmation of bourgeois functionalism in order to be its negation, in exactly the same way as African nationalists had to be part of the colonial system in order to experience its frustrations. (Mafeje 1976a: 319)

Mafeje’s discourse is much more sophisticated than Bank is willing to allow. At no point did Mafeje conceal his contribution to liberal functionalism of his youth. Of course, he was a student of anthropology in the 1960s and he may not have advanced a programmatic critique of it. But he questioned some of its concepts and categories (Mafeje 1963b, 1967). The point here, of course, is not to vindicate the honour of the young Mafeje but rather to take seriously two important sociological issues: (i) the young Mafeje was a product of the environment that shaped him intellectually and politically; and (ii) one’s intellectual and political development cannot be frozen in space and in time because ideas evolve and change through the march of history. In any case, what Bank would need to reconcile if he were to insist that Mafeje was not always politically conscious or radical are two issues: On the one hand, Mafeje’s activism that got him expelled from Fort Hare and his active political life with SOYA and the Unity Movement in Cape Town. The latter showed a decidedly Marxist inclination. And on the other hand, his liberal functionalist anthropological location in his academic work. There are two explanations for this. First, there is the broad liberal orientation of the university in which he was studying. Second, there is the liberal functionalism of Monica Wilson. At this early stage in his academic career, Mafeje would have had to live a ‘bifurcated life’. This is not uncommon

³¹ Records show that Mafeje actually began working on the Langa study in November 1960 and not November 1961 as he mistakenly suggests and as Monica Wilson mistakenly indicate in the Acknowledgements page of their book, *Langa*. Mafeje’s correspondence with Wilson had begun in earnest in 1960.

University of Cape Town, UCT Libraries Manuscripts and Archives Division, Godfrey and Monica Wilson Papers, BC 880, Correspondence with Archie Mafeje 1960–1979

in such circumstance. It is a bifurcated existence that meant he could live as a radical (if studious) black person outside the university, and as someone who did not overtly challenge the liberal disposition of this academic milieu. It is not a question of cowardice as it is about finding niches of existence in contexts imposed on him (by circumstances not of his choosing).

In his critique of Magubane's (1971) critique of anthropologists, Mafeje (1976a: 319) observes that 'we did not know it all long before; we are only beginning now because circumstances dictate it'. If Bank insists that Mafeje was not a radical student, how would he explain Mafeje's expulsion from Fort Hare and his active involvement in radical political life in Cape Town? That this radicalism did not find expression in the scholarly works Mafeje produced at the time, speaks to the bifurcated existence, underpinned by the assumptions of his academic work under Monica Wilson. Even if Mafeje were not radical as a student, such a phenomenon cannot be used against him. In chapter six of *Black Skin, White Masks* ([1952]1986), titled 'The Negro and Psychopathology', Frantz Fanon grapples with a related problematic. Specifically, he mentions that as a young man watching films in Martinique, he identified with the white Tarzan against the ill-treated 'Negroes'. It is only when he got to France that he became conscious of this dissonance and began to grapple with the ontological question of being-black-in-the-world. Mafeje's bifurcated existence is not unique and has affected some of the best minds in the black radical tradition. Mafeje's erstwhile high school teacher, Livingstone Mqotsi, worked with Monica Wilson at Fort Hare. Bernard Magubane worked with Leo Kuper at the University of Natal. One way or another, they all became complicit in aiding and abetting liberal functionalism. Historically, this had to be so because South African universities had no black academics to speak of. Black radical intellectuals, who could have been their academic mentors, were in the liberation movement and therefore outside of the academy.

Although Bank (2010, 2013), Ntsebeza (2016) and Sharp (2008) mention the fact that politically the young Mafeje was steeped into the Marxist literature of the Unity Movement, while academically charmed by liberal functionalist anthropology, they do not fully explore this apparent dissonance. Bank (2010, 2013) and Sharp (2008), each independently, mention it but leave it unexplored, while Ntsebeza (2016) takes it as a point of departure without problematizing it first. Generally, the disconnect in the young Mafeje between his co-authored academic work and his political training reflects a much bigger issue whose effects are still evident in the South African intellectual space to this day. This problem is traceable to the alienating Eurocentric intellectual traditions and universities which are geographically in South Africa but culturally located in Europe and North America. This is still an object of enquiry

among black intellectuals in the South African academy (Adesina 2002, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2010; Hendricks 2006; Lebakeng 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2010; Mamdani 1992, 1993, 1998a, 1998b, 2008; Mangcu 2016; Nyoka 2012a, 2013; Prah 1997a; Seepe 2004; Thaver 2002; Sesanti 2016; Sitas 2006).

The Langa study on which Mafeje worked with Wilson began long before he was roped in. In fact, the study began in 1954 while Mafeje was a matric pupil at Healdtown College. However, the project came up against a number of obstacles – some political, others not (see Sharp 2008). From an academic point of view, Wilson could not find a suitable researcher who was not only capable of conducting qualitative research, but also who could speak isiXhosa. After several attempts she secured the services of Cambridge-educated A.R.W. Crosse-Upcott. Crosse-Upcott worked on the project in 1955. When he left for a permanent position, Wilson was once again faced with the challenge of finding a suitable researcher. She was to engage Mafeje's services from November 1960 (not 1961 as she mistakenly suggests in the 'Acknowledgements' page of the book) until February 1962.³² In a letter to Wilson, dated 07 December 1960, Mafeje writes:

Dear Prof Wilson, I am just from Langa and I am excited because I think I have got the origin of the term 'BARI'. Most of the young men in Langa did not know the origin of the word. It was only when I approached a certain 'chap' who originally came from JHB that I got something interesting. He said, 'I suppose you know the word "barbarian"'. I said, 'Yes' and he said, 'There you are, you have got it, "bari" is derived from "barbarian"'.³³

In the process of carrying out the fieldwork, Mafeje performed superbly and produced voluminous notes which assisted Wilson in assembling the manuscript for the book. Due to Mafeje's extensive notes, Wilson deemed it appropriate to credit him as co-author although many would have probably put his name in the 'Acknowledgements' page and leave it at that. It says something perhaps about Wilson's intellectual integrity that she credited Mafeje as co-author. After all, given the amount of intellectual work he dedicated to the study this makes a lot of sense. Some of the terms which made it to the published version of the book – e.g.

³² University of Cape Town, UCT Libraries Manuscripts and Archives Division, Godfrey and Monica Wilson Papers, BC 880, Correspondence with Archie Mafeje 1960–1979

³³ Mafeje letter to Monica Wilson 07 December 1960. University of Cape Town, UCT Libraries Manuscripts and Archives Division, Godfrey and Monica Wilson Papers, BC 880, Correspondence with Archie Mafeje 1960–1979. Uncatalogued folder

‘ooscuse me’, ‘ooMac’ and ‘iibari’ – are a result of Mafeje’s deep familiarity with the language, social geography and organisation of township life in Langa.

It should be noted that Mafeje was completing his undergraduate studies when he began working on the *Langa* project. Although Mafeje rescued Wilson’s project, it needs to be said that intellectually he benefitted a great deal from her. Mafeje’s later insistence on deep familiarity with one’s objects of enquiry and ‘ethnography’ owes a lot to the training he got from her. Although a premium is usually on their working relationship i.e. who did what and how they related to each other, in the final analysis the *Langa* research was an apprenticeship for Mafeje. Their working relationship was not equal and it could not have been. Insofar as Mafeje was a student he was undergoing training. It was a learning process for him, in the same way that he was taught by her in class. Bank (2013) and Sharp (2008) respectively explore in detail the Wilson-Mafeje working relationship during the production of *Langa*.

For intellectually unrewarding reasons, Bank (2010, 2013) sets out to analyse what he calls a ‘debate’ about the authorship of the book. He refers to it as ‘the authorship debate’ (Bank with Swana 2013). Yet given that no such ‘debate’ exists, it can be said not unfairly that Bank analyses a false debate. Firstly, he gives a brief historical account of ‘the authorship debate’ by referring to those anthropologists and sociologists who reviewed the book in the 1960s (Jones 1967; Powdermaker 1964; Reader 1963). He finds that none of these authors credited Mafeje since they refer to *Langa* as ‘Wilson’s study’ or ‘Professor Wilson’s study’ (Bank with Swana 2013). Part of the reason why the reviewers did this, Bank surmises, is due to what Wilson wrote in the ‘Acknowledgements’ page of the book, and her stature as an internationally acclaimed social anthropologist. In it, she says: ‘Field work was carried out by Dr A.R.W. Crosse-Upcott from July 1955 until March 1957, and Mr Archie Mafeje, who is himself Xhosa-speaking, intermittently between November 1961 and September 1962. The formulation of the problems, the direction of the work, and the writing of the book was done by Professor Monica Wilson’ (Wilson and Mafeje 1963: ii). Strictly speaking, Mafeje began field work in November 1960 not in November 1961. At any rate, a ‘debate’ in the academic sense is an exchange or discussion between two or more individuals about a particular topic. There was no exchange among the reviewers of the book about who actually wrote the book. Their reviews of the book consist in analysing what the book actually says, not who authored it. It is not entirely clear why Bank takes this to be relevant to his case about ‘the authorship debate’.

The second case he adduces in order to strengthen the so-called debate is one which he traces to Mafeje himself. Bank says ‘Mafeje’s claims to authorship changed over time. By the early 1970s he had come to distance himself from the book, something which we associate

with his increasingly critical attitude towards social anthropology as a field of study' (Bank with Swana 2013: 257). This is a gross misrepresentation of Mafeje's work. Firstly, as will be made clear in the following chapters, contrary to this standard view of Mafeje's work, the latter was actually saying all of the social sciences are imperialist and that it makes very little sense to turn anthropology into the 'black sheep' of the social sciences (Mafeje 1976a). Secondly, claiming that Mafeje distanced himself from authorship of the book, is to undermine the theoretical and political importance of his sophisticated critique of it (Mafeje 1975). Even in his direct critique of the book, in 'Religion, Class and Ideology in South Africa' (1975), an article which appears in a *festschrift* for Monica Wilson, Mafeje does not disavow authorship of the book. What he does, instead, is to advance a Marxist critique of it and reject its liberal functionalist theoretical and ideological conclusions. This will be made clear in chapter four of this thesis. Quite apart from 'distancing himself' from it, Mafeje was conducting an auto-critique as against disavowing 'authorship' of the book (Mafeje 1975, 1976a). Again, there is no question of authorship. The critique turned on theoretical and ideological issues. Bank's characterisation of Mafeje's critique of the book is not a mere question of 'interpretation', it is a deeply ideological one. It is hard to believe that he could miss Mafeje's Marxist theoretical and ideological critique of the book and reduce it to a mere quibble about 'authorship'. Even in his harsh critique of the book, at no point does Mafeje say 'Wilson', he always say 'we' or 'I' (when referring to his field work experience).

To show just how much Bank relegates the central issues in Mafeje's critique of the book, he says Mafeje 'hinted at the limitations of Monica's theoretical framework and underlying Christian liberal ideology' (Bank with Swana 2013: 257). Mafeje does more than 'hinting' at the liberal theoretical and ideological issues involved. The whole thrust of his critique of the book is based on the theoretical and ideological issues involved. Those are the very grounds on which he rejects the book – not on the question of authorship. Bank goes on to cite Mafeje's debate with the American anthropologist, Sally Falk Moore. He argues that although Mafeje had clearly rejected the liberal social anthropology of the book and anthropology more broadly, in the debate with Falk Moore he 'ironically made fuller claim to authorship than he did in his 1975 essay' (Bank with Swana 2013: 257). There is no fact of the matter as to what Bank means when he says this. Simply put, there is nothing of the sort. As noted above, nowhere does Mafeje reject authorship of the book. He critiques the book's theoretical and ideological orientations and actually says 'we' throughout the 1975 essay. Thus the idea that in the debate with Falk Moore he 'made fuller claim to authorship' is misleading. At any rate, why would it be 'ironical' for Mafeje to claim authorship of a book of which he is

credited? Bank's analysis of the so-called debate is based on a misreading and de-politicisation of Mafeje's work.

Bank goes on to say: 'Mafeje's reflections in hindsight exaggerate the degree of intellectual equality between Monica and himself at a stage when he was just beginning his graduate studies and she was a senior professor with a very well established international reputation' (Bank with Wilson 2013: 258). This argument commits what logicians and analytic philosophers refer to as an 'irrelevant appeal to authority'. Ideas do not stand or fall on the grounds of academic seniority. They stand or fall on their merits and demerits. When Mafeje says 'I might have prevailed upon Monica Wilson not to do the same [use the term tribe] in *Langa*' (Mafeje 1997a: 12), he is not exaggerating his position. It was noted earlier in this chapter that Mafeje wrote a long unpublished review of Philip Mayer's book. In it, Mafeje notes his reservation about the use of the word 'tribe'. Indeed, during the course of the study Mafeje *did* in fact prevail upon Monica Wilson not to use the category tribe and advised, instead, that they use the research subjects' own self-definition. For example, words such as 'ooscuse me', 'ooMac' and 'iibari' which made it to the published version of the book are a result of Mafeje prevailing on Wilson. This has less to do with Mafeje asserting himself than it is a question of intellectual integrity on his and Wilson's part. Bank goes on to argue:

The authorship debate has been taken up again in the years since Mafeje's death, most notably in the articles published in the obituary issue of the CODESRIA Bulletin. Sociologist Jimmy Adesina [sic] challenges Falk Moore's riposte on the grounds that 'it hardly reflects well on her own understanding of producing a manuscript. Authorship, if that is what this confers on Monica Wilson, does not mean exclusivity of even the most seminal ideas in a manuscript'. He goes on to suggest that the 'most seminal ideas' in the book, those articulating what he terms 'the pursuit of indigeneity' [sic], came from Mafeje rather than Wilson. (Bank with Swana 2013: 258)

Nowhere does Adesina make the claim that the most seminal ideas in the book come from Mafeje. Bank is liable to the charge of distortion here in his attempt to validate the so-called debate about the *Langa* book. Moreover, to be fair to Falk Moore, she was not questioning Mafeje's authorship of the book but rather Mafeje's suggestion that he could have succeeded in persuading her into changing her mind. Falk Moore observes:

By creatively misrepresenting *Anthropology and Africa* Mafeje manufactures an opportunity to credential himself. He lists for us the names of many of the

anthropologists he has known and not only refers to his collaboration with Monica Wilson on a 1963 book on Langa township in South Africa, but alleges that he changed her mind, too (about what I wonder). The Preface to Monica Wilson's book acknowledges the fieldwork Archie Mafeje did but says, 'The formulation of the problems, the direction of the field work, and the writing of the book was done by professor Monica Wilson' (p. viii). (Moore 1996: 15)

This turns on the question of seniority and whether or not Mafeje could have been able to persuade Wilson about the course of the argument in the book. Falk Moore, from what one gathers, seems to question Mafeje's claim that he could have been able to convince Wilson to do otherwise rather than the mere question of who wrote the text. Bank continues:

The debate seems then to have come full circle. In the mid-1960s we had the striking silencing of Archie Mafeje's contribution in journal reviews based in part on the formulation of the respective roles of fieldworkers and authors in the book's Acknowledgements. In the mid-1970s Mafeje implicitly seemed to endorse this, but then began making greater claims to authorship in the course of his debate with Sally Falk Moore in the mid-1990s. Since his death, essays published in recent years have recast Langa as Mafeje's 'masterly ethnography' and Mafeje rather than Monica Wilson has been credited with the book's most 'seminal ideas'. (Bank with Swana 2013: 258)

The most embarrassing thing about this crafty statement is that none of it is actually true. First, the reviewers of the book never consciously engaged in a 'debate' or exchange about who authored the book. They discussed its contents. Second, in the 1970s Mafeje never rejected authorship of the book but actually conducted auto-critique and rejected the liberal functionalist theoretical and ideological premises on which it is founded. Third, in his debate with Falk Moore, Mafeje merely repeats what actually took place in the course of producing the book. Even then, that was not the issue about which he and Falk Moore were debating. The issues were theoretical and ideological i.e. the epistemology of alterity in anthropology. There was no debate about authorship between Mafeje and Falk Moore. Fourthly, none of the contributors to the CODESRIA tribute to Mafeje actually disparage Wilson in favour of Mafeje or that the latter was the one who came up with 'seminal ideas'. The only part of the article in which Adesina talks about 'seminal ideas' in relation to the *Langa* book is when he says: 'Authorship, if that is what this confers on Monica Wilson, does not mean exclusivity of even the most

seminal ideas in a manuscript' (Adesina 2008a: 24). This would not be the first time Bank assigns to Adesina statements and arguments which the latter did not make. In his booklet on Mafeje, Bank does the exact same thing (see Bank 2010; Nyoka 2011). Having noted these distortions and false attributions, Adesina argues:

It is, however, in the context of recognition of Archie Mafeje as an intellectual that Andrew Bank's work falls on the wrong side of the 'conspiracy of empathy'. The Mafeje that comes across in the work and exhibition is the apprentice of Monica Wilson. ...More troubling for a work of social history is Bank's retreat to 'gossip', and the choice of the single source. ...The failure to engage with Mafeje's friends and colleagues may be treated to a second worrying tendency and overall tone of the write-up: eagerness to knock down a series of 'myths'. For instance, Bank accuses me, as one of the mythmakers, of claiming that 'Archie Mafeje was never really a social anthropologist in the true sense. He was always at heart a sociologist who just happened to begin his career in social anthropology departments at UCT and then at Cambridge University'. Here one must admire Bank's capacity for fiction. On the page to which he referred (*CODESRIA Bulletin* (3/4), 2008, p.24), the only reference that I made to 'sociologist' was Bernard Magubane and not Mafeje... In an apparent reference to the 2008 special issue of the *CODESRIA Bulletin* devoted to Mafeje, Bank (2010: 9) accused Mafeje's 'friends and political allies' of casting his 'life history in overly simplistic terms as a linear success story'. He further claimed that Mafeje contributed to this 'myth' by re-inventions of his history, as he sought to position himself in debates by attempting to establish a longer pedigree for himself as a critic of social anthropology'. This again is a case of Bank's over eagerness to knock down imagined 'myths', and in the process set up straw arguments. For a work of social history, Bank did not interview a single one of such friends and allies – even those in South Africa. ...the Mafeje that emerges from Bank's 'social history' is not one understood in his own right, but as a protégé of Monica Wilson. Yet, one is convinced that Wilson herself would have been appalled at this caricature of Mafeje. (Adesina 2011: 3-4)

Adesina is worth quoting at length here in order to highlight the problematic way in which Bank reads Mafeje and those who take Mafeje's work seriously. Bank's work on Mafeje is

replete with inaccuracies and slanted interpretations (see Bank 2010; Bank with Swana 2013).³⁴ Concerning Bank's booklet and exhibition on Mafeje, Fred Hendricks observes:

The very title of the booklet is clearly a misnomer because it does not deal with his work at all, but merely provides a rough overview premised on a limited understanding of Mafeje's *oeuvre* and his political foundations. ...In both this exhibition and the accompanying booklet, Mafeje is treated as an artefact rather than a scholar. This representation of the man suggests that he needs to be recovered as an item of anthropological interest. Needless to say, this is a deeply problematic approach to Mafeje as it is steeped in alterity, objectifying the man while ignoring his scholarship. ...Not only does the booklet not capture the complexity of the man, it also implicitly expects some form of unproblematic uniformity and simplistic homogeneity in his predispositions. (Hendricks 2012: 4-5).

Bank goes on to argue that: 'We argue that the production of *Langa* is better seen as creative dialogue and co-production, rather than in terms of exclusive notions of authorship' (Bank with Swana 1913: 258). This suggestion would make sense if there was such a debate to begin with. Furthermore, it explains why Bank himself credits Mafeje's sister, Vuyiswa Swana, as the co-author of his (Bank) essay. The essay, 'Speaking from Inside' (2013), like the booklet, *Archie Mafeje: The: Life and Work of an African Anthropologist* (2010), was written by Bank himself. What Bank did was to interview Mafeje's sister about her brother's background. Notably, the authors of this essay are credited as 'Andrew Bank with Vuyiswa Swana' rather than 'Andrew Bank and Vuyiswa Swana'. At any rate, the general point of the preceding discussion is that Bank has an extremely limited understanding of Mafeje's work. What makes his study of Mafeje disturbing are the numerous distortions he imputes to other intellectuals (see Adesina 2011; Bank 2010; Bank with Swana 2013; Nyoka 2011).

While conducting the Langa research, Mafeje took the opportunity to carry out research for his own work. For example, in 1963 he published his own paper, 'A Chief Visits Town'.

³⁴ In 2015, I offered to interview Andre Bank. An email was sent to him on 09 July 2015, and a follow up email was sent on 13 July 2015. Bank ignored both emails. When I bumped into him at UCT's African Studies Library and requested an interview, his response was that I must send him my doctoral research proposal in order for him to vet it so that he can see if the two of us can work together 'creatively'. This is so because, Bank claims, there are people who are out to 'defend' Mafeje (against what or whom, nobody knows). Obviously, I did not send my proposal to Bank because in this study, like everybody else I have interviewed, he would have been a research participants or an interviewee not a co-author or a supervisor. Thus, I saw no need to send him my research proposal, especially when I had sent him a detailed email explaining the purpose of the study as I did with all the other participants.

Although the paper was published in the *Journal of Local Administration Overseas*, it was initially submitted to the Wits University based journal, *African Studies*. The article was submitted on behalf of Mafeje by Wilson to the editor, Julius Lewin. In her letter Lewin, Wilson says:

Dear Sir, I wish to recommend to you an article by a student of mine here, Archie Mafeje, analysing the visit of a Tembu chief to Langa. Mr Mafeje has been working with me on a study of the social groups of Langa and he collected this material not in the time for which he was paid but in his spare time. I think it is well worth publication though it does not quite fit into the analysis we shall publish of Langa social groups. I therefore suggested to him that he write it up as a separate article.³⁵

In a letter to Wilson, dated 26 April 1962, Lewin's secretary wrote to Wilson to say the article will be published in *African Studies* although 'it will have to take its turn but we hope to get it in by the end of this year'.³⁶ By 17 July 1962, Lewin wrote to Wilson to say although he had initially accepted the article, he had now 'read it with care' and found 'major difficulties about it': First, it was 'defamatory' and libellous and 'could easily expose' Wits University Press to 'legal proceedings'. Second, Mafeje's account of the chief's visit and attitudes toward him by the people of Langa were based on Mafeje's subjective observations and therefore too particularistic to be of sociological value. He suggested that the paper be sent to the *Race Relations Journal*, 'where perhaps the opinions he wants to express more properly belong'.³⁷ Mafeje was not impressed, he wrote back to Lewin: 'Dear Mr Lewin, I have received your letter of July 17. I find it odd, to say the least, that on April 26 you should accept an article for publication, and then write three months later rejecting it. Yours sincerely, Mafeje'.³⁸ Mafeje did not send the article to *Race Relations Journal*. Instead, Wilson sent it on his behalf to the London-based *Journal of Local Administration Overseas* and it was published in volume two issue number two of the journal in April 1963. In a letter to the editor, BV Davies, Wilson regrets the fact that the paper had to be shortened in order to remove the aspects in which Mafeje criticises the apartheid government. Davies had asked that the paper be shortened from

³⁵ Wilson letter to Julius Lewin, 09 April 1962. University of Cape Town, UCT Libraries Manuscripts and Archives Division, Godfrey and Monica Wilson Papers, BC 880, Correspondence with Archie Mafeje 1960–1979. Uncatalogued folder

³⁶ Lewin's secretary letter to Wilson, 26 April 1962.

³⁷ Lewin letter to Wilson 17 July 1962.

³⁸ Mafeje letter to Lewin 01 August 1962.

8000 words to 4000 to 6000 and ‘steer very clear of politics’.³⁹ Wilson goes on to say: ‘He chooses to sign himself Archie Mafeje and is indeed publishing a book with me under this name. For description I think you can say: post-graduate student in Social Anthropology at the University of Cape Town’.⁴⁰

As has already been noted, Mafeje had other things to do apart from conducting field research for the book on Langa and being a student of Monica Wilson. For example, apart from carrying out fieldwork for his MA thesis in the Transkei region, he also conducted research for the American political scientist Gwendolen M. Carter on the political processes and elections in the region in the 1960s. Carter had asked him to prepare a report for her.⁴¹ It was during this period that he got into trouble ‘for allegedly attending an illegal meeting’ in Flagstaff.⁴² Mafeje was arrested on Friday 16 August 1963. He was arrested in Cape Town and detained in Roeland Street jail on the basis of a telegraphic instruction from Bizana. Unfortunately for him, when he appeared before the Cape Town Magistrate’s Court on 22 August 1963 he had no legal representation because nobody knew that he was arrested. When it became known that he was jailed, his friends applied for bail but it was refused. An application to stay Mafeje’s removal from the jurisdiction of the Cape Town Magistrate’s Court was refused. On Sunday 25 August 1963, he was handcuffed and taken under escort to the Transkei by train where his case would be heard. He was to stand trial in Flagstaff. The charge was that of ‘addressing an illegal gathering’ and other charges which the police were ‘not prepared to disclose’.⁴³ His Cape Town attorney was David Dallas (who emigrated to Australia years later) of the Moore & Son Attorneys. Dallas lodged a notice to appeal on 26 August 1963. The appeal reference number was CSC 3/1/82 according to the Appeals & Reviews of 1963.⁴⁴

On 28 August 1963 Wilson posted a cheque of R200 for bail to Moore & Son Attorneys on behalf of Mafeje. Since Mr Dallas could not represent Mafeje outside of Cape Town, he instructed the prominent Umtata (now Mthatha) attorney of the Blakeway & Leppan law firm, Hugh White, to represent Mafeje in Flagstaff. According to *The Cape Argus* of 30 August 1963, Mafeje appeared before Magistrate R. Hooper of the Flagstaff Magistrate’s Court for

³⁹ Davies letter to Wilson, 18 September 1962.

⁴⁰ Wilson letter to BV Davies, 05 October 1962.

⁴¹ University of Cape Town, UCT Libraries Manuscripts and Archives Division, Godfrey and Monica Wilson Papers, BC 880, Correspondence with Archie Mafeje 1960–1979. Uncatalogued folder

⁴² D. de Keller letter to the SRC/Student Union Office, 28 August 1963.

⁴³ The Western Cape Archives & Records Service. Archie Mafeje versus The State, case number AR 445/63. Thanks to Thandika Mkandawire for suggesting that I visit state archives to see if the apartheid state had a file on Mafeje. Interview with Thandika Mkandawire in Cape Town on 15 July 2015.

⁴⁴ The Western Cape Archives & Records Service

formal remand to 09 September 1963. The *Cape Times* of 30 August 1963 reported that ‘an appeal fund for Mafeje’s defence is being organised on the UCT campus’. On 24 September 1963, Moore & Son Attorneys wrote to Wilson to let her know that: ‘We have been advised telegraphically by Attorney Hugh White that Mafeje was yesterday found guilty of the charge against him and fined the sum of R200. The fine has been paid and Mafeje will be returning to Cape Town at the end of this week’.⁴⁵ The letter continues:

We were informed earlier by Mr White that he had ascertained that the charge was one of holding an illegal meeting at the Sigcau High School, Flagstaff, during July 1962 and not July 1963, as we had previously been led to believe. We note from a report which appeared in last night’s *Cape Argus* that Mafeje pleaded guilty to the charge. Evidence for the State was to the effect that the principal of the school had given nobody permission to hold a meeting at the school during July 1962, and furthermore to the effect that Mafeje had conducted a meeting at the school at which he urged the scholars to join a certain organisation in order to obtain ‘the freedom of Africans’.⁴⁶

During this period Wilson had been on a short visit to the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles. That is where the letter was addressed to. In any case, Mafeje’s arrest calls into question both Ntsebeza’s and Bank’s supposition that there is no evidence that Mafeje was ‘radical’ or directly involved in politics during that period. No doubt the ‘certain organisation’ to which the letter refers is the Unity Movement or one of its fraternal organisations. In 1961 Mafeje married Nomfundo Noruwana, and together they had a son named Xolani, who was born in 1962. He met Nomfundo (who was a nurse at the time) after he was involved in an accident coming from a political meeting at Fort Hare (returning to Cape Town). Their marriage ended after a few years. At the beginning of 1964 Mafeje left for the University of Cambridge to begin his PhD programme. This meant that he would not be able to attend his master’s graduation ceremony. Mafeje’s degree certificate was kept by Wilson’s secretary, Leah Levy, until his father requested it. In a letter dated 19 October 1970, Bennett Mafeje wrote: ‘Dear Prof. Will you be kind enough to send us A.B. Mafeje’s MA certificate. We have got his doctorate certificate’.⁴⁷ In Cambridge, Mafeje was supervised by the prominent British anthropologist Audrey I. Richards. Strictly speaking, Mafeje’s PhD programme at King’s College in the University of Cambridge was interdisciplinary rather than

⁴⁵ Moore & Son Attorneys letter to Wilson, 24 September 1963.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Bennett Mafeje letter to Monica Wilson, 19 October 1970

purely anthropological. In a letter to Monica Wilson, Peter Carstens states that Mafeje had enrolled on the following modules: (i) 'Urbanisation', (ii) 'Social Mobility', (iii) 'Leadership in Modern Africa', and (iv) 'Rural Surveys in Africa (paying attention to Statistical Methods)'.⁴⁸ These are not standard anthropology modules. The first was an anthropology module, taught by Mafeje's PhD thesis supervisor, Audrey Richards, the other two were in sociology while the last one was offered in the School of Agriculture, and taught by the then head of school, Sir Joseph Hutchinson.⁴⁹ It will be remembered that Peter Carstens, not only offered 'illuminating' comments on Mafeje's MA thesis, but also it was under his 'supervision that the final draft of the thesis was prepared' (Mafeje 1963a: ii).

Although they were initially on good terms, Mafeje's working relationship with Audrey Richards deteriorated very quickly. By the time he had graduated from Cambridge, Mafeje and Richards had very little to say to each other, except to complete a project they were working on based on the fieldwork in Uganda. It resulted in the edited collection, titled *Subsistence to Commercial Farming in Present-day Buganda: An Economic and Anthropological Survey*, to which Mafeje contributed three chapters – one sole-authored, the other co-authored with the economist D.A. Hougham while the third was co-authored with Audrey I. Richards herself. It is important to note that Mafeje was reluctant to work on the project because he and Richards differed sharply on a number of issues. Chief among them was Richards's claim that the 'study was purely academic and political considerations did not come into it'.⁵⁰ Although Mafeje advocated this position in his comment on the *Langa* manuscript, he had later come to reject it and rightly so. In a letter to Wilson, dated 20 June 1970, Mafeje says: 'When your letter arrived, I was feeling slightly depressed after I had written to Audrey a letter which might mark the end of our uneasy relationship. I did not think it unfair to let her know what I felt and how I saw things. As one of the few people I accept without any ambiguous feelings and as an important friend I have in common with Audrey, I thought I should let you know by sending you a copy of a letter I wrote for exact information'.⁵¹ In her own letters to Monica Wilson, Richards had nothing good to say about Mafeje. Even when the subject of her letters had nothing to do with Mafeje, she always took the opportunity to present Mafeje in the worst possible light.⁵² In a

⁴⁸ Carstens letter to Monica Wilson 24 February 1964.' In *Monica and Godfrey Wilson Papers, BC 880, 'Correspondence with Archie Mafeje, 1961-1962'*, K1.2, Manuscripts and Archives: University of Cape Town.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Mafeje letter to Audrey Richards, 10 June 1970

⁵¹ Mafeje letter to Monica Wilson, 20 June 1970

⁵² University of Cape Town, UCT Libraries Manuscripts and Archives Division, Godfrey and Monica Wilson Papers, BC 880, Correspondence with Archie Mafeje 1960–1979.

letter to Wilson, dated 22 September 1970, Richards says: ‘In spite of his quickness and ability, I know for certain now that Archie has no academic gifts although I think he will do well in an organising job at a university because of his charm of manner, quickness and enthusiasm’.⁵³ She got it wrong. Mafeje went on to become a first-rate scholar.

It is important to note, however, that although Mafeje ended up carrying out fieldwork in Uganda, he had initially wanted to study West African social formations. This did not materialise because of two reasons: (i) Richards was not familiar with West African social formations; and (ii) much more importantly, his application for a permit to Ghana was turned down.⁵⁴ While pursuing the coursework component of his doctoral programme, Mafeje tutored undergraduates in the Department of Anthropology and worked as a Research Fellow at the Centre for African Studies, Cambridge. In a letter dated 29 September 1965, he wrote to Wilson to let her know that part of his job description as Research Fellow at the Centre for African Studies entailed doing theoretical work on Luganda ‘and running seminars with the land economists on some of the material that has come out on agriculture of developing societies’.⁵⁵ He left Cambridge in December 1965 to carry out fieldwork in Uganda which he began in January 1966 and completed in March 1967. While carrying out his fieldwork, he worked as Visiting Lecturer at Makerere University College. He submitted his doctoral thesis, titled *Social and Economic Mobility in a Peasant Society: A Study of Commercial Farmers in Buganda*, to the University of Cambridge in June 1968 (see Mafeje 1969).⁵⁶

2.3 Life in Exile

While completing his doctoral thesis at Cambridge, Mafeje applied for the position of Senior Lecturer at his *alma mater*, UCT, which was advertised in August of 1967. After an intense and laborious process, the Council of the University of Cape Town formally appointed Mafeje on 01 March 1968. He was to begin on 01 July 1968. Although the university followed all due process, the letter of appointment was never sent to Mafeje. The university allowed itself to be bullied by the apartheid government which objected to appointment of a ‘Bantu’ at a ‘white university’. The Minister of National Education, Senator Jan de Klerk, wrote to the Richard

⁵³ A.I. Richards letter to Wilson, 22 September 1970

⁵⁴ Mafeje letter to Wilson 29 September 1965. University of Cape Town, UCT Libraries Manuscripts and Archives Division, Godfrey and Monica Wilson Papers, BC 880, Correspondence with Archie Mafeje 1960–1979

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Bank (Bank with Swana 2013) and Ntsebeza (2016) record that Mafeje obtained his PhD in 1969. It is not entirely clear where they got that from. But the University of Cambridge records show that Mafeje obtained his PhD in 1968. See <http://www.haddon.archanth.cam.ac.uk/haddon-specials/theses/>

Luyt, the Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the university, to beseech him and the Council not to appoint Mafeje.⁵⁷ In a letter headed APPOINTMENT OF BANTU AS SENIOR LECTURER, Senator de Klerk wrote:

It is with a strong feeling of dismay that I have noted from the letter addressed to the Director of Education by your Registrar on the second instant that your Council has decided to appoint a Bantu in the person of a certain Mr A. Mafeje to a post of senior lecturer in Social Anthropology.

In a serious endeavour to obviate a catastrophe I hasten to express on behalf of the Government our intense displeasure at the decision which is tantamount to flouting the accepted traditional outlook of South Africa. Furthermore it is contrary to the entire spirit underlying the concession made as an interim arrangement in 1959, when legislation was passed for the establishment of the University Colleges, not to restrict the Universities to the training of white students by white staffs, but to allow the so-called open universities to admit non-white students subject to certain conditions. Although not specifically prohibited, it has always been understood that the staffs at the Universities, including open universities, would be whites.

In the light of the foregoing, I sincerely trust that your Council will not proceed with the appointment of Mr Mafeje, but will make further attempts to fill the vacancy suitably with a white person, even if this should entail re-advertising the post. Should your Council, however, disregard my appeal and give effect to the decision, the Government will not hesitate in taking such steps as it may deem fit to ensure that the tradition referred to above is observed.⁵⁸

Sheepishly and cowardly, UCT rescinded Mafeje's appoint although he got the job on merit. In the light of the aforementioned letter, Hendricks observes:

There is a tension of inconsistency in this request to prevent the appointment and the threat to ensure a racist tradition. While the minister recognises that there was no law prohibiting black academics from teaching at white universities, he intervened on the basis of an expectation that universities would and should abide by a vague declaration of an accepted tradition and as a quid pro quo for a concession that permitted black students to study at white universities with ministerial approval. The letter conveys an

⁵⁷ Jan de Klerk was the father of F.W. de Klerk, the last president of South Africa under the apartheid period.

⁵⁸ Richard Luyt Papers, Letter from the Honourable Mr J. de Klerk

expectation of compliance to racism and an acceptance of apartheid. The spotlight fell on how UCT was going to respond. (Hendricks 2008b: 432)

Luyt buckled under pressure and succumbed to de Klerk's outrageous threats. In his aide memoir, Luyt wrote: 'I informed the Minister that in deference to his interest in the whole matter of Mr Mafeje's appointment, the University had not posted the letter offering Mr Mafeje the senior lecturer appointment'.⁵⁹ Mafeje never returned to teach at his *alma mater* as he had intended. The whole issue led to what became known as the 'Mafeje Affair' and sparked student protests not only in South Africa but the world over (see Hendricks 2008b; Ntsebeza 2008, 2014). It is important to get a sense of what Mafeje himself thought of what happened to his appointment. In a letter to Wilson, Mafeje said:

I must confess, I somehow feel bewildered. I wish you or the university could tell me what is going on otherwise it is impossible to make meaningful decisions. If the university, for whatever reasons, feels too embarrassed to write to me, surely it should not be difficult for you to write to me about these matters. I know you well enough not to take amiss anything you might have to say, or to be unappreciative of some of the difficulties you might be experiencing as the head of your department. Secondly, I fail to understand why I am being treated as a stranger to South Africa. When I applied for the job, I was not at all unmindful of the fact that I might become a 'centre of a storm' in and outside the university. Also I did not expect to last forever at the University of Cape Town, precisely because I understand the South African situation too well not to know what to anticipate.

Therefore my reply is: 1. So far I have no plans for withdrawing my application for the post of senior lecturer in the Department of Social Anthropology. But, if it matters to the university, I do not hope to leave Cambridge earlier than the end of July or the beginning of August. 2. Depending on how external to the university the alleged causes are, I am not unduly worried about terms of tenure and the probable storm in which I might find myself as a result of the appointment.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Richard Luyt Papers, Letter to the Honourable Mr J de Klerk, 3 June 1968; Aide Memoir, The Mafeje Affair, 23 April–6 September 1968

⁶⁰ Mafeje letter to Wilson 16 May 1968. University of Cape Town, UCT Libraries Manuscripts and Archives Division, Godfrey and Monica Wilson Papers, BC 880, Uncatalogued correspondence with Archie Mafeje 1960–1979

From 1968 to 1969, Mafeje was Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague (Mafeje's CV 2000). His wish was to teach sociology at the University of Zambia. He had applied in 1968 when it became clear that he would not return to Cape Town. 'After a long process of thinking and internal conflict', he decided to accept the position of Senior Lecturer at the ISS.⁶¹ 'Something had gone wrong with the Zambia post. ...They were hoping to offer me a job over and above that. But it became apparent that one department could not have such a quick succession of senior appointments. It was then decided to write and offer me a senior research-fellowship on the Kafue River Project. But strangely enough, they did not say anything about the job I had applied for and for which I had been waiting for about 2½ months at their advice'.⁶² Had he gone to Zambia, Mafeje would have taught sociology with a radical fellow South African, Bernard Magubane, who had been teaching sociology at the University of Zambia from March 1967 until he left in January 1970 (Magubane 2010). From The Hague, Mafeje returned to Africa in 1969 to head the Department of Sociology at the University of Dar es Salaam until 1971. Although his academic career was in its early stages, Mafeje was held in high regard. For example, in a letter to Monica Wilson dated 10 September 1969, he says: 'At the end of this year I leave the Institute for Dar es Salaam. I have been offered a four-year contract there as a Senior Lecturer. I had some problems keeping my name out of the list of candidates for the Professorship. The Registrar and the Dean of the Faculty, both Tanzanians, kept writing to me as if I had applied for the Professorship whereas in fact I had indicated that I was not ready for that. Eventually, in offering me a "senior Senior Lectureship" they intimated that senior members of the staff may be called upon to act as Heads of Departments'.⁶³ Effectively, although Mafeje declined the Professorship, the university nonetheless made him a *de facto* (Associate) Professor without telling him. If that is not so, then what exactly is a 'senior Senior Lecturer'?

Mafeje did not complete his four-year contract. He had to leave for Europe for reconstructive surgery after a near-fatal car accident in January 1971. Mafeje never returned to Dar es Salaam. 'It was a mixture of reasons – some subjective and some objective'.⁶⁴ Part of the reason why he never returned to the University of Dar es Salaam is that the Principal of the university had refused to sanction an undergraduate interdisciplinary programme which he had designed the previous year.⁶⁵ The programme had been approved by the Faculty Board, the

⁶¹ Mafeje letter to Monica Wilson 15 December 1968

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Mafeje letter to Monica Wilson, 10 September 1969

⁶⁴ Mafeje letter to Monica Wilson, 4 July 1973

⁶⁵ Mafeje letter to Monica Wilson, 4 July 1973

Senate and the University Council. According to Mafeje, the Principal of the university and the Dean of the Faculty did not approve the programme. Thus following the surgery and the interdisciplinary programme debacle, Mafeje elected to return to the ISS in The Hague, where he had been Senior Lecturer from 1968 to 1969. The interdisciplinary programme which Mafeje sought to implement at Dar es Salaam is of importance if one is to understand his attempt to transcend disciplinary boundaries and how his ideas on interdisciplinarity mutated and changed over the years. The push for interdisciplinary courses was an agenda of a large circle of left academics at the University of Dar es Salaam at the time, as Mahmood Mamdani (2017) pointed out in his speech at the 8th Annual Thabo Mbeki Africa Day Lecture.

The shift on Mafeje's part toward interdisciplinarity is reflective of the wider milieu and debates at Dar es Salaam that Mamdani (2017) referred to rather than something that Mafeje came upon unilaterally. At first he was sceptical of the idea of interdisciplinarity. In a letter to Monica Wilson dated 09 February 1970, he says for example: '...the problem was that one cannot have successful interdisciplinary teaching, without strong organisation and sustained research within disciplines. Also some Departments feared, and rightly so too, that they would lose their identity and ultimately disappear under the new proposals'.⁶⁶ Only a few months later, in a letter written to Wilson dated 07 April 1970, Mafeje says:

Since April 1 I have been playing my new role as Head of the Department. It is rather a terrifying role, particularly in our Department where things have been absolutely chaotic and there a hundred important decisions to be made – all at once. The major problem is recruitment. Although many are fascinated by the Tanzanian experience, few are prepared to come to a Department with a dubious reputation. *Our insistence on candidates who appreciate the importance of the interdisciplinary approach* and who are alive to the problem of development in Africa does not make things any easier. *I think your friends are stupid and under-developed to object to interdisciplinary interests. Despite the conventional divisions which at times are treated as natural, human behaviour is unitary.*⁶⁷ (Emphasis added)

A few years later, he was not talking about interdisciplinarity but 'non-disciplinarity' as evidenced by his argument in the brilliant essay, 'The Problem of Anthropology in Historical Perspective' (1976a). Yet it may be objected to the notion of interdisciplinarity by arguing that

⁶⁶ Mafeje letter to Monica Wilson, 09 February 1970

⁶⁷ Mafeje letter to Monica Wilson, 07 April 1970

the unity of human behaviour (if accepted) is not a sufficient basis for rejecting specialisations in understanding aspects of such behaviour. There is unity and interdependence in Nature but that has not prevented the need to have Geology as distinct from Biology or Chemistry as distinct elements of understanding the dimensions of the functioning of Nature. Human Medicine deals with a single functioning (interconnected and interdependent) body but has not prevented specialisations focused on different aspects of the functioning of the human body. One is not suggesting that the body/nature and society operate the same way – one would be a functionalist to think so. One is simply dealing with specialisations.

Marx's concept of levels of abstraction in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital Vol. 1* address this succinctly, in terms of movements in analysis. First starting with the chaotic complexity of the whole; then moving into the inner operations of multiple aspects of the totality, and then walking one's way back to the starting point – so that the totality of the analysis of the latter part is a coherent complexity of multiple 'determinations'. Pedagogic specialisation is similar to the second stage in Marx's analytical framework; it does not preclude the integrated totality of the whole that 'interdisciplinarity' aims at. The Eurocentrism of the disciplines (if taken in their overwhelming orientation) is nonetheless a legitimate charge.

This is the subject of chapters four and five. Following his surgery, Mafeje began his new job at the ISS as Visiting Reader from 1971 to 1972. After that, he was Professor of Social Anthropology and Sociology from 1972 to 1976 (Mafeje's CV 2000). It is at the ISS that Mafeje became Full Professor at age 36 – the Queen Juliana Professor of Anthropology and the Sociology of Development. He also became a Dutch citizen. He would in later years describe himself as 'South African by birth, Dutch by citizenship, Egyptian by domicile, and African by love'. Although Mafeje spent close to six years at the ISS, he was always anxious to return to Africa. His friend, Brigalia Hlophe Bam, remembers that Mafeje had a great sense of urgency about him and was quite eager to return to Africa. So much so that although Mafeje is known for being stylish and sophisticated, Bam found Mafeje's furniture in his apartment in The Hague to be quite 'cheap'.⁶⁸ He saw no need to invest in expensive furniture and be comfortable in The Hague because as far as he was concerned he was in transit. In fact, in a letter written to Monica Wilson, before leaving for his first spell in The Hague, dated 01 November 1968, Mafeje says:

The Hague had actually made arrangements for me to go and discuss the terms of a possible contract with them. They also asked me to give a few lectures and one staff

⁶⁸ Interview with Brigalia Hlophe Bam in Pretoria on 28 October 2015

seminar. I did all that and, judging from their insistence that I consider their offer seriously, they might have found the sessions satisfactory. *I am still committed to the idea of going back to Africa*, but I expect that before very long I am going to be faced with a simple question of bread and butter.⁶⁹ (Emphasis added)

Mafeje wrote the letter from London after he had just completed his PhD from Cambridge. He was therefore between jobs. It was in the late 1960s at the ISS where Mafeje met his future wife and life-long partner, Shahida El-Baz, the Egyptian scholar and activist.⁷⁰ Shahida had known Mafeje through his work and the 1968 ‘Mafeje Affair’. She had been in the international student movement which protested against apartheid and UCT’s decision to rescind Mafeje’s appointment. When she met Mafeje at the ISS around 1969, she had been pursuing her master’s degree there although she was not in Mafeje’s class. They were to reconnect during Mafeje’s second spell at the ISS. By then, Shahida had left The Hague to pursue her PhD at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. In a letter dated 04 July 1973, Mafeje wrote to Wilson: ‘I have been closely associated with an Egyptian girl who is currently doing her Ph.D. in economics at SOAS in London. I had met her before I went to Tanzania. ...I have met her family and I have introduced her to my family. That marks the beginning of another serious relationship’.⁷¹

They were married and had a daughter, Dana, who was born in London in 1977 where Shahida had completed her PhD.⁷² But before they were married, Mafeje had to convert to Islam since Shahida was Muslim. As noted earlier, Mafeje had renounced religious beliefs in high school already, however he had no choice but to convert to Islam if he was to marry Shahida. Although he ‘converted’ to Islam, Mafeje remained a militant atheist materialist. The Egyptian radicals/left were very excited about the marriage of the two radicals, Archie and Shahida. But Shahida’s parents were a bit anxious and when they enquired as to where the two of them would live, Shahida gave them romantic answers such as: ‘We will live wherever the revolution is’.⁷³ The two of them were revolutionary intellectuals committed to anti-imperialism. In 1978, they moved to Cairo where Mafeje took up a post as Professor of Sociology at the American University in Cairo (AUC). In exile, Mafeje did a lot of organisational work with radical movements and organisations. For example, he was: ‘Member

⁶⁹ Mafeje letter to Monica Wilson, 01 November 1968. Emphasis added

⁷⁰ Interview with Shahida El-Baz in Cairo on 04 and 11 September 2016

⁷¹ Mafeje letter to Monica Wilson, 04 July 1973

⁷² Interview Dana El-Baz in Cairo on 09 September 2016

⁷³ Interview with Shahida El-Baz in Cairo on 04 and 11 September 2016

of the Executive Committee of the Third World Forum. Participated in the formulation of the ideas of the Forum on New International Economic Order, produced several position papers for the Group of 77 and UNCTAD and was one of the consultants to the Mexican Government in 1976 to advise on the setting up of a Third World University in Mexico' (Mafeje's CV 2000: 12). Throughout his career, he was also consultant to the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO). It is possible that they ignored some of his proposal because although he was a FAO consultant, throughout his writings on land and agrarian question in sub-Saharan Africa he was very critical of their work and proposals as will be shown in chapters six and seven of this thesis.

Mafeje was also a life-long member of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) which was founded in 1973 in Dakar, Senegal. Concerning CODESRIA's outlook, Mafeje once said:

CODESRIA is the brainchild of the Third World Forum internationalists. If anything, it was the African nationalists who indigenised CODESRIA by spurning both Frank's *dependencia* theory and Wallerstein's world-systems paradigm and, instead, insisted on an Afrocentric discourse. In doing so, they might have still relied on Marxist methodology but for different purposes. This would make neo-Marxists of those affected. It is possible that the neo-Marxists remained dominant intellectually but there is no doubt that radical African nationalism became the binding force in CODESRIA as an institution (once again, I am speaking from inside). (Mafeje 2000b: 34)

Adesina does not credit Mafeje's account and history of CODESRIA. Adesina observes:

Archie's history starts with the personality of Samir Amin not the founders of CODESRIA. These were four directors of national economic and social institutes on the continent who were invited to a Rockefeller-organised meeting at Bellagio in the second half of the 1960s to discuss Africa's development trajectory. They were not particularly happy that the discussion of Africa's development issues was being driven by outsiders, and decided to organise themselves into a Council of the Directors of Economic and Social Research Institutes in Africa (C-O-D-E-S-R-I-A). It was headquartered with HMA Onitiri, Director of the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research in Ibadan, Nigeria. In the early 1970s, Onitiri was on sabbatical at UNIDEP (headed by Samir Amin at the time) and decided that CODESRIA was best served by being headquartered at IDEP (an initiative of African members of the UN in

1962). Samir Amin became the first interim-Secretary General concurrently with his position of Director of IDEP. He handed the CODESRIA position to Abdallah Budjra (partly arising from complaints from the UN headquarters in New York). Thandika Mkandawire took over from Budjra, and the rest is history.

In other words, the primary impulse of CODESRIA was progressive nationalist – an abiding commitment to Africa and asserting its position. The most vocal strand in that was (neo)Marxist but more in the Cabral-sense than in continental European sense of Marxism. The origin of CODESRIA also explains why ‘development’ was attached to so much of its programmes for so long. The focus was on securing Africa’s growth and structural transformation (economic and social). In a sense, if we understand radical nationalism as fundamentally anti-colonial/anti-imperialist, focused on securing Africa’s economic and social advancement, then this better explains Mafeje himself. (Adesina, Private Communication; see also Mamdani 2016a, 2016b; Moyo 2016)

From its inception, CODESRIA became Mafeje’s intellectual constituency or reference group. It became his ‘intellectual home’ as Thandika Mkandawire puts it.⁷⁴ Sam Moyo says by the early 1990s, Mafeje had taken a conscious decision to publish his articles in journals based on the African continent. This was a contribution to the growing post-independence African intellectual constituencies, research networks, and knowledge production and dissemination.⁷⁵ After a careful study of Mafeje’s publications, such as are listed on his CV, one concludes that he accomplished just that (Mafeje’s CV 2000). In the 1990s most of his articles, apart from chapters in edited books, appeared in such African journals as *Africa Development*, *African Development Review*, *African Sociological Review*, *African Journal of International Affairs*, *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, *CODESRIA Bulletin*, and *Southern Africa Political & Economic Monthly (SAPEM)*. For Mafeje, publishing in these Africa-based journals was a matter of ‘conviction’. Although Mafeje had been involved with radical and progressive organisations such as the Unity Movement, the Third World Forum, CODESRIA, and so on, members of the South African liberation movements such as the ANC and SACP were hostile to him. They were of the view that he was ‘anti-ANC’ due to his relentless criticisms of the ANC/SACP. What they failed to appreciate is the fact that Mafeje was equally critical of his political organisation, the Unity Movement (see Mafeje 1992).

⁷⁴ Interview with Thandika Mkandawire in Cape Town on 15 July 2015

⁷⁵ Interview with Sam Moyo in Pretoria on 22 May 2015

For example, the touted ‘debate’ between Mafeje and Ruth First was not a mere ideological dispute (see First 1978; Mafeje 1978b). It was an attempt not only to settle political scores but also to put Mafeje in his place. Ruth First was a member of the SACP while Mafeje was a member of the Unity Movement. This was a personalised political and ideological battle. Yet before anything at all can be said about this so-called debate, it is important to note that Mafeje and First were neither friends nor comrades.⁷⁶ Ruth First had been part of the editorial collective of the journal *Review of African Political Economy (ROAPE)* while Mafeje served on the editorial board of the same journal. ‘However, two such feisty and outspoken individuals did not always make for cosy editorial meetings’ (Cliffe, Lawrence & Salahi 2007: 398). When Mafeje submitted the essay ‘Soweto and its Aftermath’ to *ROAPE*, Ruth First insisted not only on responding to Mafeje but also on publishing her response, ‘After Soweto: A Response’, in the same issue as Mafeje’s paper. This infuriated Mafeje and he objected to this stunt because it was not only unethical but also constituted what Gavin Williams calls an ‘intellectual ambush’.⁷⁷

Williams considers First’s actions in this regard to be her ‘most controversial contribution’ to the editorial process of *ROAPE*. Ruth First’s response pleased those who were sympathetic to the ANC/SACP. Mafeje responded and indicated that he considered Ruth First’s response inadequate. He made it clear, too, that he and Ruth First ‘were not talking about the same South Africa’. He went further to say in South Africa ‘there was expropriation of blacks by whites, even of the left’.⁷⁸ Tellingly, Mafeje’s response was never published. To add insult to injury, his erstwhile teacher and mentor Livingstone Mqotsi also submitted a critical response, titled ‘After Soweto: Another Response’, which was published the following year in the next volume of the journal. To be fair, Mqotsi was critical of both First and Mafeje. Mafeje submitted another paper to *ROAPE* in the early 1980s. It was rejected. Gavin Williams cryptically says the paper was ‘over the top’.⁷⁹ In spite of these issues with *ROAPE*, Mafeje continued to serve on its editorial board as ‘Contributing Editor’. He had had close and ‘extremely cordial relations’ with some of *ROAPE* editorial members such as Lionel Cliffe, Peter Lawrence, and Gavin Williams. He intervened on issues around editorial policy and ‘sent more than one sizzling cracker through the post over our South African material’ (Anonymous *ROAPE* Editors 1985: 96).

⁷⁶ Interview with Gavin Williams in Pretoria on 06 May 2015

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

It is important to note that Mafeje considered the white SACP members to be his 'worst political enemies' in exile. He argues:

Abroad, I gradually discovered that my worst political enemies were members of the SACP concentrated in London under the leadership of Joe Slovo, something which guaranteed the reproduction of the Stalinist political creed. Among them was Dan O'Meara and Duncan Innes who, when confronted with my doubts about their knowledge of the social dynamics and ethnography of the Transkei in my capacity as a referee for the *Review of African Political Economy* (ROAPE), questioned my credentials. Duncan Innes went so far as to ask rhetorically in an editorial board meeting of ROAPE, 'Who is Archie Mafeje?' and swore that he would not be found on the same platform as him. *Given the fact that in his right sense he could not assume academic and intellectual superiority over me, only one of two things he could have been asserting or both, white superiority or ideological superiority. Both were compatible with the praxis of the SACP.* (Mafeje 1997c: 2, emphasis added)

Mafeje continues:

What is said above applies to another group of the SACP intellectuals in the UK, namely, the members of the 'ANC' Education committee. When the South African negotiations started in earnest, the Dutch government contemplated the idea of offering special scholarships to black South African students to do post-graduate studies at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague. Before any decision could be made, it was thought advisable to canvass the views of the South African liberation movements. Professor Ken Post, a jolly Marxist, reported to me that when he went to interview the ANC Education Committee (in which Pallo Jordan did not feature, in spite of the fact that he was the ANC Director of Research), one of the questions which preoccupied them was whether I was likely to be named the head of such a programme. As Queen Juliana's Professor of Anthropology and Sociology of Development and a South African who had headed one of the programmes at the ISS for several years, I was a prime candidate for the job. But the totalitarian attitude of the SACP predicated that not only should the person in charge be their candidate, but that the students themselves should be recruited through the ANC. Little did the members of the Education Committee know that I had already recommended to the staff of the ISS that students should be admitted on grounds of merit and need, irrespective of their party affiliations.

Of course, the Dutch democrats could not credit the desire of any one party to monopolise the opportunities offered. So the whole idea was shelved indefinitely. (Mafeje 1997c: 2-3)

It is important to note that Duncan Innes, whom Mafeje mentions in one of the foregoing quotations, was President of the UCT Student Representative Council who staged a sit-in at UCT in 1968. What is important to note, however, as Ntsebeza (2008, 2014) brilliantly points out, the UCT sit-in of 1968 had nothing to do with Mafeje the person but the question of academic freedom. Indeed, Ntsebeza points out that some of those former students never bothered to find out what became of Mafeje. It is clear from the foregoing lengthy quotations that Mafeje did not have a good relationship with white SACP members. This did not necessarily begin in exile. ‘At the University of Cape Town, some members of the South Africa Congress of Democrats (COD) used to feed us with their literature on the assumption that our opposition to their policies and their Stalinist methods of struggle of the South African Communist Party (SACP) was due to ignorance about Marxist literature. Yet those of us who belonged to the Society of Young Africa (SOYA) had read the same classics by Marx and Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Mao Ze Dong, and Deutscher as them and organised the same clandestine study groups as them’ (Mafeje 1997c: 1).

In Cairo, on the other hand, Mafeje was well-received by the Egyptian intellectual community – particularly the radicals/left. Moreover, as Kwesi Prah puts it, Mafeje ‘had a roaring family life in Cairo with his partner Shahida and daughter’ (Prah 2008: 7). Prah goes on to talk about Mafeje’s memorial service in Cairo ‘in the *Omar Makram* mosque in the heart of the city’. Prah observes:

It was extraordinarily moving to observe the wonderful crop of the Cairene intellectual class assembled to honour and pay homage to his life. They included Tayeb Saleh, the well-known Sudanese–Egyptian writer; Kamal Bahaa Eldeen, former Minister of Education; Prof. Hussam Issa, Politbureau Member of the Nasserist Party; A.G. Shukr, Politbureau Member of the Progressive Party; Ragaa el Naqash, critic of Arabic literature; Prof. I. el Esawy and Prof. Helmi Sharawy. Archie managed successfully to pack all these different strands and impulses into his life and character. (Prah 2008: 7)

Helmi Sharawy remembers that he first met Mafeje in Cairo as a political militant in the early 1970s (Sharawy 2014). From 10 to 13 January 1972, Mafeje had attended with I.B. Tabata the 5th Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Conference in Cairo. This was the time when Sharawy was

coordinator of African liberation movements as part of his job as assistant to Mohammed Fayek, Minister of State (who was advisor to the President on African affairs).⁸⁰ Sharawy had also been Secretary of the African Association which is now known as the African Society based in Zamalek, Cairo. His main task was receiving African liberation movements and managing relations between them and Egyptian political and social organisations. He received African liberation movements on individual basis, and secured permission for them from the then President, Gamal Abdel Nasser, to be represented in Cairo in the 1960s. Liberation movements from all over the African continent – Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, Uganda and so on – were represented there. This job gave Sharawy the opportunity to meet and interact with members of the South African liberation movements who were represented in Cairo.

Although the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) mandated member states to assist two liberation movements from those countries who were engaged in the liberation struggle, Egypt wanted to accept three South African liberation movements – the ANC, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and the Unity Movement. Shahida El-Baz says she got to interact with I.B. Tabata and his partner Jane Gool through Mafeje, and facilitated military training for the Unity Movement in the Middle East.⁸¹ However, as Sharawy puts it, due to the ‘arrogance’ of the ANC, they could not accommodate the Unity Movement.⁸² They continued, however, to receive and interact with Tabata whenever he was in Cairo. The main problem, Sharawy remembers, was that the ANC had accused the Unity Movement of being a ‘Maoist’ or ‘Trotskyist’ organisation, something which made the Egyptian government reluctant to host the latter organisation. During Nasser’s presidency in the 1960s, Egypt had been pro-Soviet Union and would not want to be seen to be fraternising with Trotskyist organisations. It was after Nasser’s death during Anwar Sadat’s presidency that Egypt gravitated towards the West. Although Sadat posed himself as pro-Western ‘democracy’, undoing much of the political and economic foundations of Nasserism, he was a dictator who locked up Egyptian intellectuals who were critical of him. Shahida remembers that the Egyptian intellectuals despised Sadat for his actions. Although Mafeje never directly involved himself in Egyptian politics, he was a keen follower of Egyptian socio-political and economic developments and he despised Sadat for persecuting intellectuals. When Sadat was assassinated on 06 October 1981, Mafeje had been reading in his study. Shahida was watching news on the television. She shouted ‘Archie,

⁸⁰ Interview with Helmi Sharawy in Cairo on 10 September 2016

⁸¹ Interview with Shahida El-Baz in Cairo on 04 and 11 September 2016

⁸² Interview with Helmi Sharawy in Cairo on 10 September 2016

Sadat has been shot!’ Mafeje’s response was to the point: ‘Is he dead?’ Shahida said yes. Mafeje took out a bottle of champagne and celebrated.⁸³

One of the troubles with intellectual exiles is that they try very hard not to be absorbed by their new found ‘home’. Mafeje was always yearning to go back home. When it became clear to his South African family in the 1970s that he would not be returning to South Africa anytime soon, a meeting was arranged with him in one of the small towns in Botswana in 1972. Present at the meeting was his father, Bennett, his sister Vuyiswa, her husband Marshall and Mafeje’s son, Xolani.⁸⁴ At the meeting, it was agreed that since Archie the eldest son would no longer be coming home to look after his father’s homestead, this responsibility would fall on Vuyiswa and her husband Marshall. Bennett died soon after in 1974. But Mafeje kept in touch with his family throughout. In the 1980s he frequented Lesotho for academic conferences after which meetings would be arranged with his South African family.⁸⁵ At some point, Marshall and Vuyiswa wanted to sneak Mafeje into South African borders via Lesotho so that he could see the rest of his family in the Transkei. Thankfully, this plan was never executed because it was too dangerous. There were frequent roadblocks in and around Umtata (now Mthatha) in the 1980s. Mafeje would have been easily arrested.

Both Shahida and Thandika Mkandawire insist that Mafeje never fully immersed himself in the Egyptian society.⁸⁶ Mkandawire says exile is ‘very tiring’. He goes on to say there are three ways in which one reacts to exile: First, you miss and want to know everything about home. Second, you become totally indifferent. Thirdly, you become very hostile to the idea of home. Nostalgia turns into aggressiveness and hostility.⁸⁷ You then think of your home country as a ‘political project’ rather than an intimate place filled with memories. But then there is also the fear of being absorbed in your temporary or newfound ‘home’. For Edward Said, ‘exile is one of the saddest fates. In premodern times, banishment was a particularly dreadful punishment since it meant not only years of aimless wandering away from family and familiar places but also being a permanent outcast, someone who never felt at home and was always at odds with the environment, inconsolable about the past, bitter about the present and future. There has always been an association between the idea of exile and the terrors of being a leper, a social and moral untouchable’ (Said 1993: 113).

⁸³ Interview with Shahida El-Baz in Cairo on 04 and 11 September 2016

⁸⁴ Interview with Marshall Swana and Sandile Swana in Johannesburg on 31 March 2017

⁸⁵ Ibid

⁸⁶ Interview with Thandika Mkandawire in Cape Town on 15 July 2015; and interview with Shahida El-Baz in Cairo on 04 and 11 September 2016

⁸⁷ Interview with Thandika Mkandawire in Cape Town on 15 July 2015

Mafeje never wrote about Egypt and North Africa as such. The exile question is one explanation. The other explanation, Shahida observes, is that in order for Mafeje to write meaningfully and satisfactorily he would have had to speak and read Arabic fluently because Egyptian scholars write overwhelmingly in Arabic and the same is even truer of historical texts which he would have had to read in order to understand that society fully.⁸⁸ This is unlike other African countries such as Uganda which he wrote about. Historical and sociological texts about Uganda and other sub-Saharan countries are mainly in English. Yet the most obvious reason why Mafeje never wrote about Egypt is probably the truest. This is so because his research interests inclined him towards sub-Saharan Africa. It needs to be said, however, that in 1991 he was commissioned by Helmi Sharawy and the Arab and African Research Centre (AARC) in Cairo to write a comparative paper on the liberation movements in Palestine and South Africa. The paper was published in Arabic in 1992 in an edited book titled *Mantiq al-'amal al-watani: harakat al-taharrur al-watani al-Filastiniyah fi dirasah muqaranah ma'a harakat al-taharrur al-Afriqiyah (min al-kifah al-musallah ila al-hulul al tafawudiyah)* [*The Logic of National Hope: Palestinian National Liberation Movements in a Comparative Study with African Liberation Movements (From Armed Struggle to Negotiation Resolutions)*].⁸⁹ There is no surviving copy of the original English version of the paper.

At AUC, Mafeje taught a third-year sociology class called 'People and Cultures of Africa'.⁹⁰ Mafeje's former students, who are now professors in their own right in Cairo, feel that Mafeje never endeared himself to his students and that he was very intimidating.⁹¹ Yet, some of his bright students became personal friends and frequented his home in Cairo for intellectual and political discussions. Some of those students fell in love with each other in those gatherings. In his class Mafeje preferred students to engage in critical discussions rather than merely listening to him speak. If he asked a question and nobody answered, he would sit down and say 'Okay, I'll also keep quiet until somebody answers my question'. In spite of that, they nevertheless feel that he was a dedicated teacher who taught them to think critically and independently without trying to make 'mini-Mafejes' or 'Mafejeists' of them.⁹² Significantly, Mafeje's students say he never taught or prescribed his own work except for his article 'The Ideology of Tribalism'. In a letter to Monica Wilson, dated 07 April 1970, he refers to it as a

⁸⁸ interview with Shahida El-Baz in Cairo on 04 and 11 September 2016

⁸⁹ Thanks to Dina El Basnaly for the translation.

⁹⁰ Interview with Reem Saad and Hanan Sabea in Cairo on 05 September 2016

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² Interview with Hania Sholkamy in Cairo on 08 September 2016

‘pungent article’.⁹³ Generally, however, the views Mafeje expressed in class, Hanan Sabea recalls, are those he expressed in the essay ‘The Problem Anthropology in Historical Perspective’, i.e. all of the social sciences are equally imperialist and Eurocentric.⁹⁴

Although at AUC anthropology and sociology are offered in the same department, the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Mafeje never taught anthropology.⁹⁵ Important to note is Mafeje’s pedagogic approach. He never set an exam for his students. He preferred them to write term essays/papers to which he commented extensively. He believed, and rightly so, that an exam not only encourages students to learn by rote, but also tests memory rather than the level of comprehension of what was taught in class. Mafeje’s pedagogic approach also improves students’ writing skills. This is a very important pedagogic lesson for those South African social scientists who speak of ‘decolonising’ higher education. It needs to be asked, not unfairly, whether it still makes sense for social scientists (since they pride themselves for ‘critical thinking’ and research skills) to ask students to sit an exam. Of what value is testing memory, rather than the level of comprehension and understanding? Mafeje’s daughter, Dana, recalls that he once caught her studying a night before an exam, he asked her to go to bed and sleep because ‘exams are for stupid people’.⁹⁶

Well-aware of her father’s reputation as someone who did ‘not suffer fools gladly’, Dana never took anthropology or sociology at AUC. Instead, she majored in political science. Some of her friends unwisely signed up for Mafeje’s third-year sociology class in the hope that he would be kind to them. Not so. He was as tough on them as he was on other students. Although Mafeje was extremely proud of his daughter, and wanted her to excel in her studies, he once objected when Dana scored 100% for her political science essay. He asked how such a thing was possible in the social sciences, since unlike mathematics, political studies have no formula. He went so far as to confront Dana’s lecturer, who duly rebuffed Mafeje for interfering.⁹⁷ At AUC, he was known by faculty and students alike as a no nonsense academic. In the 1980s, Mafeje wanted to attend a conference in Lesotho, the uninformed Provost of the university, who was supposed to approve his travel grant, insisted that he would only approve Mafeje’s grant if he told him where Lesotho was. Mafeje was taken aback by this level of ignorance and therefore stormed out of the meeting. He relayed this incident to one of his

⁹³ Mafeje letter to Monica Wilson, 07 April 1970

⁹⁴ Interview with Reem Saad and Hanan Sabea in Cairo on 05 September 2016

⁹⁵ Interview with Reem Saad and Hanan Sabea in Cairo on 05 September 2016; and interview with Hania Sholkamy in Cairo on 08 September 2016

⁹⁶ Interview with Dana El-Baz in Cairo on 09 September 2016

⁹⁷ Interview with Dana El-Baz in Cairo on 09 September 2016

students, Hania Sholkamy: ‘That fool does not know where Lesotho is. What do you think, should I buy him a map?’⁹⁸ Mafeje’s former student and graduate assistant, Reem Saad, feels that his strictness may have alienated those students who not only admired his intellect but also wished to major in sociology. In this regard, his no nonsense approach was probably one of his shortcomings.

Mafeje’s tough exterior nearly cost him a potential friendship and comradeship with Thandika Mkandawire. Mkandawire knew about Mafeje when he was in Dar es Salaam. He knew Mafeje principally through his writings, particularly the then recently published article ‘The Ideology of Tribalism’. They would meet in person for the first time at the University of Stockholm, Sweden, in the early 1970s. Mafeje was there to deliver a public lecture. He spoke without notes and delivered a brilliant lecture. The lecture was about South Africa. Yet in some parts of the lecture, Mafeje seemed to condemn the unions who engaged in the 1973 Durban strike. Mkandawire was taken aback because he knew Mafeje as a radical South African scholar. So during the question and answer session, he asked Mafeje to clarify or otherwise elaborate on this point. Instead of addressing Mkandawire’s query, Mafeje launched a massive attack and accused Mkandawire of all manner of crimes. Mafeje said ‘I know you are from Malawi. Malawi supports apartheid and you have no business asking me a question about South Africa’.⁹⁹ Mafeje wrongly assumed that Mkandawire was an official representative of ‘the Banda regime’. Unbeknown to Mafeje, Mkandawire was a Malawian ‘refugee’. Mkandawire had his passport (hence his citizenship) revoked by the Banda regime while he was in Columbia (as an extension of his studies at Ohio State University) for his critical position on the Banda government. Mkandawire had left Malawi on a US scholarship (part of US’s gift to Malawi) to study journalism in the US shortly after Malawi’s independence. His cousin, Guy Mhone, suffered the same fate.

Mafeje’s response is understandable when viewed in the context of the brutality of the apartheid regime on those who were critical of it and the paranoia of South African political exiles. Three days after the lecture, Mkandawire received a telephone call from none other than Mafeje. Mafeje apologised profusely and said unreservedly that there was a big misunderstanding. Mkandawire accepted the apology and invited Mafeje for dinner at his home in Stockholm. Mkandawire’s wife had cooked and at the dinner table, after having taken a bite, Mafeje asked her: ‘Were you trying to cook?’ Mafeje chose to return the favour and told the

⁹⁸ Interview with Hania Sholkamy in Cairo on 08 September 2016

⁹⁹ Interview with Thandika Mkandawire in Cape Town on 15 July 2015

Mkandawires that on his next visit he would cook. Indeed, he took over the kitchen and cooked. Dinner was served and Mafeje spent the whole night impressing upon everyone at the dinner table that ‘what they were eating was excellent food’ – *bon appétit*.¹⁰⁰ Shahida believes that Mafeje actually cooked better than her (Shahida). She says he cooked ‘scientifically’.¹⁰¹

Years later, as Executive Secretary of CODESRIA (1985–1996) in Dakar in the mid-1980s, Mkandawire organised a conference of South African scholars in exile. The political scientist Sam Nolutshungu was there, as well as Bernard Magubane, Archie Mafeje, and many others. They were a ‘very difficult group to manage’. This was due in part because of their divergent ideological and political views. Mkandawire relays the story of what he calls the ‘bizarre debate’ between Nolutshungu and Mafeje. Mafeje was a wine connoisseur, so was Nolutshungu who also appreciated whiskey. The debate ensued at the dinner table between the two South Africa intellectual gurus. Everybody paid attention to hear what this intense debate was about, only to discover that it was about wine. Mafeje was not known for losing debates. True to form, the ‘bizarre debate’ ended on a high note, with Mafeje telling Nolutshungu in no uncertain terms: ‘Sam, you’d better stick to your whiskey because you know nothing about wine!’¹⁰² Mkandawire had also invited donors such as the Ford Foundation and the Swedish Embassy who were all interested in funding a South African research network. Although they were present at the dinner table, Mafeje had refused to meet with them on account of the fact that they were ‘imperialists’. Mafeje said to Mkandawire: ‘I didn’t come here to talk to donors. I came here to talk to you’.¹⁰³

Importantly, Mkandawire feels that Mafeje enjoyed being in Dakar and interacting with the CODESRIA circle. Being there affected him in a ‘profound sense’ and reminded him that he was African, perhaps in a way that Cairo did not. Mafeje was frequently tasked by CODESRIA to work on various projects such as writing proposals, review manuscripts, to submit articles, to write reports, and so on. In 2001, he served on the CODESRIA Scientific Committee, in 2003 he was awarded the Honorary Life Membership of CODESRIA while in 2005 he became its Distinguished Fellow. Although he was appreciative of all these awards and honours, Mafeje wondered whether it made sense to be celebrated while he was still alive. He let his CODESRIA family know what he thought: ‘It might be that you are wishing me not a soon death, but death alright. When you honour people, you usually honour them after their

¹⁰⁰ Ibid

¹⁰¹ Interview with Shahida El-Baz in Cairo on 04 and 11 September 2016

¹⁰² Interview with Thandika Mkandawire in Cape Town on 15 July 2015

¹⁰³ Ibid

deaths, and the glory comes after their death. But this glory comes before death' (Sall 2008: 48).

Mkandawire realised early on that Mafeje did not like being told what to do. You give him work to do and a deadline; leave him alone, he would do it extremely well and submit it on time. It would be corrected, proof-read, edited and submitted before the deadline. Mkandawire says Mafeje never trusted copy-editors and proof-readers so he edited his own work. In the early 2000s, when Mkandawire was Director of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) in Geneva (1998-2009), he commissioned Mafeje to write a monograph on the land and agrarian question in sub-Saharan Africa. Mafeje complied and submitted the manuscript. It was reviewed and accepted without revision. When copy-editors sent page proofs to Mafeje, they had butchered his writings style beyond recognition. He duly responded and sent them a long letter giving them a free lesson in English grammar. They retreated and the monograph, titled *The Agrarian Question, Access to Land, and Peasant Responses in sub-Saharan Africa* (2003), was published in the original version he had submitted. When one reads Mafeje's draft manuscript against the published version this becomes very clear. The same holds true for most of his work. There is usually little or no difference at all between his extremely well-written manuscripts and published versions of the same. He expected others to do likewise. For example, Sam Moyo and Mkandawire, each independently, attest to the fact that after having commented on their draft manuscripts, Mafeje would say: 'You can think, but you can't write!'¹⁰⁴ It is not at all surprising, therefore, that Mafeje's Visiting Fellowship at the SAPES Trust in Harare did not last very long. He worked there in 1991 and left in the very same year. The Executive Director of the institute, Ibbo Mandaza, wanted Mafeje to keep office hours – 09:00 to 17:00. That was not going to work with Mafeje who did not like being bossed around.¹⁰⁵ As a result, the two of them fell out.

When I.B. Tabata passed away on 13 October 1990, Mafeje was in Zimbabwe already in preparation for his Visiting Fellowship at the SAPES Trust. He attended the memorial service. The members of the Unity Movement convened the memorial service in the garden of the Tabata/Gool home while his body lay in state inside. The funeral took place in Lesseyton, just outside of Queenstown in South Africa, on Saturday 27 October 1990. Although Shahida says Mafeje attended the funeral, it is not clear whether he actually did. To do so, he would have needed to secure indemnity from the South African government, as did Jane Gool and

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Thandika Mkandawire in Cape Town on 15 July 2015; and interview with Sam Moyo in Pretoria on 22 May 2015

¹⁰⁵ Ibid

other Unity Movement members, in order to enter the country and attend the funeral. There is no available information of Mafeje having entered South Africa in 1990. Through Mafeje, Shahida knew Tabata and Jane Gool very well. In 1992, Mafeje began a one-year Visiting Fellowship in the Program of African Studies at Northwestern University, Evanston, in the United States.

From Northwestern University, Mafeje worked from 1993 to 1994 as Professor of Sociology and Anthropology and Director of the Multidisciplinary Research Centre at the University of Namibia. Somadoda Fikeni says Mafeje was very excited about working at the University of Namibia.¹⁰⁶ Fikeni had been in Namibia during that period to carry out fieldwork for his master's thesis on SWAPO. He says Mafeje felt that Namibia was a perfect place for him to re-familiarise himself with South Africa if he was to do justice to his plan to rewrite its historiography. Mafeje believed that Namibia was a 'microcosm of South Africa'.¹⁰⁷ He was badly prepared for what the racist white academics and senior administrators of the University of Namibia had in store for him. The kind of cruelty and racism visited on Mafeje led him to conclude that the white settler community of southern Africa will never change. Namibian racists made his life a living hell in and outside of the university. It is unheard of that an academic would have to hire a bodyguard. This affected Mafeje most profoundly.¹⁰⁸ Shahida believes that the Namibian experience did much to re-familiarise him with racism which he did not fully experience in his sheltered life in Cairo.¹⁰⁹

Mkandawire believes that that experience was for Mafeje a rude awakening to the realisation that racism was alive and well in southern Africa. Intellectually, it rose him from his 'class analysis' slumber.¹¹⁰ Even so, in spite of the claim that he later adopt an 'Africanist perspective', Mafeje never quite confronted the question of race in his work of the 1990s and 2000s. He saw it as nothing more than an epiphenomenon unique to southern Africa. Unlike Magubane, for example, who saw it as the primary contradiction in southern African liberation struggles, Mafeje preferred the platitudinous claim that race is a 'social-construct'. The problem with such a view is that it ends where analysis should actually begin. Race may be 'socially-constructed', but that is cold comfort to those who are at the receiving end of racism. To say race is 'socially-constructed' is merely to state the obvious. To what end is it socially-constructed? This is the question which separates the liberal/Eurocentric Marxist and the black

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Somadoda Fikeni in Pretoria on 13 October 2015

¹⁰⁷ Ibid

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Shahida El-Baz in Cairo on 04 and 11 September 2016

¹⁰⁹ Ibid

¹¹⁰ Interview with Thandika Mkandawire in Cape Town on 15 July 2015

radical critique of racism. This is so because it raises a further question about the primary and secondary contradictions in liberation struggles. At any rate, the Namibian experience led Mafeje to write a 69-page dossier, remarkably titled *Mafeje and the Boers*, which circulated in *samizdat* within his inner circle.¹¹¹

From Namibia, Mafeje went back to Cairo. He was now Visiting Professor in his former department at AUC. He resigned shortly afterwards while contemplating coming back to South Africa. Shahida advised him not to resign but take an extended leave while weighing up his options. The principled Mafeje said ‘I wouldn’t cheat them’. Shahida’s view was that he did not need to resign in order to figure out his next move. Mafeje was anxious about coming back home. He asked her: ‘Do you want me to be buried outside of the land of my ancestors?’¹¹² He contacted his friend Kwesi Kwaa Prah, the founder and Director of the Cape Town-based Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS) which was established in 1997, to host him at the Centre.¹¹³ Prah declined because his newly established Centre did not have enough funds to host a world-renowned scholar like Mafeje. Mafeje was not entirely pleased with this response. A few years earlier, he had tried to come back to UCT and had applied for the AC Jordan Professorial Chair in African Studies. Ntsebeza (2008, 2014) argues that his application was turned down after those involved in the recruitment process collaborated with Mafeje’s former enemies and traducers at the University of Namibia. When Mafeje returned to South Africa in the early 2000s, UCT tried to apologise to him for this shabby treatment. He rebuffed their overtures and rightly so. They offered him an honorary doctorate but he ignored them. His nephew, Sandile Swana, says Mafeje had by then distanced himself from his *alma mater* and wanted nothing to do with it. He felt that the honorary doctorate was a frivolous gesture and that he did not need an honorary doctorate since he already had a PhD from Cambridge of all universities.¹¹⁴ Mafeje’s family accepted the UCT apology and honorary doctorate posthumously in 2008. Ntsebeza explores these issues meticulously and brilliantly in a paper titled ‘Mafeje and the UCT Saga: Unfinished Business?’ and Hendricks explores the 1968 ‘Mafeje Affair’ in great detail in a paper titled ‘The Mafeje Affair: The University of Cape Town and Apartheid’. There is no need to join issue with them on this topic, except to raise a few points in regards to Hendricks’ related publications on Mafeje (see Hendricks 2007a, 2007b, 2008a, 2012).

¹¹¹ Interview with Somadoda Fikeni in Pretoria on 13 October 2015; and interview with Thandika Mkandawire in Cape Town on 15 July 2015

¹¹² Interview with Shahida El-Baz in Cairo on 04 and 11 September 2016

¹¹³ Interview with Kwesi Kwaa Prah in Cape Town on 15 July 2015

¹¹⁴ Interview with Sandile Swana in Johannesburg on 31 March 2017

One of the major problems with Hendricks reading of Mafeje is the extremely problematic claim that the latter was ‘bitter’ because of the 1968 ‘Mafeje Affair’. Instead of locating Mafeje’s writings within the socio-political environment in which Mafeje found himself, Hendricks elects to focus on Mafeje’s personality and deduces from it unjustified psychoanalytical claims. Perhaps the strangest thing about Hendricks’ approach is the enormously strained argument that the 1968 ‘Mafeje Affair’ left Mafeje so ‘bitter’ that his ‘bitterness’ crept into his debates of the 1990s (see Mafeje 1995a, 1995b, 1997a, 1998a; Mazrui 1995a, 1995b, 1997; Moore 1996, 1998). For Mkandawire, the valid reason for Mafeje’s ignoring of UCT’s overtures is the most obvious: the UCT saga proved what Mafeje suspected all along, that it was an untransformed and racist university. Of course Mafeje felt insulted by UCT’s actions, but to accuse him of being ‘bitter’ is to blow things out proportion.

Hendricks’s claim that Mafeje was a combative ‘warrior’ engaged in a ‘lonely battle’ is problematic in a dual-sense. First, it places Mafeje outside of social and political struggles in which Africans were and are engaged. It unduly puts a premium on the individual at the expense of wider societal issues. It ignores the fact that Mafeje’s ‘polemics’ were not simply a matter of bad temper but part of a larger socio-political struggle. It might therefore be useful to revisit Mafeje’s argument with regard to polemics. Hear Mafeje speak:

We have already stated that the negation of one historical epoch by another is of necessity a revolutionary process. It is a struggle between particular groups or classes. In its intellectual forms the struggle cannot but be critical and polemical. Revolution implies an intensified attack on bad manifestations e.g. exploitation and repression in our time. It then transpires that polemics are an integral part of critique. *It is not a matter of style, as is often supposed, but a matter of theory trying to overthrow theory.* The incongruity between potentiality and actuality incites critical theory to be part of the practice of transformation, to be a factor in the historical struggles that it aims to comprehend. (Mafeje 1978a: 10, emphasis added)

Mafeje clearly saw his writings as part of a wider social struggle and therefore to reduce his ‘polemics’ to a mere question of style and ‘bitterness’, as Hendricks does, is to miss the point of his writings entirely. Second, the claim that Mafeje was an ‘embittered’ scholar is unsociological. It amounts, rather, to psycho-biography insofar as Hendricks is attempting to analyse Mafeje’s mind instead of his work and the environment which shaped them. Ignoring the 1970s and 1980s and making reference to the 1990s, results in coming dangerously close

to saying Mafeje had repressed feelings and emotions. It seems extraordinary that this should be so. In short, the issues raised by Hendricks about Mafeje's personality are extremely tangential to the latter's work. It takes a different kind of logic (not at all sociological) to give credence to an argument that seeks to bring people's personalities and emotions to bear on their scholarly work.

When Mafeje finally returned to South Africa in 2002, he worked as Senior Research Professor at the Centre for African Renaissance Studies, University of South Africa (UNISA). Barney Pityana, former Principal and Vice-Chancellor of UNISA, says it was in fact the former President of the National Research Foundation (NRF), Khotso Mokhele, who recruited Mafeje back to South Africa.¹¹⁵ Mokhele said to Pityana: 'I am very concerned that here is a great South African social scientist living in Egypt. Let us find a reason for him to come back home and live here. I am prepared to find money to fund him'.¹¹⁶ What Pityana did, he says, was merely to implement the recruitment plan by providing Mafeje with office space at UNISA and to place resources at his disposal. So the main task for Mafeje was to mentor and develop a new generation of South African social scientists, principally at the 'historically black universities'. UNISA would be his base. The idea, however, was that he should not be confined solely to UNISA. After all, in a very strict sense he was not a UNISA employee. The idea was that he would work with such 'historically black universities' as Fort Hare, Venda, Limpopo, Zululand, and so on. The idea was that he would spend time with research students from the said universities in the form of Summer/Winter Schools. He would also give a series of public lectures and supervise some doctoral students.

Things did not work out as planned partly because of 'Bra Archie's idiosyncrasies' as Pityana puts it.¹¹⁷ The main reason, however, was that much of this work was left to Mafeje to organise. The reason why he was given free reign is precisely because UNISA did not want to confine a senior scholar and subject him to university bureaucracy. In a very strict sense, Pityana says, Mafeje had nobody to report to. Mafeje's 'situation' in the university structure was not clearly defined. He was therefore left to his own devices. The major flaw with the whole issue, according to Pityana, was that there was not enough dialogue with the universities with which Mafeje was supposed to work. This is an important point because as somebody who had spent many years in exile, Mafeje had no knowledge of the people he was supposed to liaise with. This frustrated him because he actually went to the said universities and nobody

¹¹⁵ Interview with Barney Pityana in Pretoria on 05 November 2015

¹¹⁶ Ibid

¹¹⁷ Pityana referred to Mafeje as 'Bra Archie'.

seemed to know what he was doing there. This was the failure of the project, Pityana admits. One thing that Mafeje did successfully, however, was to help UNISA design, conceptualise and establish the Centre for African Renaissance Studies. Although Pityana had hoped that Mafeje would head this Centre, the latter declined to do so. He preferred an academic position instead, hence he became Senior Research Professor.

Pityana surmises that Mafeje declining the administrative position of Executive Director was a blessing in disguise. This is so because Mafeje was not a good administrator. Mafeje did not have the patience required for such a position. Nor did he tolerate nonsense from anybody. Although Mafeje died in 2007, his last major publication was the monograph published in 2003, *The Agrarian Question, Access to Land, and Peasant Responses in sub-Saharan Africa*. There are several reasons why he did not publish in the years between 2003 and 2007. The first reason is that there was a burglary at his house in Monument Hill, Pretoria. Both Mkandawire and Mafeje's nephew, Sandile Swana, confirm that his laptop was stolen with his draft manuscripts.¹¹⁸ The second reason was that Mafeje 'had been in poor health for a few years' (Adesina 2008a: 21). Indeed, Brigalia Hlophe Bam, then Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), had commissioned Mafeje to edit a collection of essays on the history of elections in South Africa.¹¹⁹ According to Bam, Mafeje took a very long time to submit the manuscript. The book, titled *The Disenfranchised: Perspectives on the History of Elections in South Africa*, was published posthumously in 2008 by UNISA Press. Mafeje died on 28 March 2007, two days before his 71st birthday. He was buried next to his parents in Ncambele village in the Tsolo District on 07 April 2007. It was a beautiful ceremony which combined the rituals of amaXhosa, the Wesleyan Methodist Church and Islam.¹²⁰

Shahida says she asked some of Mafeje's CODESRIA colleagues who are of Islamic faith to pray at his graveside. The former Executive Secretary of CODESRIA, Ebrima Sall, was one of them. South African intellectuals isolated and ignored Mafeje upon his return to the country. Indeed, Adesina says Mafeje's return to South Africa was akin to a return to exile. Yet since his passing in 2007, efforts have been made to preserve his legacy. In 2010 he was awarded posthumously an honorary doctorate, Doctor of Literature and Philosophy, by Walter Sisulu University. In 2012, UNISA established the Archie Mafeje Research Institute. There is, too, the Annual Archie Mafeje Memorial Lecture organised by the Africa Institute of South

¹¹⁸ Interview with Thandika Mkandawire in Cape Town on 15 July 2015; and interview with Sandile Swana in Johannesburg on 31 March 2017

¹¹⁹ Interview with Brigalia Hlophe Bam in Pretoria on 28 October 2015

¹²⁰ Interview with Shahida El-Baz in Cairo on 04 and 11 September 2016; and interview with Francis Wilson in Cape Town on 25 July 2015

Africa (an institute within the Human Sciences Research Council) and the Archie Mafeje Research Institute. The inaugural memorial lecture was delivered in 2010 by Mafeje's friend, Dani Nabudere. The Tiso Foundation funds doctoral studies through the Archie Mafeje Scholarship for Advanced Study. Recently, UCT established the Archie Mafeje Professorial Chair in Critical and Decolonial Humanities. This Professorial Chair was established by the School of African and Gender Studies, Anthropology and Linguistics at UCT. What is needed is critical engagement with Mafeje's work.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter was not intended to narrate a life history of Archie Mafeje. Instead, the chapter attempted to locate him within his intellectual and political environment so as the better to understand his writings. For this reason, the chapter is better understood as an attempt to contextualise Mafeje's work. The first part of the chapter dealt with Mafeje's background and early political and intellectual development. The second part discussed his intellectual training at the University of Cape Town, his political interaction within the Unity Movement and his time at the University of Cambridge. The third part of the chapter engaged with his intellectual and political environment in exile and his return to South Africa. To put it briefly, this chapter serves as a preamble to the ensuing chapters on Mafeje's scholarly writings.

Part II: A Critique of the Social Sciences

Chapter Three

From Liberal Functionalism to Radical Social Science

3.0 Introduction

To a great extent this chapter will focus on Mafeje's critique of the concept of 'tribalism' and its counterpart, 'ethnicity'. This is so for at least two reasons. First, his essay on tribalism seems to be the one that effectively established a clear radical break with Mafeje's early liberal functionalism, although it constitutes a thematic critique of anthropological categories rather than a programmatic critique of the social sciences. Second, Mafeje's handling of the concept of tribe led to misinterpretation, on the part of his readers, which are here clarified. Mafeje does not reject the entity or the institution of tribe as having been non-existent, but rather rejects it for being anachronistic (Mafeje 1971, 1991a, 1993a, 2002a). In *The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations* (1991a), he in fact says explicitly that to assume that he rejects the term is to misread his argument. What he rejects, fundamentally, is the ideology of tribalism. Adesina's critique is that in saying the notion of tribe is anachronistic, Mafeje concedes that there were tribes on the African continent in the past (Adesina 2008b). One of Mafeje's critics, John Sharp (1998: 69), argues similarly when he says 'it is important to recall that Mafeje has never said that tribes were simply a figment of the European imagination, but rather that European observers generalised the notion of tribe to be an inherent feature of all African social formations'. Over and above that, this chapter is intended to demonstrate Mafeje's thematic critique of anthropological categories, while the next two chapters are intended to demonstrate his programmatic critique of the social sciences proper.

3.1 Early Functionalist Writings

Mafeje began working as Monica Wilson's research assistant on the study of Langa in November 1960 until September 1962. His field notes led to the production of the manuscript of the book, *Langa: A Study of Social Groups in an African Township* (1963). The book was published the same year he completed his master's degree, with a thesis titled *Leadership and Change: A Study of Two South African Peasant Communities* (1963a). At any rate, the Langa study seeks to answer two questions: (i) what are the effective social groups in Langa? (ii) When and why do they cohere, and when and why do they split or dissolve (Wilson and Mafeje 1963)? This second question, the authors argue, leads to one of the 'fundamental problems in social anthropology': What is the basis for the coherence of groups (Wilson and Mafeje 1963: 11)? Typical of liberal academics, the authors argue that although South Africa was in a

political turmoil in the 1960s, they did not ask political question to their participants. The claim is that the two major political organisations at the time, the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) were banned. Yet, before Mafeje began working on the project, when Dr ARW Crosse-Upcott was the fieldworker, from July 1955 until March 1957, at the time when the two political organisations were not yet banned, they could not pose political questions ‘because that would have aroused political suspicion’ (Wilson and Mafeje 1963: 11). The two political organisations were banned in 1960. During Crosse-Upcott’s tenure as fieldworker surely political questions could have been posed. This silence on political issues highlights one of the major problems with liberal anthropological writings, the tendency to remain ‘neutral’ and acquiesce in the face of burning political matters. It may be said that this is often a reflection of political commitment: often antagonistic to the demands and objectives of the suppressed group. It is about acquiescence with the oppressor group even if they disagree on minor issues. This commitment is more of Wilson than Mafeje, even at this early stage.

That liberal functionalist anthropology assumed ‘neutrality’ or ‘objectivity’ need not lead one into thinking that the discipline was ‘apolitical’. On the contrary, that anthropologists remained silent on matters political in favour of ‘value-free’ ‘scientific’ enquiry was itself a political manoeuvre typical of liberal academics. On the pitfalls of liberalism, Adesina makes the following illustrated observation:

What is unique about liberalism, generally, is how easily liberals acquiesced with the horrendous deprivation and violence done to the *Insignificant Other* around them. ...the continued adherence to [Classical English Liberalism] has the tendency, inherently, to justify, rationalise, and acquiesce with injustice and inequity; and for continued defence of class/race/gender privileges. Often, the defence of these privileges is couched in the language of *individual* freedom and liberty and against government encroachment. In the university setting, this will be presented as academic/intellectual freedom. (Adesina 2005: 30–31, emphasis in original)

Indeed, in anthropological writings certain questions were never posed (Magubane 2007). When posed, such treatment as they got was rather perfunctory. Chief among these questions are the questions of slavery, conquest, land dispossession, exploitation and oppression. All of these, in Magubane’s view, ‘constitute a historical totality of horror, whose structures are bound together in such a way that any one of them considered separately is an abstraction’ (Magubane 2007: 254). The problem of abstraction was, of course, not unique to anthropology

but was shared by historians as well. Magubane observes: 'What is striking about the historiography of South Africa is that each generation seems to think that history began only yesterday and what happened a day before yesterday is "ancient history" that has no relevance for today's problems' (Magubane 2007: 253). Of course, such a tendency ignores the fact that problems of the past weigh heavily on the present.

Magubane saw in the discipline of anthropology a sinister political project which was, in spite of its purported neutrality, designed to enable colonial administration and apartheid in the case of South Africa. He writes: 'In a colonial situation, Africans were studied and conceptualised by anthropologists because they belonged to what Eric Wolf later described as "People Without History". That is, the study of Africans grew up as an applied discipline, conducted mainly by anthropologists for the purpose of managing them so that they could be controlled and exploited' (Magubane 2007: 262). The very concepts deployed in anthropological studies were ideologically laden. Magubane argues that although anthropological writings spoke of social change in Africa, they could not account for change because 'failure to account for change was built into the subject as a theoretical discipline' (Magubane 1968: 23). In the eyes of anthropologists, writes Magubane, Africa served as 'raw material for anthropological studies'. As such, because of the ahistorical nature of anthropology, it was unable to account for changes which were taking place in Africa since the advent of colonialism. To the extent that it did, it did so in ethnocentric and mechanistic terms. Anthropological 'findings' described black people's behaviour and needs but overlooked the historical and structural context which gave meaning to such needs. Following C. Wright Mills, Magubane (1968) refers to such undialectical and seemingly apolitical analyses as 'savage neutralism'.

In any case, it was due to Mafeje's participation in the study of Langa that certain of these problems were avoided. For example, he used or adopted the terms which participants used for themselves. Mafeje's first sole-authored article, 'A Chief Visits Town' (1963b), is concerned to 'illustrate the attitude of townspeople in Cape Town to chiefs' (Mafeje 1963b: 88). By 'townspeople' he includes both black migrant workers and permanent residents of the said town. Mafeje is interested in particular in the former group. 'Migrant workers', he argues, 'regard themselves as country people and most of them have their families in the country. Their reaction in any given political situation is of particular interest, as it gives the sociologist an opportunity of seeing how the people's aspirations fit in the Government's policy of increasing the power of Bantu authorities in the country, and appointing chiefs' representatives in towns or establishing urban Bantu councils' (Mafeje 1963b: 88). In particular, Mafeje sets out to

describe the arrival of Mtikrakra, the third chief of abaThembu, in Cape Town. Beyond the descriptive nature of the article, its theoretical thrust is that by the 1960s there were no tribes to speak of in South Africa. The section that follows deals in some detail with the concept of tribe and the ideology of tribalism. In the meantime, it is important to note that the absence of tribal entities in South Africa meant that, contrary to liberal functionalist anthropology, there was no absolute divide between rural and urban settings. This view is given extra strength by the fact that due to the migrant labour system, the Africans in the country were in large measure already incorporated into the British colonial state by the end of the nineteenth century. Thus the use of the classification 'tribe' was an anachronism in that by the time the apartheid government was in power, some Xhosa chiefs had become pan-Africanists of the PAC variety, and had thus transcended ethnic identities in order to fight racial oppression (Mafeje 1963b). The chief's visit to Cape Town was meant precisely to illustrate this point. This is a political reality, informed by its broader context, which anthropological writings failed to grapple with.

Mafeje's subsequent paper, 'The Role of the Bard in a Contemporary African Community' (1967), was part of his thematic critique of anthropological anachronism which reduced African societies to tribes. He uses the English term 'bard' interchangeably with, or otherwise to translate, the Xhosa word '*imbongi*'. Mafeje does this because he sees a similarity between *imbongi* and the bard in ancient Europe. The bard was, in anthropological literature and linguistics, reduced to a praise-singer and Mafeje sought to show that this was a misplaced assessment in that bards were more of socio-political critics than praise-poets (Grant 1928; Jordan 1957; Schapera 1965). In accentuating this view, Mafeje sought to demonstrate that anthropologists and linguists were, in calling bards praise-poets, 'over-emphasi[sing] the wrong aspect of the institution' (Mafeje 1967: 193). According to Mafeje, there is a functional difference between bards and individual members of society who compose praise poems for themselves or their loved ones. Anthropologists saw the difference only in status i.e. those who did it as a calling and those who did it for personal reasons. The former had greater political significance while the latter was for self-entertainment. Due to the seriousness of the institution of *imbongi*, not every member of society could stand up in public gatherings and recite a poem either for a chief or the general public. Those who nevertheless do so may do it for personal gain or recognition, but that is hardly the central function of the bard. Be it noted that to argue that the bard or *imbongi* is best understood as a socio-political critic, as against a praise-poet, it is not argued that *imbongi* does not praise the chief (every political institution has its legitimisers). The issue, however, is to call into question the view that *imbongi* is primarily a praise-singer.

Apropos the genealogy of the bard, Mafeje argues that although ‘often loosely used as synonymous with “poet”, “bard” is a term of Celtic origin that was applied to ancient Celtic poets who had peculiar privileges and functions’ (Mafeje 1967: 194). The term bard comes from the Latin term ‘*bardi*’ which was a title for national poets and minstrels among the people of Gaul and Brittany. Although the institution has disappeared in Gaul, there is ‘evidence of its continued existence in Wales, Ireland, Brittany and Northern Scotland, where Celtic people survived the Latin and Teutonic conquests’ (Mafeje 1967:195). In Wales the bards had hereditary rights and privileges akin to royal families in that they were exempt from tax and military service. This follows their formation of an organised society with hereditary rights and privileges. Their duty was to celebrate victories of their people and sing hymns of praise. They gave poetic expression to societal sentiments and in this sense they were very influential in the Welsh society. In Ireland, too, bards were a distinct social category, and they also had hereditary rights. They were divided into three types, each of which had a distinct role: (i) those who celebrated victories and sang hymns of praise; (ii) those who chanted the laws of the nation; and (iii) those who gave poetic genealogies and family histories (Mafeje 1967). In the South African context, the role of *imbongi* was to interpret public opinion and to organise it. Failure to do so, he would not achieve the status of a ‘national poet’. The major difference between the South African bard and his European counterpart is that the former did not enjoy hereditary rights and such privileges as tax exemption. Moreover, South African bards were not an organised society but pursued their endeavours as individual members of society. *Imbongi* was largely self-appointed and his success depended largely on how people responded to him. If the people responded positively, *imbongi* could be elevated to the level of ‘*imbongi yakomkhulu*’ (the poet of the main residence) or ‘*imbongi yesizwe*’ (the poet of the nation). In the latter sense, he transcended ‘tribal’ identities, although the sub-ethnic category of abaThembu can be said to be the equivalent of the ‘the nation’.

There are three key issues which characterise both the South African and the European bards: (i) they usually emerge from the rank of commoners i.e. they were not of royal blood; (ii) their role and substance depended on their reception or response by the people; and (iii) they had freedom to criticise (overtly or covertly) those in power. Having laid this historical and conceptual background, Mafeje goes on to analyse the poems of the *imbongi* known as Melikhaya Mbutuma. Mbutuma was *imbongi* of abaThembu paramount chief, Sabatha Dalindyebo. Mafeje followed Mbutuma as part of his fieldwork in the Transkei for his master’s thesis in 1963. The methodological lessons to be drawn from Mafeje’s paper relate to epistolary, archival research, ethnography and textual analysis. The poems were in isiXhosa,

Mafeje first reproduces them in the original and then translates them into English not only to make their meaning apparent to the reader, but also to subject them to critical scrutiny. Although likely to be clumsy in translation, and this is inevitable, it cannot be said that the translation is inaccurate or that the meaning is lost. Although *imbongi yosiba* (the poet who writes down his poems) is usually distinguished from *imbongi yomthonyama* (the poet who recites his poems from memory), Mbutuma's poems were in written form, 'except some of the shorter ones which I wrote down as he recited them in public gatherings' (Mafeje 1967: 196-197). These poems cover political events in the Transkei region from 1959 to 1963.

In citing these poems, Mafeje sought to illustrate the role of the bard as a mediator between two social categories – the ruler and the ruled. Although the poems as are analysed by Mafeje are political in content, his main goal is not to show how political the bard can be. But rather, the point is to highlight the bard's role as a mediator. Yet to mediate in such political circumstances as the Transkei of the late 1950s and early 1960s was *ipso facto* to play a political role. In any case, when the situation gets dire, *imbongi* is forced to abandon his role as a mediator and join forces with either side. If he sides with the ruler, whose authority is being questioned, he loses his social status which depends more on general acceptance by the people rather than the ruler. A reader of Mafeje's paper will not fail to notice his political fidelity to the 'people' which is quite evident in his analysis of the poems and the general political developments in Transkei of the 1960s. Moreover, unlike social anthropologists such as Schapera (1965), Mafeje clearly demonstrates that the 'people' are not merely impressed by the form of the poems from *imbongi* but generally the content or substance thereof. When the people ask for *imbongi* who 'says worthwhile things', or when the chief's entourage takes away the microphone from *imbongi* who was critical of the chief, everybody knew how politically-aware he was. The section that follows, based on the critique of the ideology of tribalism, forms part of an analysis of Mafeje's thematic critique of anthropological categories.

3.2 On the Concept of Tribe and the Ideology of Tribalism

Mafeje argued that few social scientists had been able to write about Africa without invariably making reference to 'tribalism' (Mafeje 1971). It is thus a question whether this is a distinguishing feature of the African continent. From the point of view of sociology of knowledge, objective reality is not easily distinguishable from subjective dispossession. In this sense, social scientific categories are hard to separate from the ideological baggage of their peddlers. It is not by accident, therefore, that when African scholars write about their societies tend to reach different conclusions compared to their Euro-American counterparts. This is also

true of such concepts as are deployed by the latter group of scholars. According to Mafeje (1971), in writing about Africa, liberal idealists, Marxist materialists and African ‘converts’ alike, have tended to assign nomenclature that is fundamentally at odds not only with African history but also the contemporary setting. As such, Mafeje (1971) argued, the problem with social scientific writings in Africa is not necessarily one of concrete realities but that of ideology – particularly the ideology of tribalism.

This phenomenon, Mafeje argues, is traceable to European colonialism and its ideological reconstruction of African realities. Europeans regarded the African continent, as against Europe, as distinctly tribal. European social scientists were unable to transcend such colonial categorisations of Africa as were used by colonial administrators. They could not transcend them precisely because their studies were handmaidens of colonialism and dispossession of the African people. This, writes Mafeje, produced certain ‘ideological predispositions which made it difficult for those associated with the system to view these societies in any other light’ (Mafeje 1971: 253). Thus colonial anthropologists and some of their African counterparts, have continued to write about Africa as if there were no significant economic and political changes on the continent by the turn of the twentieth century. It thus stands to reason, Mafeje maintains, that if tribalism is uniquely African, then the ideology that perpetuates it is distinctly European.

While European social scientists (see Gulliver 1969) sought to exonerate themselves by arguing that they do not use the term ‘tribe’ to denigrate Africans, but use it because Africans themselves tend to use it, it is significant to note that even if this were true, the usage of the term surfaces only when English is spoken. Even if it were true that Africans use the term, surely social scientists are not bound to use such terms as are used by their objects of enquiry. Instead of a critique rooted in historical and wider context, the issue ends up as phenomenological affirmation of what the objects of enquiry say. At any rate, the question stands: where did the ‘native’ subject of analysis derive these categories in the first place? There are instances where, as mentioned above, adopting the terminology of the research participants might be useful and even desirable. But there are instances where such a strategy might be downright complicit in perpetuating stereotypes etc. – particularly if the researcher uses derogatory terms uncritically just so s/he could mimic research subjects. Further, things are not always or necessarily what they are called. In South Africa, for example, the word tribe has no equivalent in local languages. The people tend to speak of ‘a nation’, ‘clan’, ‘lineage’ etc., or simply identify themselves according to the territory from which one originates.

That the concept of tribe only arises when English is spoken says something about its ideological origin rather than the Africans who use it uncritically. Significantly, ‘tribes’ who are noticeably the central unit of analysis in anthropological writings were, by and large, created by colonial authorities (Mafeje 1971: 254). That anthropologists were uncritical or otherwise unable to transcend it, says something about their complicity in colonial domination and structuring of African societies. Anthropological studies were serviceable to colonial administrators. It is thus not at all surprising that Africans, who are still shaped by colonial distortions, continue to use the term in spite of its connotations. The negative images which Africans come to have about themselves cannot be understood outside of this historical and sociological context. Mafeje invokes Marx’s and Engels’, *The German Ideology* (1965), with the following quote:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. (Marx and Engels 1965: 61 in Mafeje 1971: 254, emphasis in original)

Significantly, Mafeje argues, anthropologists ignored any noticeable changes in Africa by the turn of the twentieth century. The essentialist and purist nature of these assumptions conveniently depoliticised the colonial intrusion which forced African people into migrant labourers. This is the period in which Africans were being forced and ensnared into web of extra-economic and political relations. Even when Africans were residing in urban areas, albeit in squalid conditions, anthropologists always sought to retribalise them by either tracing their rural roots or by drawing invidious tribal distinctions among them through stereotypes, etc. This was not the only method they adopted, since they sought also to draw distinctions between the urban-based and the rural-based Africans. The former were purportedly aspiring to a ‘western way of life’, ‘Europeanisation’ or ‘civilisation’ while the latter were referred to as ‘red people’ or ‘pagans’ etc. The notion of aspiring to a western way of life meant that Africans paid a heavy price which resulted in de-culturation. These issues, emanating as they did from extractive economic and political relations, led to studies of ‘social change’.

Curiously, while anthropologists saw that African societies were not as static as they had hitherto thought, they never dispensed with ‘tribe’ as a unit of analysis. The concept became an organising framework in a different way. Whereas it was initially considered a rural

phenomenon, it was now discovered that it persists in urban areas after all. Thus anthropologists retribalised Africans while they at the same time sought to 'civilise' them. The rural/urban divide was, of course, a false dichotomy since the urban African was the same rural African. Sociologically, people adjust or adapt to the environments they find themselves in.

Mafeje goes on to argue that Epstein (1958) was one of the few anthropologists who was willing to dispense with the concept of tribe. Epstein's position was that Africans living in urban areas were not necessarily affected by the problem of tribalism. According to Mafeje, Epstein discovered that in the copper mines of Zambia miners refused to accept 'Tribal Elders' as their representatives or leaders in negotiations with mine management/owners. Non-salaried members of staff or waged workers were suspicious of salaried leaders who tended to act in accordance with their own needs. Having noted this, Mafeje is then led to conclude that this 'was another instance of class formation among Africans' (Mafeje 1971: 256). This is a controversial point which some may wish to dispute and argue that Mafeje mistakes social stratification for class. It might be argued that gradations within the same stratum need not admit class differentiation and that the so-called salariat is not a class apart from the proletariat.

For Mafeje this is a known datum, however, in that he does not declare the miners to be a class proper – but that they are gaining class consciousness. Enthusiastic about these developments, Mafeje is moved to declare that these were 'winds of change' which were fast becoming a reality. He mentions political scientists who came with notions of 'modernisation' in what they considered 'modernising states'. That such theories were no different from anthropological civilising missions is not something Mafeje offers to discuss. He goes on to argue, however, that anthropologists were incorrigible in their use of the term tribe as an analytic category, but only this time they were determined to buttress the 'persistence and resilience' of tribes than their 'disintegration' or 'disequilibrium'. So to stress an earlier point, while anthropologists initially sought the tribe in rural areas, they now sought to identify its resilience and persistence in urban areas. This represented, according to Mafeje, a shift although not change, in the ideological standpoint of anthropologists. For them, modernisation was, as against political scientists, not incompatible with 'tribalism' or 'traditionalism' (Mafeje 1971).

Anthropologists thought 'tribal values' were an explanation for the reluctance on the part of Africans to embrace 'modernity'. They believed that Africans would fully modernise once they dispense with tribalism. Unlike anthropologists who wholeheartedly embraced the tribal ideology to explain both the successes and failures of modernisation in Africa, political scientists used the ideology of tribalism only to account for failures in modernisation. Further,

unlike anthropologists, they preferred to speak of problems of ‘integration’, ‘penetration’ and ‘mobilisation’. In spite of this, political scientists had conceptual problems much bigger than anthropologists. This is so because: (i) they lacked the ethnographic detail of knowledge available to anthropologists; and (ii) their use of the tribal framework made it difficult for them to account for similar problems in other parts of the world. As a result, they fell victim to Eurocentrism in the same way that their anthropologists counterparts did. The only difference is that anthropologists have always been engaged in tribal studies *ab initio*.

Having discussed the political antecedents and the ideological function of the concept of tribalism, Mafeje turns his attention to its conceptual problems. The question that immediately arises is whether or not tribalism exists without the existence of tribes. Anthropologists typically described tribes as societies which were ‘self-contained, autonomous communities practising subsistence economy with no external trade’ (Mafeje 1971: 257). In 1940, Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1940) introduced new terms such as ‘centralised states’, ‘stateless’ and ‘acephalous’ societies. Notwithstanding the introduction of these new terms, anthropologists have had problems in deciding whether or not all African societies were tribal societies. Yet it seems odd to suggest that African societies were, by the twentieth century, still ‘self-contained, autonomous communities practising subsistence economy’. Thus, Mafeje argued, the continued use of the term is a contradiction in terms.

Instead of dispensing with the concept altogether, Schapera shifted the proverbial goalposts by redefining it as ‘separate “political communities”, each claiming exclusive rights to a given territory and managing its affairs independently of external control’ (Schapera 1956: 203 cited in Mafeje 1971: 257). This is a loosely formulated definition of a ‘tribe’. This must be so because if this is what passes for a tribe, then surely an array of societies, including ‘nation states’, are tribes. The constituent elements of tribe such as are outlined in Schapera’s definition are to be found in many places even to this day. In this regard, anthropologists, following Schapera’s definition, were not only contradicting themselves but were, as evidenced by the double-standard of the definition, performing an ideological role. It is noteworthy that, according to Mafeje, the concept of culture never figured in the foregoing definitions of tribe until the arrival of ‘pluralist sociologists’ and political scientists. Moreover, by 1969, anthropologists had dispensed with the term. They sought, once more, to redefine it. By then, Gulliver (1969:24) defined a tribe as ‘any group of people which is distinguished, by its members and by others, on the basis of cultural-regional criteria’. Again, this is not an airtight definition. There is no reason to suppose that the same cannot hold true for many societies

including Europe. Moreover, as Mafeje points out, tribe had in Gulliver's eyes become a subjective perception.

Having mounted a sophisticated critique of anthropologists, Mafeje concedes that '[a]lthough their reasons are suspect, anthropologists *may have been right* in insisting that traditional or pre-colonial African societies, large or small, were tribes' (Mafeje 1971: 258, emphasis added). Although Mafeje concedes that anthropologists may have been right, there is very little evidence, on the basis of definitions he enumerates and his paper more generally, that this is actually the case. If one is reluctant to endorse what Mafeje says, it is not that one believes he is wrong, it is simply that Mafeje himself seems uncertain about the veracity of what he says – 'anthropologists may have been right'. In his second impression on the concept, Mafeje concedes unambiguously that: 'A careful analysis of African social formations would indicate that tribal formations *did* exist in Africa but that they were not characteristic of *all* regions of the continent' (Mafeje 1993a: 919, emphasis in original). Adesina questions the validity of this concept altogether when he says: 'The problem is that Mafeje pursued his line of thought at the expense of conceding that the category might have been valid at an earlier time. Not only does Anthropology deal with its objects of enquiry outside of history, it is ill-equipped to address the issues of history' (Adesina 2008b: 137). In any case, Mafeje goes on to say:

This is not to deny the existence of tribal ideology and sentiment in Africa. The argument is that they have to be understood - and conceptualised - differently under modern conditions. There is a real difference between the man who, on behalf of his tribe, strives to maintain its traditional integrity and autonomy, and the man who invokes tribal ideology in order to maintain a power position, not in the tribal area, but in the modern capital city, and whose ultimate aim is to undermine and exploit the supposed tribesmen. The fact that it works, as is often pointed out by tribal ideologists, is no proof that 'tribes' or 'tribalism' exist in any objective sense. (Mafeje 1971: 258–259).

The fact that tribalism seems to work in Africa is not a sign of an objective existence of the term but rather an indication of false consciousness on the part of 'tribesmen'. This is so because in subscribing to tribalism, which leads one to ignore the real causes of their suffering, they unwittingly subscribe to voluntary servitude. Regarding African leaders, who peddle tribal rhetoric, tribalism is of great benefit to them because it leads its bearers away from a correct

comprehension of real issues. In the process, it conceals the exploitative role of the African elite. This, for Mafeje, is ‘an ideology in the original Marxist sense’ (Mafeje 1971: 259). This is something which the African elite share with their ‘European fellow-ideologists’. Mafeje points out that if tribalism *per se* does not matter, then the ideology of tribalism does. This so for three reasons. In the first instance, it performs a capitalist, colonialist and imperialist function which obscures the nature of economic and power relations domestically. It also performs the same function between Africa and capitalist countries of the West. Secondly, it is not only divisive among Africans but between Africans and people from outside of the continent. Thirdly, it is an outdated concept which thwarts analysis and cross-cultural comparisons. Elsewhere, Mafeje argues that “‘tribalism’ is more an ideological reflex than an index of some concrete existence in Africa’ (Mafeje 1991a: 107). Moreover, he laments the fact that his earlier critique of tribalism (Mafeje 1971) was taken to mean a denial of the existence of tribes in Africa. That is not so, Mafeje argues. His original argument ‘was that the idea that all African societies were “tribes” was a result of the colonial legacy on the continent’ (Mafeje 1991a: 107). He concedes that the problem with this misunderstanding may be a result of the fact that ‘the original paper was not definitional and was concerned mainly with exposing the falsity of that assumption [that all African societies were tribes] by pointing to contrary cases’ (Mafeje 1991a: 108).

Mafeje argued that, “‘tribes’ refer to particular forms of political organisation which are kin-based. The chief is the most senior man of the most senior lineage of the founding clan, whether putative or real’ (Mafeje 1991a: 39). It may be argued that Mafeje is only shifting the deck chairs here. First, if kin-based relation is what makes the political organisation a tribe how many of the abaThembu (for example) are abaThembu because of consanguinity? Consanguine relations and political structure relate to entirely different elements of social life. Second, if this is what defines a tribe, then what is a clan or lineage? Yet it is not uncommon to use the label ‘tribe’ to define people who share a common language – even if the sub-variations of the language are such as to make aspects of communication mutually-unintelligible. If, as Mafeje argued, the word tribe does not exist in the indigenous languages what is the point of African intellectuals seeking to sustain the idea? What makes 11 million amaZulu a ‘tribe’ and 5.3 million Scots a nation?

In his second impression on the concepts of tribe and tribalism, Mafeje argues that African intellectuals believe that the European assumption that there is tribalism in Africa reflects the usual European stereotypes derived from colonialism (Mafeje 1993a).

Significantly, this leads to an ideological and epistemological disjuncture between African intellectuals and their western counterparts. Mafeje goes on to argue that:

[The] problem is not to decry a spurious category called ‘tribalism’ but to confront the problem of *cultural pluralism* within modern nation-states which, deriving from the European historical antecedent, are supposed to be unitary. What is called ‘tribalism’ in Africa is often an attempt by disadvantaged sociocultural groups to gain more social space within the given political and economic setup. In the circumstances, democratic pluralism is at issue rather than a dictatorial insistence on misconceived unitarism. (Mafeje 1993a: 919, emphasis in original)

In a word, this suggests that with democratic pluralism, ‘tribalism’ will wither away. Yet such a view ignores the patent reality that democracy does in fact facilitate a resort to narrow jingoism in mobilising support or articulating grievances. There is little evidence that structuring democratic politics along ‘tribal’ lines attenuates ‘tribalism’. Mafeje seems to have modified his earlier impression on tribalism. Significantly, he oscillates between ‘cultural pluralism’ and ‘democratic pluralism’. It is far from clear that the two are the same or that the existence of one necessarily entails the existence of the other. What is puzzling, however, is Mafeje’s adoption of the concept of pluralism when some of his contemporaries jettisoned it some decades earlier (see Magubane 1969). Nor does Mafeje spell it out for the reader what he really has in mind when he invokes the notion of pluralism.

Magubane, as intimated above, had as early as 1969 critiqued the notion of pluralism and its anthropological counterpart, tribalism. Although the two concepts are slightly different, the analysis from anthropologists was too tentative, in respect of both, to do justice to what they had set out to do (Epstein 1958; Gluckman 1963; 1964; Kuper and Smith 1965; Mayer 1961; van den Berghe 1965). Symptoms were treated as underlying causes. For Magubane, the problem with pluralism was to treat social cleavages as though they were innate or as though societies were static. In this regard, the pluralist anthropologists could not construct what Magubane calls, following Perry Anderson, ‘a totalising history’ (Magubane 1969). Magubane’s objection is that conflicts in Africa should be historicised and contextualised and not reduced to psychological variables like ‘tribalism’ or the purportedly innate hatred between ethnic groups. It remains the case, of course, that for societies to be considered societies there ought to be some degree of coherence and stability. That notwithstanding, there are no societies without internal divisions and frictions. The issue, for Magubane, is to explain these frictions

in-depth and contextually i.e. finding their root causes. Magubane maintains that, properly understood, present day conflicts stem from colonial and imperial rule. The administrative personnel may have changed, but the economic and institutional structure remains.

The problem with pluralist anthropology was to isolate ethnic conflicts and other social features in space and in time (Epstein 1958; Gluckman 1963; 1964; Kuper and Smith 1965; van den Berghe 1965). For Magubane, pluralist anthropologists were reluctant to situate problems in Africa in the wider context of the colonial situation or as an extension of the capitalist metropolis. To the extent that African societies were brought together, they were robbed the opportunity to develop organic institutions which would foster unity and solidarity. In this regard, the notion of pluralism fails adequately to explain the role of government in denying societies the opportunity to foster organic unity. Because some pluralists considered tribalism to be the source of conflict, they assumed that African societies will always be ridden by conflicts since, in their view, tribalism was the 'state of nature' in Africa. In many respects, pluralism had no economic and social analysis of Africa. What it did was to brush aside core issues and make conflict and 'tribalism' seem natural. Ultimately, Magubane observes, this led to the unattainable position that these conflicts will sort themselves out or, as it were, die a natural death.

The use of such concepts as tribalism and pluralism in explaining conflicts in Africa is a case of stereotypes prevailing over reality; for the true nature of the conflicts is best understood in the context of colonial maladministration and neo-colonialism. It is true that parochial loyalties exist and at times manifest themselves in ethnic terms. However, such loyalties are typically based on '*perceived material interests* by those who exploit them' (Magubane 1969: 534, emphasis in original). To the extent that pluralists invoke history, it is only to invoke prejudices many of which are devoid of analysis of present day problems in Africa. Pluralists simply appeal to notions of an African as a tribesman in an essentially primitive state (Epstein 1958; Gluckman 1963; 1964; Kuper and Smith 1965; van den Berghe 1965). The focus is thus, even when aided by empirical research, on epiphenomena not the core socio-historical and structural realities. Epistemologically, pluralist anthropologists, inspired by J.S. Furnivall, misread the latter's argument (Furnivall 1940). *Apropos* Furnivall's argument, Magubane is worth quoting at length:

Furnivall's thesis is straightforward: in the tropical countries which have been subjected to European colonisation the free play of economic forces has resulted in the creation of multi-racial societies which have no overall common standards or culture save that

of animal existence on the one hand and economic competition on the other. Under colonial domination one finds a medley of people who ‘...mix but do not combine. Each group holds to its own ideas and ways. As individuals they meet, but only in the market place in buying and selling’... Most pluralists have taken this casual observation and projected their prognostications – that in a plural society, because of the destructive cultural peculiarities, there is bound to be a pervasive conflict and dissension, deriving from the inherent exclusiveness of groups. However, the other argument in Colonial Policy and Practice is that even though laissez faire economics and colonial forces bring together racially diverse populations, these forces act as a ‘solvent’ of traditional culture and values, creating conditions of social atomisation in which a highly individualistic society is held together by the twin forces of market relations and colonial domination. (Magubane 1969: 544)

Moreover, ‘despite the limitations of the concept of pluralism as used by Furnivall, among the recent pluralists the concept becomes not only a distortion of the social realities but a despairing philosophy. ...Pluralism, as used in this sense, covers such disparate social and economic historical formations that it loses validity’ (Magubane 1969: 546). Magubane’s central critique of pluralism is that it merely describes a multiplicity of ethnic groups within a particular nation state, yet it says very little about the relationship between the said groups – save only when they are in conflict. Pluralism on the part anthropologists only means ‘multi’ and is never qualified or accompanied by reference to concrete historical situations.

Magubane’s critique of the term notwithstanding, the section below discusses Mafeje’s critique of a concept closely related to both pluralism and tribalism, *viz.* ethnicity.

3.3 On Ethnic Groups, Ethnic Divisions and Ethnicity

Mafeje argues that the terms ‘tribalism’ and ‘ethnicity’, typically deployed interchangeably by social scientists, are in the whole process used as ‘things in themselves’. For Mafeje, these terms are ‘illusory and need to be deconstructed and replaced by radical or transcendent thought-categories’ (Mafeje 2002a: 55). As noted, ethnicity and tribalism are typically used interchangeably. In a strict sense, the former is the successor of the latter due in part to the fact that it is considered less offensive. In spite of that, Mafeje argues that the two concepts have the same ideological connotations. The advantage which the term ethnicity has over tribalism is that Africans have no objection to its usage. Although the term ethnicity has gained currency

among African scholars, 'it does not explain why "ethnicity" is correlated with the crisis of state power in Africa and elsewhere' (Mafeje 2002a: 56). Mafeje contends that ethnicity may not be what it is presumed to be. As far as Mafeje is concerned, the term is 'a metaphor for things, which could be understood otherwise' (Mafeje 2002a: 56). Although in his classic text, *The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations* (1991a), Mafeje denies the existence of tribalism but not of tribes, in an essay entitled 'Multi-Party Democracy and Ethnic Divisions in Africa' (2002a), while conceding that the idea of 'ethnicity' as such is a 'pervasive problem in Africa', he denies that it is attributable to the existence of 'ethnic groups'. In his own words, 'in our interrogation, while acknowledging the fact that "ethnicity" has become a pervasive problem in Africa, we will try to dispel the supposition that it is attributable to the existence of a multiplicity of natural units of affiliation called "ethnic groups" within African countries' (Mafeje 2002a: 56).

Mafeje returns to classical sociology on the distinction between a 'social group' and a 'social category'. A social group is characterised by necessary patterns of social interaction e.g. a lineage, an association, a religious sect etc. By contrast, a social category, although characterised by a common identity, has no necessary or regular patterns of interaction. Mafeje believes that the same is true for the so-called ethnic groups, members of the same race, sex or members of the religious faith. It might come as a surprise, Mafeje argues, but the same is also true of the 'political elites' in Africa. Yet the fact that they are dominant does not mean that they are necessarily a coherent whole or homogeneous. They are a category comprising different social factions. In this sense, they are a loose category. Yet there is reason to believe that this would apply to any social group; in that it is shared characteristics that make them a group not the fact of face-to-face interaction or homogeneity. For Mafeje, it is precisely because of continued internecine conflicts among the elites which usually gives rise to such labels as 'tribalism' or, as is sometimes called, 'ethnicity'. Yet this would limit the problem to only the political elite and miss the possibility that contestations and tensions that give rise to jingoism do exist at the level of ordinary citizens. Controversially, Mafeje argues that members of the African elite are equally too loosely organised and their interests too personalised to constitute a class 'in itself and for itself'. Yet 'elite' as a category is not the same thing as 'class.'

In support of the foregoing claim, Mafeje argues that 'historically, it is unimaginable that members of a hegemonic class would engage in unbridled mutual extermination and preside over the destruction of their supreme instrument of social control, the state, as has become the order of the day in Africa' (Mafeje 2002a: 57). If that is the case, it is a question

as to how one should classify the African elite. Mafeje may have missed the target in this regard. This is so because what makes an elite an elite is its relations to other levels in society – social distance – and its relative size. Sub-divisions and intra-elite conflicts are inherent in any social group. A distinction has to be made between contestation over control of the state between factions of the elite and situations where the legitimacy of the state and political society itself is at stake. Coherence is not an essential element in the characterisation of a group as a cultural, economic, or political elite. At any rate, what matters, as is always the case with Mafeje, is constantly to subject concepts to critical scrutiny. No theory or concept is taken for granted in Mafeje's work. The question thus is whether or not such internecine struggles are necessarily a result of 'multi-ethnicity' in African countries. Mafeje denies such an assumption and argues that the existence of 'ethnic groups' or 'ethnic existence' does not necessarily entail 'ethnicity'. In his own words, 'existence is not necessarily limited to systems of social classification, that is, ethnic existence does not connote "ethnicity"' (Mafeje 2002a: 57).

Just as he has made a distinction between 'social groups' and 'social categories', Mafeje makes a distinction between 'categorical' and 'structural' relations. To the extent that 'systems of social classification are notional and taken for granted by their bearers they are passive and non-binding whereas socially structured relations are not only binding but are also purposeful and dynamic' (Mafeje 2002a: 57). As such, people from different backgrounds or socio-cultural identities can live together in peace without discriminating against each other or exhibiting 'ethnicity'. But, Mafeje points out, 'in times of structural conflict not between whole categories but between interacting groups this could occur' (Mafeje 2002a: 57). It is at moments such as these that 'perceived identities of difference are called into play'. To put it differently, perceived identities are used as an excuse for what Mafeje calls 'structural conflicts'.

For Mafeje, 'ethnic conflict' or 'ethnicity' is an upshot of 'greater interaction' among people with socio-cultural identities living in the same geo-political space. In his view, ethnic conflict and ethnicity are a result of 'processes of state formation' in post-independence Africa. As against pre-colonial and colonial wars, ethnic conflicts are not struggles for liberation but for 'relative advantage' within the same socio-political framework. If anything, they are a distraction and do more harm than good. Thus, Mafeje concludes, 'they are not struggles for autonomy but for relative advantage within the same set-up. They are, thus, in theory *non-transcendent*' (Mafeje 2002a: 58, emphasis in original). If this is the case, how does one understand secessionist movements or projects e.g. Biafra, South Sudan, etc.? Although intermittent or occurring not permanently but periodically, ethnic conflicts are nevertheless that

recurrent and are invoked typically at moments of crisis of state power. In this way, such conflicts become a political culture and an ideological tool to maintain or gain power. Not only does this entail centralisation of power but also it leads to ethnic competition. Yet, according to Mafeje, ethnic competition does not necessarily translate to ethnic conflict. As will be seen in chapter four, certain modes of existence or specialised fields of endeavour became part of certain communities e.g. pastoralism, arable agriculture, fishing etc. Although the specialists might be in competition with one another, for access to resources, they might also by virtue of their specialisation need to cooperate. From this perspective, ethnic diversity could contribute to social division of labour. But in post-independence Africa this is hardly the case. It might be true of pre-colonial Africa as will be shown in chapter five.

Secondly, Mafeje argues, whatever conflict may arise in these situations it is never widespread. This is a debatable point. But intra-group conflicts cannot be called or referred to as ethnicity. Mafeje argues that ethnicity does not occur at local level where there are mundane activities but at the national level where there is serious political competition. This is not entirely accurate in that when killings begin, they do so as local phenomena. Significantly, however, ethnic antagonisms connote a state of national politics which deviate from the objectives of liberation movements and thus undermine nation-building as envisaged at the moment of independence. For Mafeje, ethnicity is thus the progeny of 'modern African politics' than it is a case of African antiquity. From a historical point of view, it is hard to say that there is any 'organic link' between the phenomenon of 'ethnicity' and what is called 'ethnic groups'. There are, of course, parallels between 'ethnicity' and what people are called or call themselves. For Mafeje, this is ideology as false-consciousness as alluded to earlier on. Thus ethnicity is peddled by African political elites in order to gain power or to maintain it, only then do people embrace it as a result of 'classificatory systems' or 'categorical identities'. Political elites are fully aware of these weaknesses and proclivities and thus take advantage of them to further their own ambitions.

This would cast the political elites as all-knowing and consummate masters of history. Yet, often they are both initiating and responding to the crisis, and could be hapless beings swept up in the current of history. Mafeje argues that ideology as false-consciousness in this case cuts both ways. This is so because the kind of falsity peddled by elites obscures objective reality such as class differentiation and group conflicts among the same people. Further, it undermines past and continuous cooperation among people of different ethnic origins. Ultimately, the worst casualties of the ideology of ethnicity are the ordinary people not the elites. In a sociological sense, the reproduction of ethnic identities is a work of serious

indoctrination. Given that ethnicity may lead to disaster, the question which confronts sociologists is why African elites continue with it. This would suggest a level of irrationality in the elite mobilisation of ethnic jingoism. Self-aggrandisement on the part of the elites is not a satisfactory answer. Historically, that could be achieved through other means.

Part of the reason for this, Mafeje argues, is not just class interest but 'sectional interests'. The former is vital or important to the class as a whole while the latter, if not managed carefully, could jeopardise the interests of the whole. This does not really address the question for it would seem extraordinary that elites would want to jeopardise not only their opponents' interests but their own interests as well. This is so because sectional interests threaten not just sections but the whole. Mafeje does not immediately address this issue but goes on to say for the development of an authentic class, Africans in sub-Saharan Africa have been the slowest in the world. Further, while African ruling elites have bourgeois aspirations, they nonetheless demonstrate no consistent capitalist outlook, discipline, and ethics. Instead, they plunder state resources and engage in corrupt activities. Mafeje (2002a: 60) suspects that the real problem lies in their inability to 'convert state revenues into real capital'. What is quite telling is the fact that there is no qualitative difference 'in patterns of investment' between mineral-rich and mineral-poor African countries. None of the above adequately explains Mafeje's postulation about sectional interests as against class interests.

In any case, he goes on to argue that ethnicity is either an admission of failure or an excuse to cover up for their shortcomings. He calls this an 'ideological ploy' and not a 'class ideology'. In the context of cunning manoeuvres by African elites, he feels that the use of the term 'ideological ploy' is more than justified. But the question is what makes it 'ideological'. It is ideological because of its ideational or cognitive impact on the part of the people. What the elites believe or not believe is somewhat immaterial. It is the impact of what they say to the target constituencies that matter. This, in Mafeje's language, is an 'ideological reflex' and not ideology itself. Although he says this, Mafeje still believes in the explanatory value of ideology in the classical sense. This refers to rationalisation of class interests. In the main, this applies to hegemonic classes since they wish to remain dominant. Here the term rationalisation refers both to practical considerations and normative claims to justify them. Thus ideology can be used in both a positive and a negative sense. Given this ambiguity, Mafeje argues that it is difficult to tell what the guiding ideology of the emergent African elites is supposed to be. According to him, it is the absence of a broader societal and regional vision which has led to the 'degenerative political culture' of ethnicity, petty dictators etc. In this sense, African elites are especially uncompetitive in the global scale. Disintegration of African states and economic

decay can be explained similarly. The effects of ethnicity are typically acknowledged but are hardly seen as ideology *per se*. Instead, it is ethnic-consciousness that is seen as ideology proper. Ethnicity is thus seen in negative terms as it is used to gain power by manipulating people's sentiments. In this sense, Mafeje argues, it can be described as 'antipathetic'. Although it is said to be antipathetic, Mafeje argues that it is important to note that there exists 'sympathetic' forms of organisation among people of the same ethnic origin. He gives examples of mutual-help associations, burial associations, social clubs etc. These organisations tend to be inward-looking and are usually found in urban areas where newcomers might suffer alienation and anonymity, social and emotional insecurity.

In colonial anthropological parlance these organisations are called 'tribal associations'. At the same time, anthropologists referred to these organisations as 'voluntary associations'. Yet they missed the contradictory nature of such a label in that, by their own admission, tribal organisations were 'prescriptive' while voluntary organisations were discretionary insofar as individuals had freedom to choose. The latter was part of the discourse of 'social change' – supposed progress from 'barbarism' to 'civilisation'. Aside from these colonial epithets, Mafeje notes that the underlying issue here was that the so-called tribal associations were people's organisations. They were not intended for exploiting or oppressing others. From the point of view of the members, the value of the organisations 'was instrumental rather than ideological' (Mafeje 2002a: 63). Secondly, 'their relations were personal rather than categorical' (Mafeje 2002a: 63). In this regard, Mafeje argues that it is incorrect to refer to solidarity of their kind as 'ethnicity' since this term connotes an evocative, impersonal and pernicious force. Above all, it could be argued that ethnicity is the exact opposite of these since it militates against their mundane and innocent interest.

Mafeje thus goes on to discuss and analyse what he calls, in anthropological terms, 'exegetic texts' i.e. 'texts which are authored by living subjects in their own context' (Mafeje 2002a: 64). These are excerpts and quotations based on views from ordinary people who were involved in 'ethnic conflicts in Africa' – specifically the people involved in, respectively, the Bahutu-Batutsi conflict which led to the Rwanda genocide and the 'majimboism' in Kenya. Having discussed these 'texts', or verbal reports which he concedes are 'very scanty', Mafeje notes that the problem in Africa is not necessarily the existence of 'multi-ethnicity' but the fact that African leaders who are supposed to deal with the national question in respective countries are the very same people who are the root cause of political conflicts. In this regard, African elites are the cause, or 'authors' in Mafeje's language, and not bearers of what is known as 'ethnic identity'. This must be so since socially, economically and politically they are far and

free from the conflicts they fuel to be bearers of ethnic identity as such. Mafeje reiterates that ethnic identity on its own is innocuous. Secondly, there is nothing to it that can be said to be intrinsic since in many ways it can be replaced with other identities such as religion, race or regionalism. Mafeje argues that on the African continent there has been a blanket approach to conflict resolutions. These relate to liberal notions of ‘rational negotiations’. Although negotiations are important in their own right, often they tend to run against vested interests. Here Mafeje criticises liberal social scientists for their lack of recognition of the concept of ‘contradiction’ in political struggles or conflicts. Mafeje does not say much about the concept. But it is safe to assume that, given his partiality to radical/revolutionary theory, he is invoking Mao’s antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions (see Mao 1967a). Simply, the former speaks to irreconcilable differences between those waging the struggle and their enemy, while the latter refers to reconcilable differences among those waging the struggle – comrades and fellow-travellers. In any case, it is rare that the powerful political elites would be willing to negotiate away their power and comparative advantages. In this way, wars or conflicts of resistance are not at all irrational. Additionally, they are not likely to be solved by ‘conflict resolution’ or ‘negotiations’ until and unless their root cause has been effectively dealt with.

In this sense, conflict resolutions tend to deal with symptoms as against the cause. Given that liberal ideals of negotiations tend to dominate the discourse of conflict resolutions in Africa, it could be said that the symptomatic reading of problems is to be expected. In another sense, there is the old question of the super-structure and the infra-structure/base which remains unaddressed. But it appears that, although Mafeje does not mention it, it is nevertheless latent in his analysis. For example, he mentions and critiques issues of super-structure such as the law and state institutions which are usually invoked to solve problems of ethnic conflicts. Yet these issues hardly succeed in solving such problems. These are all important issues but do not always translate to solving societal problems such as are discussed here. It is only later in his argument that Mafeje speaks about the ‘material base’ of ethnic social formations in Africa. He argues that it has been undermined by ‘modern developments’. In the process, ethnic identities are used as tools to mediate or forge new social relations and for promoting new social interests. Against Ake (1993) and Nnoli (1978, 1989, 1998), who argued that lack of ‘commoditisation of social relations’ in Africa is one of the reasons for the persistence of ethnic identities, Mafeje argues that the opposite is actually true. This is so because if there is anything that capitalism introduced successfully on the continent it is the market system which necessarily includes the sale of labour. As such, Mafeje argues:

[T]rade or circulation is probably competing with agriculture. This is not limited only to national economies. It pervades regional economies, as is evidenced by the so-called smuggling and spontaneous population movements. This leads to extensive acculturation among people with different ethnic origins, which, most importantly, includes learning one another's languages. As is known, language does not only facilitate communication but is a powerful agent of acculturation. As far as this is concerned, it is quite possible that African peoples are ahead of their ruling elites. (Mafeje 2002a: 73)

If one were to excuse the awkward term of 'acculturation', which Mafeje uses quite liberally, the issue in the foregoing quote seems to be that through interaction or intermingling, ethnic identities tend to be irrelevant, although sometimes latent, until they are used or manipulated by political power-mongers. But this idea, in typical left discourse, sees the masses (when they engage in acts that the intellectuals consider contradictory to their assumed interests) as hapless victims manipulated by their 'elites'. Yet, people on the basis of their perceived interests participate enthusiastically in the extermination of others like them who are of different hues, creed, or other sundry 'identities'. Mafeje's denunciation of the African elites is in this sense typical of class-centric discourse of the broader left.

For Mafeje, in the context of processes of social integration such as are discussed in the above quote, it becomes important to decentralise power. In the first instance, that gives space for local initiatives, entrepreneurship etc. so that people can express themselves in various ways. Secondly, he says, decentralising power does away with fragmentation among the citizenry and brings them together. Yet this may not be the case. Such fragmentations simply play out at the local level. The contradictions that manifests as national phenomena are often typically experienced at local levels. Different segments of a local government or even a town can typically become the basis for new fragments invented in the process of competition over resources. Mafeje goes on to argue that, 'strategically and in the long-term, there is no advantage in fragmenting the existing African states' (Mafeje 2002a: 74). In this regard, there is every need to bring African states closer together. So, when Mafeje talks about decentralisation he has in mind delegation of authority and responsibility to provincial and local governments. This idea is neither new nor novel. One might argue that even in centralist states such as the United Kingdom, a lot of work and autonomy happens at local levels. One would be hard pressed to find an African country where all powers and decision-making are concentrated at the national level. Several African countries are federations. Yet it should be

noted that Mafeje does not advocate a federal structure such as in the United States, where there are states within a state. He says such a model has the danger to worsen regional antagonisms – especially in areas where regions coincide with ‘ethnic maps’.

Equally important to note is the fact that in many African countries prospects for ‘nation-building’ were undermined by the ‘bourgeois form of government adopted at independence’ (Mafeje 2002a: 80). The claim that Africans are generally incompetent, autocratic and corrupt does not on its own suffice since many African leaders who have the potential to do better are either imprisoned, banned, exiled, assassinated or murdered and this usually happens with the help of imperialist western powers. Mafeje concedes that ultimately the use of certain concepts e.g. ethnicity, ethnic groups, multi-partyism, is prejudicial and quite Eurocentric. For one thing, multi-partyism is not the same as democracy itself and there are enough examples to prove that. For another, to equate this term with democracy mistakes forms for substance (Mafeje 2002a). Moreover, it is analogous in nature with very little regard for qualitative differences in socio-cultural context.

As regards ethnic divisions, Mafeje argues that there is greater ethnic integration in Africa than ever before. He attributes this integration to migration and inter-marriages. If anything, he continues, ‘sociologically-understood, the so-called ethnic conflict or ethnicity is a sign of the imperatives of greater integration or social pressures arising out of a shrinking political arena’ (Mafeje 2002a: 81). He continues: ‘If by “shrinking political arena” is meant increasing crisis of democracy, then it becomes clear that in the absence of other ideological predispositions the corollary of this is intensified “ethnicity”. If intensified “ethnicity” is an index of absence of democracy, then it stands to reason that our starting point is neither imagined ethnic divisions nor their ideological manipulation in the form of “ethnicity” but the question of democracy itself’ (Mafeje 2002a: 81). Mafeje’s general conclusion is that ethnic divisions in Africa are by and large imagined and encouraged by the elites who stand to benefit from them. This, he concludes, is ideological manipulation which should be called ‘ethnicity’ and ‘not innocent, self-imposing identities which people acquire by historical accident’ (Mafeje 2002a: 83).

3.4 Conclusion

In the last analysis, Mafeje argues, what makes people who they are is what they do to reproduce themselves and not the labels attached to them. Over and above that, this chapter was intended to demonstrate Mafeje’s thematic critique of anthropological categories. The

chapter was organised around three key issues: the first section dealt with Mafeje's early liberal functionalist writings. The second section was concerned to demonstrate his break with his earlier liberal functionalism by discussing his radical critique of the ideology of tribalism. The remainder of the chapter dealt with a related issue of ethnic groups, ethnicity and ethnic divisions. The next two chapters are intended to demonstrate his programmatic critique of the social sciences proper.

Chapter Four

On Positivism, Functionalism and Alterity: A Critique of the Social Sciences

...when I went to Langa to do fieldwork in 1961, I was armed with an essentially ahistoricist and overly functionalist question: Why and how do social groups cohere or split? Historically, it is necessary not to accuse me of inanity but simply to acknowledge the fact that I should have known that ebbs and flows are the very movements of which the dialectic of history is made, and, as such, are permanent features of collective existence. – Mafeje 1975: 167

4.0 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with Mafeje's early writings with the intention not only to show how his ideas gradually evolved and changed as he grew as a scholar, but also to demonstrate his thematic critique of anthropological categories. The present chapter builds from the preceding one and concerns itself with Mafeje's more deep-going and programmatic critique of the social sciences. Those who are enthusiastic about polemic, or otherwise polemically enthusiastic, tend incorrectly to reduce Mafeje's critique of the social sciences to a polemic on anthropology singly (Hendricks 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2012). That is what one will call the standard view or the conventional view. The standard view or conventional view is that he single-handedly 'demolished' 'anthropology as a discipline' or that he 'single-handedly destroyed the science of anthropology' (Mngxitama 2007, 2010). Such a standard view or conventional view of Mafeje's work is misleading in at least three respects. Firstly, it is true that for over at least two decades, the discipline of anthropology went through a Kuhnian 'revolutionary crisis'. But to say that it was destroyed or demolished simply is not true, not least because anthropology is still a thriving discipline. If anthropology was indeed 'demolished', Mafeje (2001a), Magubane (2000, 2007) and Nyamnjoh (2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2015) would not as late as the twenty-first century feel the need to critique a discipline that was demolished. Secondly, the idea that Mafeje 'single-handedly' took down anthropology is factually and historically incorrect. There were a number of other radical social scientists who critiqued anthropology (see Ahmed 1973; Asad 1973; Banaji 1970; Depelchin 1983; Faris 1973; Gough 1968a, 1968b; Goddard 1979; Magubane 1968, 1969, 1971, 1973, 2000, 2007; Magubane and Faris 1985; Moore 1971; Stauder 1974; Vilakazi 1973, 1989). Thirdly, to suggest that he offered a critique of anthropology singly and not all of the social sciences, far from being an appreciation of Mafeje, is tantamount to saying he was a reformist as opposed to a radical or revolutionary scholar. Mafeje understood very clearly, where other radical social scientists did not, that all of the social sciences were Eurocentric and imperialist. Thus, the

focus on anthropology to the exclusion of other disciplines is to make reforms as against adopting a thoroughgoing and radical critique for the emergence of what he called ‘non-disciplinarity’ (see Mafeje 1976a; 1996). The object of this chapter is not only to show that the excessive focus on Mafeje’s critique of anthropology is a partial reading of his *oeuvre*, but also to make apparent how his critique was directed at *all* of the social sciences and not limited to the discipline of anthropology.

4.1 Sociology of Knowledge and the ‘Totalising Critique’ of Social Change

Mafeje’s essay, ‘Religion, Class and Ideology in South Africa’ (1975), from which the above epigraph is extracted, constitutes not only a brilliant critique of social change but it is a pioneering work in the sociology of knowledge. It marks, together with Mafeje’s earlier essay, ‘The Ideology of Tribalism’ (1971), a significant departure from standard anthropological and sociological writings on Africa. The former essay, moreover, constitutes or amounts to an auto-critique of Mafeje’s earlier work, the co-authored book, *Langa*. It is for this reason that this section uses the essay as a point of departure. In critiquing some of the themes pursued in the Langa study, Mafeje focuses in particular on those aspects which deal with religion. In setting the theoretical matrix, he singles out controversial questions in the epistemology of the sociology of religion. The question turns on whether or not it is possible to reconcile a belief in an ‘extra-societal source’ – the transcendental viewpoint – and a belief in a positivist conception of science. In other words, the conflict seems to be on whether or not belief systems are a reflection of concrete realities – experience – or an outcome of higher or divine intervention. This challenge compelled *areligious* theorists to make a distinction between sociologists of religion and religious sociologists. This, for Mafeje, gives force to the view or belief in the positivistic notion of ‘value-free’ or ‘non-partisan’ science. So that just as materialists are confronted with the problem of ‘consciousness’ and empirical history, positivistic idealists are confronted with the problem of ‘theodicy’ (Mafeje 1975). As a result of the functionalist approach, South African sociology of religion was confined to narrow studies of churches, ‘tribal’ rites etc. and their function in society. Yet, ‘the preoccupation with institutions has meant a narrowing of context to a point where some of the more general ramifications of belief systems and some nascent forms of commitment are made to appear as something apart’ (Mafeje 1975: 164–65). Therein lies the rub, because this was a refusal to contend with history and the wider socio-political context.

Mafeje argues that functionalist analyses of social phenomena or ‘functionalist organicism’, due to the tendency to study or focus on social institutions as if they were

disconnected rather than focusing on society as a whole, have treated or interpreted ‘social change’ as if it only meant ‘a substitution of one set of institutions with another’ (Mafeje 1975: 165). At the descriptive level, this may well be valid, but substantively this serves as an ‘ideological mystification’ of underlying societal issues. Accordingly, ‘social change’, such as is understood by functionalist and positivist sociologists, did not necessarily connote the same thing as radical historical transformation which is called for by those who subscribe to the materialist conception of history. In critiquing social change, Mafeje appeals to the sociology of knowledge primarily and attempts to relate sociological phenomena to ‘its material substratum’ *viz.* class and ideology.

Writing in response to Magubane’s well-known essay, ‘A Critical Look at Indices Used in the Study of Social Change in Colonial Africa’ (1971), Mayer had this to say: ‘The considerable interest of Magubane’s paper seems to me to lie in its contribution to the sociology of knowledge rather than to the theory of change. The author’s own “existential” situation is therefore of some relevance, especially as such single-minded onslaught of “colonial anthropology” seems almost anachronistic in 1970. He is speaking out of personal experiences which have clearly affected his perspective...’ (Mayer 1971: 433). There is a lot riding on this quote not least because of its relevance for the present section of this chapter.

First, Mayer does not intend these words as a compliment to Magubane. If he so intended, the outcome is surely backhanded. Second, Mayer sets up a false-dichotomy between the sociology of knowledge and contribution to the study of social change. In the process, he disdainfully discards the relevance of one’s existential experiences in knowledge-making. In doing so, he confirms both Mafeje’s and Magubane’s respective critiques of the positivistic nature of social anthropology and sociology in Africa. Mayer writes as though social scientists write ‘neutrally’ and ‘objectively’ without being influenced by the sociological baggage of their socio-historical backgrounds. Relatedly, Mayer’s argument accords with the very issues critiqued by Lewis R. Gordon (1998; 2000) when he says that such treatment as black intellectuals get from their white counterparts, where it is not patronising, it is contemptuous to the point where the former are seen as providing ‘experience’ as opposed to contributing to knowledge or being knowledge-makers in their own right. Yet taking seriously one’s lived experiences is precisely what enabled both Mafeje and Magubane to see through the colonial and imperialist nature of the social sciences in Africa. Thirdly, the fact that Mayer is unable to see that anthropology in Africa was colonial, even in the 1970s, is precisely because of the failure to acknowledge the importance of one’s own socio-historical and biographical experiences. By contrast, however, and in taking seriously the sociology of knowledge, Mafeje

was able to understand the ‘totality’ of South African history without getting entangled in idealistic arguments which characterised the works of liberal functionalist and positivist sociologists and anthropologists in South Africa. This is what he calls, elsewhere, a ‘totalising critique’ (Mafeje 1976a, 1991a).

This holistic historical approach is important for Mafeje because, ‘a sociology of knowledge that operates outside of particular historical contexts seems futile’ (Mafeje 1985a: 97). In acknowledging the importance of history and context, Mafeje parts ways with liberal idealists who only focus on minor ‘contradictions’ and ‘perversions’ of the South African society. It should be said that Mafeje was not alone in critiquing the notion of social change. Among those African scholars who mounted a scorching critique of social change may be mentioned Magubane, who has already been alluded to above. For Magubane, in refusing to take seriously the fact that colonialism is an ‘essential dimension’ of the present social structure, colonial anthropologists assumed that its general characteristics are already known, and therefore one could conduct studies without situating them in their historical context. What is essential in understanding social change, for Magubane, is ‘a total historical analysis’ (Magubane 1971: 419). In accounting for changes in African urban and rural settings, colonial anthropologists were wont to speak of ‘Europeanisation’, ‘Westernisation’ or ‘acculturation’. In doing so, they thought Africans were, rather than being disposed of their own being and knowledge-systems, aspiring to a western way of life. Colonial anthropologists played down the fact that the purported ‘acculturation’, such as they called it, hinged on three stages:

1. An initial period of contact between the invading whites and Africans: African resistance to white rule of formerly independent chiefdoms, and white use of physical force to overcome African resistance.
2. A period of ‘acquiescence’: some Africans, alienated from their traditional society, are impelled to acquire the techniques and social forms of the dominant group, as shown by adopting its religion, going to school, and assimilating value patterns and cultural traits functional in the new order.
3. A period of resistance in a new way: Africans develop a ‘national’ consciousness that transcends ‘tribal’ divisions and confront the colonial power with the demands of national liberation. (Magubane 1971: 419–420)

There is, of course, an overlap in these stages, but they must all be taken into account if one is to survey in a meaningful way social change in Africa. Thus, for Magubane, colonialism must at all times be the point of reference or the natural starting point. Social anthropologists and sociologists tended to ignore the fact that the different stages of change in Africa were

accompanied by force and coercion. The focus tends to be on appearances and superficial issues which do not scratch beneath the surface. So that many of the conclusions reached are no more than impositions of dominant values on the Africans. The studies tend to take on micro units of analysis such as individual behaviour as opposed to society at large. A study of social change, therefore, required that one study not only the victims of oppression but the structure of domination itself and the methods used by the oppressor to maintain the oppressive structure.

As intimated in the previous chapter, anthropologists tended to over-emphasise or otherwise create a dichotomy between the rural and the urban communities. For Mafeje, there is a 'dialectical link' between the two settings (Mafeje 1975). Based on the fieldwork he conducted in Langa and the rural Transkei, for the *Langa* book and for his MA thesis respectively, he discovered that sociologically, town and country are not polar opposites. The 'Christian atmosphere' which permeates Langa township is to be found in the rural hinterland of All Saints (an Anglican mission station founded in 1859 in the Engcobo District) as well. The same can be said of cultural practices, subsistence farming etc. The migrant worker who lives in Langa is the same man who goes home to perform cultural rituals during holidays or goes home for subsistence farming either during holidays or when he retires. Further, the so-called 'pagans' of the Transkei are to be found in the barracks in Langa. Mafeje writes: 'In South Africa after 1½-2 years I was able to interview in the Transkei – a rural area, the same men as I had interviewed in Cape Town. In Uganda before I had finished my 15-month survey some of the poorer farmers had disappeared to the city for employment or were commuting by bicycle' (Mafeje 1978a: 43 fn1).

What becomes 'a curious logic of colonial history' is the fact that the 'pagans' or *amaqaba* who were once considered 'conservative' (insofar as they refused to give up their African ways of living) became latter day militants through the sheer force of their resistance to Christianity and the western way of life. In this regard, they found allies in the urban-based militant youth who rejected Christianity and racism by appealing to an 'African God'. In fact, '... the youth in Langa are indifferent to and even disaffected from the church. They are ready to condemn Christianity as a diabolical scheme by the whites to enslave the black man and rob him of what legitimately belongs to him. They compare unfavourably the material well-being and greed of the whites with the misery, deprivation, exploitation and oppression of the blacks. Their feelings are genuine and they explode with anger and frustration' (Mafeje 1975: 175). Mafeje says there may be a difference between the two groups at the level of 'theoretical self-consciousness', but there remain clear affinities. One example being that in the 1960s, the two

groups were the only ones who ‘tried to fight white oppression bodily’ (Mafeje 1975: 178). Admittedly, Mafeje argues:

The radical youth have not all the answers. But because they have rejected the status quo and have no wish or way of going back to the African past, they are destined to produce the necessary revolutionary paradigms, even for the unliberated African Christians. But, contrary to the expectations of the ‘primitive rebels’, who are their potential followers, the issue will be resolved neither in the church nor on Zion but in the wider society which the radicals have chosen as their terrain. (Mafeje 1975: 176–177)

It should be emphasised at once, that through missionary stations, white oppression in rural areas was felt as much as any other part of South Africa. Thus the rural–urban thesis, much loved by anthropologists and sociologists of social change, was no more than a false-dichotomy. In the rural areas, as in the urban settings, there was to be found the same South African white supremacist ideology. In the church, the white liberal ideology reproduced itself through missionary work and education. Missionaries have, of course, been doing that *ab initio*. Mafeje is, however, too quick to find positive features in this colonial arrangement when he says: ‘While at first this represented a *progressive* force, by introducing the arts of writing and universalising metaphysical concepts in small pre-literate societies which relied on simple theoretical paradigms for explanation, later it became *reactionary*, precisely by failing to come to terms with the contradiction of its own emergence in peculiarly South African conditions’ (Mafeje 1975: 182, emphasis in original).

Here Mafeje unwittingly accepts the ‘civilising mission’ of the missionaries but fails to locate its logic in the wider sociological and historical context which informs it. The sheer enormity of pain and oppression which accompanied this ‘civilisation’ simply overshadows the supposed ‘progressive force’ about which Mafeje speaks. The colonial project, suitably interpreted, was about plundering, looting and subjugating others. Civilisation, if it must be so called, was a by-product not its driving force. Mafeje is here pandering to the social change theory of colonial social scientists. Once again, Magubane’s work is instructive in this regard. Magubane argues that because colonial social scientists were reluctant to criticise colonial governments, they chose to play it safe and never exposed the truth about colonial rule. They never touched on matters political but simply focused on innocuous issues. To the extent that they touched on colonialism, they saw it as a necessary stage in history and how its long-term

effects benefitted African people (Magubane 1968). They ignored altogether the suffering, exploitation and degradation of Africans and their value systems. Thus the theory of social change, the term itself notwithstanding, could not account for social change in Africa. To the extent that it did, it did so in mechanistic and ethnocentric terms. When colonial social scientists saw change, they saw ‘tribesmen’ who were becoming like them, *viz.* Europeanised. They mistook appearance for reality. In this respect, they saw a fulfilment of white supremacist ideals – hence the notion that the African was being ‘civilised’ (Magubane 1968).

It should be said that notwithstanding Mafeje’s foregoing claim about the progressive nature of the liberal ideology, he nevertheless acknowledge that being ‘civilised’ did not necessarily mean automatic acceptance in white liberal middle-class cosmic view. In this regard, the liberal theory, which had always taken for granted its own supposed progressiveness, is put under the spotlight and its hypocrisy exposed. It is unable to transcend itself insofar as it treats black people as perpetual subordinates who are in need of tutelage. The liberals sought to produce ‘black “carbon-copies” of white Christian orthodoxy in South Africa’ (Mafeje 1975: 184). Mafeje posits that, from the point of view of the sociology of knowledge, the liberal may not be able to transcend his own ideological limitations. He reminds sociologists of knowledge that: ‘Weber, having recognised the partiality of the German middle-class ideology, came to the conclusion that, since it was the fate of all ideologies to be both “objective” and “subjective”, they could not be transcended. Therefore, the most that could be done was to endure them stoically. Thus, he paid the price of being radical without being revolutionary’ (Mafeje 1975: 184). In invoking the sociology of knowledge, much of what has been said in this section was an attempt to build a case against the supposed ‘value-free’ or non-partisan positivist belief generally and functionalism particularly. The section that follows attempts to characterise this problematic more fully.

4.2 On Positivism and Functionalism in Anthropology

The issues discussed above were not unique to the social sciences in South Africa. They were/are characteristic of the social sciences universally. Indeed, anthropologists and sociologists in other parts of the world had, by the 1960s, began to question the status of anthropology as a discipline and the categories which anthropologists used in understanding Africa and other ‘less-developed’ societies (see Asad 1973; Banaji 1970; Faris 1973; Gough 1968a, 1968b; Goddard 1979; Mafeje 1971; Magubane 1968, 1969, 1971; Moore 1971; Stauder 1974). In an excellent (albeit often overlooked) essay, ‘The Problem of Anthropology in Historical Perspective’, Mafeje surveys the diverse manner in which critics of anthropology in

the North aired their views as regards the status of anthropology: in the American academy criticisms of anthropology were, he says, largely ‘ideological than theoretical’; in Britain, on the other hand, the discussion was less ideological so as to give it an air of respectability in the name of an ‘academic discussion’ (Mafeje 1976a).

The said discussions and revisions issued in what Mafeje calls ‘neo-positivist conceptions’ of the French anthropologists. Such neo-positivism is to be found in Levi-Straussian structuralism or in liberal relativism which was, Mafeje argues, couched in neo-Marxist jargon. According to Mafeje, this was an ideological tactic all of its own. Unlike in the US and the UK, in France there was a sharp divide between Marxist and non-Marxist anthropology. Though all these groups attempted to place on the table issues which plagued anthropology as a discipline, Mafeje nevertheless felt that the problematic they were grappling with was badly formulated from the start (Mafeje 1976a). Characteristically, the UK-based critics of anthropology lacked in their critiques what Mafeje calls a ‘totalising critique’ (see Brown 1973; James 1973; Kuper 1973). They sought to rehabilitate anthropology by offering or presenting the other, supposedly better, side of it. The ‘militantly critical anthropologists’, on the other hand, allowed their critiques to remain at the level of ideology and polemic (see Gough 1968a, 1968b; Moore 1971 etc.). The upshot were self-contradictory appellations such as ‘radical anthropology’ or ‘socialist anthropology’. Yet, as Mafeje eloquently argue: ‘It is as hard to fit socialist clothes on an imperialist off-spring as it is to transform positivism by radicalising it’ (Mafeje 1976a: 308).

In short, the two sides of the divide are best understood as reflective of a case of the ‘complicity of opposites’. They took different routes only to arrive at the same destination. The assumption they made was that there is a better side of anthropology which could be rescued. Magubane, who himself had been a critic of anthropology was not spared Mafeje’s criticism. Mafeje reminded Magubane of the importance of the sociology of knowledge in shaping one’s ideas. With regards to Magubane’s critique of colonial anthropologists, Mafeje wrote:

...a more than *ad hoc* (or *ad hominem*) premise was required to conduct a proper critique of their work, of which Magubane is, historically-speaking, both an affirmation and a negation. For an appreciation of the latter a deeper theoretical self-consciousness is required than was reflected in Magubane’s polemic. Nor is Magubane alone. In an unpublished article in 1971, while recognising the systematically selective nature of theory under determinate historical conditions, I also became ahistorical by suggesting

that British anthropologists should have been something other than what they were.
(Mafeje 1976a: 308–309)

Not only was Mafeje criticising Magubane, he was, over and above that, conducting an auto-critique. Here Mafeje gets to the crux of the matter. He argues that in singling out colonial anthropology as *the* problem, its critics became undialectical, and thus created an epistemological impasse, in that they identified in it functionalism and imperialism but failed to link that to the ‘metropolitan bourgeois social sciences which are equally functionalist and *imperialist*’ (Mafeje 1976a: 309, emphasis in original). They failed to advance the totalising critique about which Mafeje speaks. As far as Mafeje is concerned, the problem of anthropology is primarily theoretical (‘universal’) rather than ideological (‘colonial’). Merely to point out that anthropology was a handmaiden of colonialism was to present the argument in a partial and ideological way. That it was colonial could not have been its ‘single diagnostic attribute’. Epistemologically, its biggest crime was positivism and functionalism.

It should be emphasised, however, that the Enlightenment, out of which anthropology and the other social sciences were born, was inherently bourgeois and sought to universalise anthropological viewpoints. This then laid groundwork for European ‘civilising mission’ of the 19th century – ‘the highest point of European colonialism’ (Mafeje 1976a: 310). It should be stressed that the European civilising mission was not a noble endeavour. In the main, its rationale was based on ‘economic plunder, political imposition and other inhumane practices’. For Mafeje, while these practices took extreme forms in the colonies, they had in fact started in Europe itself. They were an expansion of European capitalism. In fact, in his book, titled *The Making of a Racist State*, Magubane argues that the first colony of England was Ireland (see Magubane 1996; Nyoka 2016). That is where the English first tested and put into effect their colonial practices. It needs to be said, however, following Fanon, that ‘European opulence is literally scandalous, for it has been founded on the slavery, it has been nourished with the blood of slaves and it comes directly from the soil and from the subsoil of that underdeveloped world. The well-being and the progress of Europe have been built up with the sweat and the dead bodies of Negroes, Arabs, Indians and the yellow races’ (Fanon 2001: 76).

The said European expansionism about which Mafeje speaks served as a source of inspiration for European scholars of the Enlightenment. This, then, is the ‘sub-stratum’ which served as a basis for the philosophies and ideologies of European expansionism from which metropolitan bourgeois social sciences cannot be separated. Hence it is important at all times to make connections between the latter and how anthropological writings manifested

themselves in Africa. Having laid this foundation, Mafeje argues that functionalism, which is a particular paradigm within the social sciences, is the natural starting point. Although functionalism has been discussed and critiqued, few anthropologists have analysed its ideological status in the age of European expansionism (Mafeje 1976a). Those who have attempted to do so, such as Stauder (1974), have fallen into the trap of associating functionalism only with the discipline of anthropology and with the historical epoch of colonialism. Yet for Mafeje, 'in the same way that capitalism, as a specific mode of accumulation, had to exist before imperialism could manifest itself, likewise functionalism, as a theoretical rationalisation of the epoch, had to exist in the metropolitan countries before it could be used in the colonies' (Mafeje 1976a: 311). Moreover, 'in its paradigmatic form functionalism is a product of nineteenth century Western European bourgeois society, and was never limited to a single discipline called "anthropology"'. On the contrary, it straddled all the life sciences' (Mafeje 1976a: 311).

In the 19th century, functionalism had relied mainly on analogies derived from physical and biological sciences to account for or explain complex social phenomena. The other version of functionalism, which was 'rationalist-utilitarian', 'was a reflection of the logic of the industrial revolution in England and France' (Mafeje 1976a: 311). Hence, the two pioneers of 'modern functionalism', August Comte and Herbert Spencer, came from France and England respectively. For them, rationality, utility and functional-value, order and progress were foundational to a bourgeois European society. These principles served as an affirmation of its achievements and a justification for its continuation and existence. Thus such theories as are enunciated in the works of Spencer and Comte, served as an inspiration for Durkheim who synthesised them and came up with 'structural-functionalism'. If it were not for a synthesis of Spencer and Comte in Durkheim's work, structural-functionalism 'would not have emerged in anthropology in quite the same way that it did' (Mafeje 1976a: 312).

Secondly, the Spencer-Durkheim theoretical nexus laid foundation for the works of British anthropologists such as Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. Thus both Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown owe their greatest intellectual debt to Durkheim primarily, and Spencer and Comte secondarily (Mafeje 1976a). For Malinowski, the premium was on psychological and biological needs of the individual so that social and cultural institutions were merely a response to the said needs. This was a Spencerian understanding of society. Radcliffe-Brown, on the other hand, following Durkheim, stressed the autonomy of social institutions and sought to understand how disparate social elements and institutions were instrumental in maintaining the social whole. But Radcliffe-Brown remained faithful to Spencer's use of biological analogies,

as did Malinowski. Malinowski's and Radcliffe-Brown's writings had a great influence on American functionalist sociologists such as Talcott Parsons, George Homans and Robert K. Merton (Mafeje 1976a).

It should be said that the foregoing description does not exhaust or complete the picture. For one thing, sociologists were also influenced by Marx Weber, Durkheim's contemporary, who served as a reminder to sociologists that not all positivist sociology is functionalist (Mafeje 1976a). Weber rejected the use of biological or natural science analogies to explain social phenomena. He appealed to individual subjective meanings by using 'ideal types' and 'normal types' as suitable method of sociological analysis. 'For him, unlike Talcott Parsons, adaptive behaviour on the part of individuals was no measure of the "functionality" of the system. Rather, systems functioned because they had an internal logic, whether it was good or bad individuals – a question which Weber treated as a purely subjective matter' (Mafeje 1976a: 314). For Mafeje, ideas and social forms are shaped by 'particular nations' and bourgeois classes at any particular time. Positivism and functionalism are examples of such ideas. It is a question therefore as to whether bourgeois writers, such as Spencer and others, could espouse neutrality and 'positive science' and still be faithful to their class interests. For Mafeje, this was an attempt on their part to gloss over social contradictions which were manifest in Europe. There was in Europe, as is the case today, inequality, exploitation and unmitigated sociological individualism – the upshot of capitalism. That these sought to find theories which guaranteed social integration and cooperation is a case in point.

Having discussed the link between the Enlightenment and functionalism, it is necessary to discuss how the latter found expression in the colonies through anthropology. It should be remembered that for Mafeje, anthropology was in the colonies what other social sciences were in the metropole. As such, to single out anthropology and leave out the other social sciences was a form of mystification. Moreover, functionalism was the prevailing paradigm both in the metropole and in the colonies. That anthropologists lent their support to colonial governments is not Mafeje's main contention. The issue, for him, is the ontology upon which the intellectual efforts of anthropologists were premised. Equally, it is beside the relevant point whether there were anthropologists who were opposed to colonialism. In the final analysis, the contours of anthropology were as much colonially determined as they were informed by functionalism. The oppositional anthropologist and the colonial anthropologist were in unison as regards the utility of social research institutes in Africa. Significantly, however, their units of analysis or subjects for research were virtually the same: 'kinships', 'religious systems', etc. On both sides

of the purported divide, therefore, the anthropological enterprise was bourgeois *ab initio*. A further example of the importance of the sociology of knowledge.

It is at this point that Mafeje takes time to conduct auto-critique. For Mafeje, critiquing the older generation or colonial anthropologists was not simply a reflection of a ‘generational gap’. It was, over and above that, ‘a negation of negation’. Just as functionalism was a negation of ‘speculative history’ of the Enlightenment, it was also an affirmation of bourgeois capitalist utilitarianism which led to the oppression of the people of the Global South. In the process, functionalism reproduced itself by producing native objects of study who would later be identical to the ‘knowing’ subjects through the process of bourgeois conversion. In this regard, Mafeje says he, along with Magubane, were products of colonial anthropology. As such, the crimes of colonial anthropology were not merely based on descriptive and superficial writings about ‘modernising’ Africans who sought European status. But rather, the crimes of colonial anthropology lay in its ahistoricity which failed to trace the problems confronting African people to the root cause which is colonialism. Mafeje says he and Magubane had to be part of the bourgeois functionalism in order for them to be its negation. Analogously, African revolutionaries had to be part of colonialism in order to experience its frustrations. To ignore these factors is to fall victim to ‘undialectical presumptuousness’ (Mafeje 1976a). Although anthropologists were among the first social scientists to arrive in the colonies, they should not be singled out as the only functionalists or academic imperialists. Functionalism and positivism is not unique to anthropology but characterises all of the social sciences. Mafeje’s point is well taken. Yet it raises more questions than it answers. If the crime of the social sciences lies in its being functionalist and positivistic, what would Mafeje have to say about the social sciences that were not functionalist or positivistic in their epistemology? What would be said of the social sciences grounded in Marxist dialectical materialism—as Mafeje’s analysis clearly was? In a sense, it appears that what Mafeje critiques is “bourgeois social science” rather than “social sciences”, as such.

Against this background, one is able to criticise anthropology without turning it into ‘the black sheep’ of the social sciences. Anthropology was the first to arrive in the colonies because the bourgeois metropole needed it in order to conquer the natives about whom they were least informed. That it coincided with colonialism is hardly surprising since anthropology, perforce, provided knowledge and access to hitherto unknown societies. As such:

If the suggestion is seriously made that anthropology is a child of imperialism, then simple logic obliges those who are so persuaded to abandon anthropology altogether,

as part of their struggle against imperialism. But, as we have argued, that would be a caricature of the struggle against imperialism. In its theoretical manifestations imperialism does not begin or end with anthropology but with all the cognate bourgeois social sciences whose origin is positivism. (Mafeje 1976a: 331)

Thus to fixate on anthropology to the exemption of other social sciences, which are equally bourgeois and imperialist, is to engage in petty–reformism which does not take seriously history and the ‘totalising critique’.

Mafeje therefore advocates a ‘holistic approach’ which transcends disciplines. Such an alternative is to be found, he suggests, in Marxism. For:

It is obvious that there can be *no disciplines* within Marxism. But what is the function of disciplines in the social sciences? To illuminate problems in fragmented (specialised) social existence would be one answer. For whose benefit? Supposedly, for the benefit of uncomprehending ordinary people. Therein comes the problem of the subject-object relation in bourgeois epistemology. If the function of bourgeois social science is to increase the awareness (or false consciousness) of uncomprehending objects, then when the people have become comprehending subjects, there will be no need for social science. (Mafeje 1976a: 332, emphasis in original)

This argument is not entirely convincing. This is a distinct issue from the critique of (bourgeois) social science. The non-disciplinarity that would emerge from transcending disciplines will still be social science as distinct from natural or biological sciences. What Marx concerned himself with was the ordering of society and social relations (the subject matter of social science) rather than biological or natural sciences. The paradox of the charge of Eurocentrism against functionalist/positivistic social science is that Marxism is itself fundamentally Eurocentric – the problematic that it sets itself was mainly Europe; specifically speaking to the European conditions – even if it could be appropriated (with considerable modifications) for the revolutionary projects in the (former) colonies.

Yet in order the better to understand where Mafeje is coming from, one has to read him outside of the text. In other words, context is important. In his search for alternatives, Mafeje was also limited by his background and/or environment. At any rate, as pointed out in chapter one, this thesis does not necessarily concern itself with whether Mafeje succeeds or fails in the very difficult task he set before himself. But rather, the point is to follow the unit of his thought and to see what insights African social scientists may garner from him in the quest for

knowledge decolonisation. At any rate, for a Unity Movement trained Marxist such as he was, their internationalist outlook would have prevented him from adopting what he would call an 'Africanist' or even 'nationalist' perspective on these issues. As far as he and the Unity Movement were concerned, to be 'Africanist' or 'nationalist' was to be reactionary (see Mafeje 1997c). He says for example: 'In the name of international socialism Pallo Jordan and I were trained to think that "nationalism" was narrow-minded, bourgeois, and, therefore, reactionary' (Mafeje 1997c: 7). If the sociology of knowledge be taken seriously, such as has been mentioned in the first section of this chapter, then this biographical detail and the context in which Mafeje wrote ought to be taken seriously without seeing it as a 'rationalisation' of Mafeje's argument.

At any rate, Mafeje champions Marxism insofar as it does not recognise disciplines. Thus, according to him, even claims to 'Marxist anthropology' or 'Marxist sociology' are self-contradictory since Marxism does not recognise disciplines. Equally, Marxism cannot be 'inter-disciplinary' without being self-contradictory. The difficult question then is what is the role of disciplines in the social sciences? The answer is usually that the social sciences make apparent complex socio-political issues to the uncomprehending lay people. Yet this is Mafeje's representation of it. The social sciences could well be about comprehending subjects. Most scholarly works are addressed to other scholars, much the same way that the *Grundrisse* or *Das Kapital* was not addressed to the peasant or factory worker. The complexity of scholarly writings have to be diluted into pamphlets to make them more comprehensible to literate non-specialists among the masses. According to him, the crux of the problem of the social sciences lies in its bourgeois epistemology of subject-object. Although it is said that the role of the social sciences is to increase awareness of unknowing objects, it is unlikely that this is so. For even when people would have become comprehending subjects, the social sciences would most likely still be in existence. In the final analysis, Mafeje argues, the role of the social sciences is politics and therefore ideological. Thus:

Participation in the making and execution of decisions by either 'knowing subjects' (experts, advisors and consultants) or liberated objects is a political process. Then Marxist theory which advocates revolutionary politics and which denies separation between subjects and objects, between theory and practice, between value and fact, and between science and history comes to its own. At the most fundamental level, it is the best anthropology that there is and the best candidate for future society. (Mafeje 1976a: 332–333)

So that, ‘if dialectical materialism is a theory of history, then historical materialism is its methodology’ (Mafeje 1996: 26). Yet it could be objected to Mafeje that Marxists are acutely aware of the distinction between theory and practice – hence the idea of praxis. The fact that practice informs theory or vice versa is no reason to suppose that Marxism ‘denies separation’ between the two. Although Mafeje declares that Marxism ‘is the best anthropology that there is’, he was not unwilling to subject it to critical scrutiny if its categories did not adequately address the concrete cases they are meant to address. The next section of this chapter attempts to capture something of that.

4.3 On Idiographic and Nomothetic Enquiry

This section, as intimated above, attempts to zero in on Mafeje’s critique of Marxism which, he claims, is the best answer to the bourgeois social sciences. In his essay, ‘On the Articulation of Modes of Production’, Mafeje is concerned to understand at least five important issues: (i) does idiographic enquiry yield deeper insights into societal processes than nomothetic enquiry (Mafeje 1980)? He raises this issue specifically because he wants to understand whether traditional disciplines such as history and anthropology (both of which are idiographic) are the best candidates in accounting for societal processes *vis-à-vis* Marxism which makes nomothetic claims such as ‘the theory of modes of production’; (ii) is mode of production, as a unit of analysis, a worthy substitute for such concepts as ‘tribe’ or ‘nation’ both of which are used by historians and anthropologists? (Mafeje 1980); (iii) given that Marxism tends to treat ‘culture’ as purely a ‘super-structural’ phenomenon (which has little influence on the base which produces the necessities of life), what is the relationship between cultural relativity and meta-theory?; (iv) if world history and anthropological philosophies are necessarily Eurocentric, and therefore inadequate and unacceptable, what counter theories can one generate from the Global South?; and (v) in an otherwise imperialist world, what is the responsibility of the social scientist (Mafeje 1980)? Not only do these questions speak to the problem of theory, but also speak to the sociology of knowledge. As such, Mafeje proposes to approach the general through the particular. Herein lies the genius of his approach. In grappling with these questions, Mafeje discusses the works of two Marxists, Wolpe (1972, 1980) and Morris (1976, 1980), who wrote about the South African capitalist relations and specific mechanisms of labour-reproduction in the 20th century. In their attempts at understanding the South African conditions, the two said Marxists deploy such Marxian categories as ‘class’, ‘mode of production’, ‘production relations’, ‘forces of production’ and ‘social formation’.

Mafeje wants first to clarify what it is that the two said writers mean by these concepts, and then understand how such concepts explain the concrete conditions they are meant to explain. Mafeje's starting point is conceptual and theoretical. Although he is concerned to clarify the said concepts, he is equally concerned to comprehend their applicability to or usefulness in different conditions. This is so because while the concepts seem theoretically reasonably precise, substantively they need further clarification. Wolpe, following Laclau (1971, 1977), makes a distinction between a mode of production and an economic system and seeks, moreover, to understand the 'constituent elements' of the latter. Such elements are capitalist modes of production, the African redistributive economies and the system of labour-tenancy (Mafeje 1980). For Mafeje, the latter two concepts are a deviation from Marxism and are, in the main, empirically unreliable.

For Morris, on the other hand, a mode of production 'is an articulated combination'/'structured combination' or, more precisely, a determinate structure. On this score, a mode of production is combined precisely because modes of production do not follow one another sequentially with one replacing the other. Nor is a mode of production produced by a movement or changes within it. To argue in such a manner is to ignore the Marxian dictum that the struggle is the motor of history (Morris 1976, 1980). For Mafeje, this constitutes an 'epistemological break', that is if we are to follow Morris' logic, because there can be no theory of articulation between modes of production. This is so because, Morris argues, contradictions occur in class struggles within a given social formation not between modes of production or within a mode of production. An argument of the sort, however, abandons altogether dialectical materialism (Mafeje 1981). Morris' thesis, Mafeje argues, can only be valid if class struggle, which is concrete, is used to mean the same theoretical or abstract construct which is used to explain it i.e. mode of production. In other words, a mode of production is a theoretical concept used to explain the concrete yet on Morris' account the two are used somewhat interchangeably. In a word, Morris' thesis cannot be valid 'unless the material conditions of class struggle are accorded the same theoretical/logical status as the mode of production to which they refer. In orthodox Marxism this is provided for in the concept of "contradiction" within a mode or between modes of production' (Mafeje 1981: 132).

Both Morris and Wolpe agree that 'all modes of production exist only in the concrete economic, political and ideological conditions of social formations' (Mafeje 1981: 133). But it is doubtful that Wolpe would agree with Morris' rejection of the articulation of modes of production. Further, while Morris uses the term 'social formation', he nevertheless has no theoretical definition of it. On Wolpe's schema, on the other hand, the concept refers to specific

‘mechanisms of social reproduction or the “laws” of motion of the economy’ (Mafeje 1981: 133). By mechanisms of social production Wolpe means a combination of modes of production. Wolpe observes: ‘The distinction between the abstract concept of mode of production and the concept of the real-concrete social formation conceived as a combination of modes of production constitutes the explicit or implicit presupposition of all these articles’ (Wolpe cited in Mafeje 1981: 133). By ‘articles’ Wolpe refers to chapters in the collection of essays he edited and to which he wrote an introduction where the foregoing quote is taken. To the extent that the distinction between the two concepts is implicit or explicit in all the essays to which Wolpe refers, Mafeje argues the authors have clearly ignored Balibar’s caveat that: ‘... the term “social formation” which Marx uses, may be either an empirical concept designating the object of a concrete analysis, i.e., an existence: England in 1860, France in 1870, Russia in 1917, etc., or else an abstract concept replacing the ideological notion of “society” and designating the object of the science of history insofar as it is a totality of instances articulated on the basis of a determinate mode of production’ (Balibar cited in Mafeje 1981: 133). To this Mafeje adds that one ought to make a distinction between abstract concepts and the concrete referent which needs to be explained. *Explanans* are not the same as the *explanandum*.

Having discussed these abstract concepts, Mafeje is keen to critique the empirical issues that these concepts were meant to explain. Broadly speaking, Wolpe’s thesis is that, with regards to the dialectic between urban and rural, the pre-capitalist mode of production ensured, or otherwise maintained, the reproduction of migrant labour. For Morris, it was the labour migration from white farms which maintained the reproduction of the labour-power of migrants (Mafeje 1981). Although farm workers were allocated pieces of land by the white farmer, through the so-called labour-tenancy, they still sought work either in other farms or in the cities. This argument, such as is presented by Morris, that farm workers could hold more than one job, ‘is tantamount to [saying the latter supplement] *wage* with *wage*’ (Mafeje 1981: 127, emphasis in original) without giving a clear indication as to the supposed essential difference between the labour tenant on a white farm and his peasant counterpart in the rural areas who uses his labour power for his own subsistence.

This prompts the question as to the real difference, should there be any, between Wolpe’s and Morris’ theses of labour reproduction. For Morris, the difference lies, regarding feudal and capitalist relations of production, in the difference between land-rent and wage-labour. Morris uses the organising concept of ‘relations of real appropriation’ to understand this dynamic. Even so, Morris over-simplifies the social relations on white farms (Mafeje

1981). The pre-capitalist South African case need not translate into feudalism by virtue merely of ground-rent and landlordism. Unlike Russia, the South African society was ‘polyglot’. For Wolpe, the capitalist mode of production was linked to other modes of production – ‘the African redistributive economies and the system of labour-tenancy and crop-sharing on White farms’ (Mafeje 1981: 127). Mafeje argues that this definition of a mode of production lacks rigour. This is so because ‘labour tenancy’ and ‘share-cropping’ connote two different things. Nor do these lend themselves to categories of ‘feudalism’ and ‘capitalism’. Thus, when the colonial government ensured that Africans can never rise to the level of capitalist or commercial producers, they fought for their existing pieces of land and grazing rights for their livestock. They also decided to send some of their family members to the rural areas with the stock they would have accumulated on white farms.

Those who engaged in this practice, particularly in the Eastern Cape, were referred to as *amarhanuga* (i.e. those who go around collecting value specifically from white farms). The said value is in the form of livestock. Those farm wage labourers who had been uprooted from white farms were called *amaqheya*. This is the point at which Mafeje asks whether livestock or cattle can be thought of as property i.e. means of production or merely instruments of production. In the South African context of the time, what did it mean to speak of property with reference to black people? For both Morris and Wolpe, property referred to land in the agricultural economy. It is at this point that Wolpe incorrectly said that land in the rural areas is ‘held communally’. Mafeje argues, however, that this is inaccurate because arable land is individually registered at the magistrate’s court with the ‘head’ of the family accepting liability for annual rent. Strictly speaking, therefore, such land is owned by the state and not the individual. In this sense, peasant cultivators of the land are tenants of the state. Thus, the difference between peasants and white farm tenants (or *amarhanuga*) was that under the ‘quit-rent’ system, the former could pass down their registered plots under customary law. Registered plots were heritable. This presents a problem for those theorists who talk about communally held land because any family that had a plot could hold on to it perpetually as long as they paid rent annually. This surely is no model of a communally owned land.

The incorrigibility of the ‘communally owned land’ thesis, as opposed to the redistribution of land through kinship units, persists unabated in spite of the fact that theorists such as Meillasoux and Rey had written persuasively about the ‘lineage mode of production’ (Mafeje 1981). On this model, the notion of ‘prestige goods’ is critical in understanding the social reproduction of lineages. Mafeje argues that whether one is talking about white farms or the rural areas, cattle among South African peasants represent prestige goods as opposed to

property or means of production. As such, cattle are instrumental in lineage reproduction insofar as they facilitate, *inter alia*, issues of *lobola*. This invites the question of the role of livestock in subsistence farming and reproduction of labour.

In South Africa, the two do not necessarily coincide. Subsistence in South Africa is met through cultivation of crop or wage labour. Thus to return to the point made above, livestock only entail means of lineage reproduction or instruments of production. A related point which needs to be made is that what is usually owned communally in South Africa are grazing grounds not arable land as such. Even during the peasant rebellions of the late 1950s and the early 1960s, the peasants were *not* protesting for halving of their quit-rent land, which they knew was associated with individual family units, but with limitation of stock and fencing of grazing grounds (Mafeje 1981). Equally, when Wolpe talks about ‘a development of classes in the reserves’ (Wolpe in Mafeje 1981: 129), he misses the fact that the possibility of such a process was thwarted by the Land Act of 1913. This was compounded by the fact that ‘Paramount Chiefs’, through the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, were given farms by the state so as to bribe them. Thereafter, Bantustan government Ministers helped themselves, and their cronies, to large portions of land. Still, this need not entail a growing ‘land-owning class’. It is at this point that Mafeje argued: ‘To conduct class analysis we do not have to invent classes, but rather to be alert to possible mediations in the process of class formation’ (Mafeje 1981: 130). The general lessons of this discussion is that a theory which is not adequately sensitive to concrete realities, however progressive, is likely to be as dangerous as its reactionary counterpart. Moreover, although it has been shown earlier on that Mafeje was advocating Marxism as the best answer to the social sciences, he was nevertheless willing to repudiate its categories if they did not accord with concrete realities. By this it is not meant that Mafeje was an empiricist. But rather, Mafeje took seriously ethnography and the sociology of knowledge. The significance of this will be clear in the following discussion on an epistemological break and the incorrigibility of Eurocentrism in the social sciences generally and alterity in anthropology specifically. It should be noted, too, that the issues discussed in this section will be dealt with fully in the next chapter – via a discussion of Mafeje’s study of the interlacustrine kingdoms – with a view to expound Mafeje’s methodological and epistemological approach.

4.4 On the Epistemological Break and the Lingering Problem of Alterity

Although anthropology has been criticised by a number of scholars who are located in different parts of the world, it has not yet dispensed with its problem of alterity – the ‘othering’ or the ‘epistemology of subjects-objects’ (see Mafeje 1996, 1997a, 1998b, 2001a). Reasons for this

incorrigibility of alterity in anthropology certainly go beyond questions of theory but speak to the sociological of knowledge which has been stated more than once in this chapter. Knowledge-making is thus a contested terrain very like the political. Mafeje makes the following observation:

It is a self-evident truth that epistemologies or grounds for knowledge are changeable and that paradigms or particular ways of constructing reality are perishable. However, the grounds under which such changes occur are perennially debatable. What is clearly an illusion is the bourgeois supposition that new knowledge is a result of free enquiry. History is full of examples which indicate that, if anything, new knowledge is often a result of struggle. This is to be expected. The requirements of social reproduction predicate that every society sanctions only such activities as are consistent with its overall mode of existence. Intellectual enquiry is no exception to this rule. (Mafeje 1986a: 10)

As noted earlier on, anthropology should not be singled out as the black sheep of the social sciences. All the social sciences are Eurocentric. Those who, like Mafeje, critiqued this Eurocentrism in the social sciences have earned themselves such labels as ‘angry’, ‘polemical’, ‘combative’ etc. Once they are so labelled by the academic orthodoxy, they need not be taken seriously. Their ‘anger’ is managed by ignoring them and through silencing or erasing their voices. This is not something that is easily intelligible to positivistic social scientists who fixate on the notion of ‘value-free’ enquiry. Lived experiences play a crucial role in how one perceives the world and therefore how one constructs knowledge. Indeed, with characteristic eloquence, Mafeje informs us so: ‘The separation between intellectuality and sociality is a result of European prejudice which we need not share. Intellectual activity is intrinsically social both in its constitution and in its practice. It can be stated emphatically that what puts intellectual issues on the agenda is social praxis’ (Mafeje 1986a: 10).

Mafeje goes on to argue that ‘it would seem that intellectual systems are capable of a clean epistemological break’ (Mafeje 1986a: 11). For example, there is no necessary affinity between Marxism and positivism or idealism. This raises the question of whether or not intellectual systems grow by accretion or by epistemological ruptures. If the latter were necessarily true, it would be difficult to explain why and how Mafeje found himself critiquing anthropology as late as 2001 when he and others had done the same in the 1960s and 1970s already (see Mafeje 2001a; Magubane 1968, 1969, 1971). His critique of anthropology in 2001 was in the context of Africans (led by Paul Nkwi) organising themselves into the Pan-African

society of anthropologists. It is in the context of the persistence of the discipline and seeming enthusiastic embrace by the Africans. In any case, Mafeje's critique and repudiation of anthropology did not translate into its repudiation by all Africans (even most Africans). This speaks precisely to the view that earlier critiques of anthropology did not necessarily entail a complete rupture or break with the discipline. Indeed, there would hardly be any critiques of Eurocentrism today if the critiques of the same in the 1970s constituted a rupture.

Mafeje goes on to 'posit most emphatically that epistemological ruptures in sciences as well as in other forms of knowledge are usually preceded by crises' (1986a: 11-12). This is analogous to the Leninist notion of a 'revolutionary situation' which constitutes the necessary (though not always sufficient) condition for a revolution proper. Crises in the social sciences have long been identified by Mafeje, Magubane and others, but it is a question why this has not led to an epistemological rupture – particularly in Africa. Knowledge making in and about Africa is still very much West-centred. It would seem to follow that the said crisis is only necessary but hardly sufficient to lead to a rupture. This, however, is to be understood in the wider sociological context which informs knowledge making – the working example being the skewed relations between the West and the Global South. Mafeje anticipates the foregoing objection when he makes the following observations:

The word 'crisis', has featured very strongly in social scientific writings since the 1970s, but its exact connotations remain a mystery. Yet, this need not be the case. It is our submission that social crisis occurs in society when the requisite processes of social reproduction cannot be attained by normal means i.e. means which are presumed to work because they have done so before. (Mafeje 1986a: 12)

It is still not obvious, however, whether or not Mafeje believes that, in spite of their earlier critiques of the 1970s, the social sciences have reached a point of an epistemological break. It is not clear, too, whether African scholars missed the opportunity to capitalise on the momentum of the said crises. Whatever the case may be, what is clear at this point is that the crisis can only be regarded as a necessary and not a sufficient condition for an epistemological break. Elsewhere, Mafeje argues:

The late sixties saw the first critical studies by African social scientists. This was more evident in anthropology and history. In fact, the former underwent a deep crisis after independence from which it has never recovered. A radical change of perspective in the other social science disciplines such as sociology, economics and political science was

brought directly by the introduction of the *dependencia* paradigm. They all veered towards *political economy* and exhibited a very strong neo-Marxist trend, to which Samir Amin at IDEP contributed in no mean way. This played havoc on disciplinary boundaries, even though African universities continued to be organised into disciplines for social studies. All these were important departures from bourgeois social science and were treated with a mixture of contempt and hostility by the savants of the north. (Mafeje 1986a: 16, emphasis in original)

There is a lot to tease out and reflect on in this quote. Firstly, it needs to be asked whether anthropology has not recovered from the said crisis. Mafeje's critiques of anthropology in the 1990s and 2000s suggests that the opposite may very well be true (see Mafeje 1996, 1997a, 1998b, 2001a). The battle seems far from over. Second, with regards to other disciplines, it could be argued that although they were critiqued by radical social scientists in the 1970s, they have in fact survived the onslaught. Indeed, scholars of the Global South would not now speak of Eurocentrism and the need for epistemological and curriculum decolonisation if the situation were as severe as Mafeje presents it. If anything, the said critiques were reflective of a particular epoch – both intellectually and socio-politically. In the age of neo-liberal complacency, there is now more than ever a need to revisit those critiques which have been overshadowed by conservative scholarship. To be fair, Mafeje was here reflecting on the state of affairs in the 1980s. A lot has happened since. In the context of consolidation of conservatism both intellectually and socio-politically by an academic orthodoxy the world over, it could be said that, contra Mafeje, what radical social scientists are pursuing now is 'the recovering of intellectual nerve' about which Adesina speaks rather than an epistemological break proper (see Adesina 2008b). In his own words, Mafeje says:

...a distinction should be made between an epistemological break and the consolidation of a new alternative theory. Implicit in this are very difficult theoretical issues which require a high level of intellectual self-awareness. The adoption of Marxism could be an emotional response to frustration with bourgeois theory and practice, in which case the twin evils of vulgarism and dogmatism are ever present. Marxism, like positivism, is basically a method of analysis. While any methodology, rigorously applied, is capable of producing valid results, every methodology is limited by its underlying assumptions. It is when such underlying assumptions are found not to apply to an increasing number of observable instances that a theoretical crisis occurs. (Mafeje 1986a: 16-17)

The nagging question is why and how is an epistemological break or even alternative theories reversed so that the gains already made lose their relevance? Mafeje's response is as follows:

In the social sciences the ideological component, which earlier we referred to as intellectual prejudice, appears to be incorrigible, ultimately. For instance, irrespective of the evidence that might be brought to bear, there is no way in which social scientists in the imperialist camp could be persuaded that imperialism exists and is a major problem of development in the Third World. It is also noteworthy that it was only possible to convince the practitioners that there was *colonial* anthropology after colonialism had been fought and defeated. (Mafeje 1986a: 17-18, emphasis in original)

Formally, colonialism may have been fought and defeated but anthropology has not. Analogously, 'while it is true that "modernisation theories" have been discredited, to assume that they have disappeared would be dangerous complacency' (Mafeje 1986a: 18). Thus the following words are axiomatic: '...while the social science might aspire to being technical subjects, rarely are the reasons for change in their theories technical or internal to them. More often than not, any revolutionary changes in their paradigms are sparked off by dramatic social changes or crises. This means that they, more than the natural sciences, are strongly *ideologically-conditioned*' (Mafeje 1986a: 19, emphasis in original). Elsewhere, Mafeje reiterates the same point when he says:

The idea of self-correcting scientific/rational thought overlooks a number of theoretical considerations regarding the process of knowledge-making. Among these may be mentioned the fact that, bourgeois individualism notwithstanding, knowledge-making is profoundly social. By this is meant not the now fashionable collaboration among members of a given scientific community but the fact that the direction and the content of scientific enquiry are socially determined. However, these determinations do not occur everyday but rather coincide with identifiable historical changes which are always preceded by intolerable social crises. (Mafeje 1984: 16)

This notwithstanding, it is not always clear when such social crises occur. For as Mafeje puts: 'The idea that crises are a necessary condition for radical or historical change would seem self-evident, especially to social scientists since "social problems" are their professional preoccupation. But at what point do social problems amount to a societal crisis? Supposedly, when they are no longer amenable to the usual practical and theoretical rationalisations' (Mafeje 1984: 17). Analytically, one way of objecting to this argument would be to point out

that it breaks the old philosophical taboo on deriving 'ought' from 'is' i.e. that X exists, or will exist, is no sufficient justification for its moral goodness. Such an assumption commits the 'naturalistic fallacy'. Substantively, however, such an objection may do little to dent the necessity of the social crises for historical changes, for it seems extraordinary that a rupture could simply come via a spontaneous combustion. That notwithstanding, the moral or inherent goodness of social crises is still in doubt. This is so because the crisis in the social sciences in the 1970s has not necessarily led to an epistemological rupture. The incorrigibility of alterity in anthropology is the case in point. Yet it might be better to seek ruptures at meso-levels as against the level of totality of the social sciences. The works of Oyeronke Oyewumi on gender are representative of an epistemological rupture in the global discourse of gender. Her widely-cited book, *The Invention of Women* (1997), is instructive in this regard.

As intimated earlier, although Mafeje was critical of anthropology as a discipline, he understood very well that all of the bourgeois social sciences were equally implicated. As such, he attempted to show that anthropology must be understood as consistent with the growth of functionalism and colonialism more generally. Anthropology was/is, he concedes, founded on studying the 'other'. Quite why this persists even to this day is a question which exercised Mafeje a great deal. The lingering problem of alterity, it should be remembered, continues years after anthropology had gone through a 'crisis' as a result of criticisms by Mafeje and other critical and radical social scientists. Mafeje writes: 'my ultimate concern is Anthropology as a discipline which was founded on studying the "other". With the knowledge that the "other" is a thing of the past. I am logically and subjectively interested in interrogating the credentials of Anthropology for dealing with the present, without making invidious distinctions between the Third World social subjects and those of the imperialist countries. Therefore, the *problematique* which our essay is intended to explore is the deconstruction of Anthropology with reference to the ex-colonial world' (Mafeje 1996: 1).

Three issues generally emerge from Mafeje's investigation: (i) the self-identity and role of African anthropologists in the post-independence period; (ii) the question as to whether or not there can be, post-independence, African Anthropology (not Anthropology in Africa) without African anthropologists; and (iii) the question as to whether 'authentic representation', on the part of African anthropologists, would entail a 'demise of Anthropology as is traditionally known' (Mafeje 1996: 1). The general point seems to be that deconstruction carries little weight if it does not entail reconstruction. In other words, negation without affirmation is meaningless. But such reconstruction attempts have always been difficult since much of the deconstruction was conducted in the North to begin with – with a few exceptions

from the South. Mafeje captures something of this when he says: ‘Looked at from a historical perspective, it could be said that on the main African anthropologists did not anticipate independence in their professional representations. What this would have entailed is an anticipatory *deconstruction* of colonial Anthropology so as to guarantee a rebirth or transformation of Anthropology’ (Mafeje 1996: 2, emphasis in original). Murunga laments the fact that in making these remarks, Mafeje overlooks the work of Okot P’Bitek: ‘It is true however that Mafeje’s concern is as old as 1970 when Okot P’Bitek, also a trained anthropologist, declared the tenure of anthropology on any African university over (see his *African Religion in Western Scholarship*, 1970). Unfortunately, Mafeje seems to pay no attention to P’Bitek, therefore overlooking his contribution. The difference between P’Bitek and other African anthropologists that when he declared anthropology dead in Africa, he actually redirected his energy into literature to the extent of championing the field of oral literature’ (Murunga 1998:177). Oral literature, whatever its merits, seems an obscure substitute for anthropology which, whatever its faults, prides itself for empirically-informed conclusions.

It seems that in spite of the said deconstruction, or the so-called crisis which anthropology went through, attempts at reconstructing or otherwise burying it altogether proved impossible. The lingering problem of alterity is a case in point. Elsewhere, Mafeje (1997a) suggests that anthropology is dying but it is not yet dead. Although he had in his earlier works suggested that critique must be directed at all the imperialist social sciences, Macdonald (2009) points out that Mafeje somewhat revised his position in the light of responses from his critics (see Laville 1998; Moore; Nkwi 1998; Prah 1997b; Sharp 1998; Vilakazi 1998). One of Mafeje’s critics, Kwesi Prah (1997b, 2007, 2015), makes the following observation:

Mafeje endorsed much of the criticism directed at anthropology for the wilful and sometimes innocent collusion between anthropologists and colonial administration which many including Kathleen Gough, Talal Asad, Jarius Banaji, David Goddard, Ben Magubane and Abdel Ghaffar Mohammed Ahmed had made. I would go further beyond anthropology to accuse Western social science in general and some of the humanities in particular of colonial distortions. ...Reconstitutions are not required of only anthropology. (Prah 2015: 9)

Prah continues with this illustrated observation:

My observation was that, hegemonic forms of knowledge production and reproduction are anathema to most of us, but Mafeje's view not only attempts to close the chapter on anthropology as a science of culture, but is also ambiguous on whether the deconstruction of bourgeois social science is meant also to create a post-sociological, post-psychological or post-economic sciences eras. ... This is what I call his courageous and daring *Hypothesis of a Unified Field of Social Science*; a plea for a new conceptual bricolage for social science. This position appeared to me to be not only shatteringly and iconoclastically adrift, but even more worrying was its implicit denial of the disciplinary logic of the social sciences. ... The seductions of Mafeje's viewpoint are compelling. ... They seem to be that, if we unify the conceptual field of the social sciences we would command a formidable and integrated arsenal of terminology, frameworks and concepts and achieve greater seamless inter-disciplinarity which has so far eluded us because of the traditional preservation of turf and the *territorium drang* which goes with it. The argument needs to be considered. (Prah 2015: 10–11, emphasis in original)

This misreading of Mafeje's argument is quite surprising coming from Prah. Although Prah argues that Mafeje's argument needs to be considered, he nonetheless assigns to Mafeje precisely what the latter argued against. Firstly, Prah argues that he would go further beyond anthropology to critique other social sciences and humanities for colonial distortions. That is perfectly fine. But this pronouncement leaves the reader with the impression that Mafeje never went beyond anthropology in his critique. To imply that a critique of the other social sciences was lost on Mafeje is at best misleading. In this regard, Prah is liable to the accusation of re-inventing the wheel. Secondly, to argue that Mafeje was 'ambiguous' on what deconstruction of the social sciences meant is not altogether justified. Prah argues, for example, that Mafeje is making an attempt to 'unify the conceptual field of the social sciences' in the manner of 'inter-disciplinarity'. The opposite is actually the case. Mafeje was making a plea for 'non-disciplinarity', and that is a case he had been building as far back as the 1970s with the essay 'The Problem of Anthropology in Historical Perspective' (1976a). The question, for Mafeje, turns on *transcendence* of disciplinarity as against *unification* of disciplines. Adesina also takes issue with Mafeje's rejection of disciplinarity and epistemology. He argues that not only does Mafeje mistake issues of pedagogy for those of research, but also he mistakes epistemology for dogmatism (Adesina 2008b). Adesina advances a well-considered albeit brief argument against Mafeje, but it needs to be said that Adesina himself wrongly imputes to Mafeje the

concepts of ‘inter-disciplinarity’ and ‘trans-disciplinarity’ (Adesina 2008b: 144). Adesina’s critique of Mafeje’s view is that scholarship is necessarily inter-disciplinary *ab initio* in that no social problems are purely social or purely economic and thus in terms of research they require that one tap into other disciplines. In this view, Mafeje’s argument appears misdirected. As regards pedagogy, Adesina argues, the danger with inter-disciplinarity will lead to training students who have no methodological grounding in any discipline. This is a valid argument. But there is something to be said about the fact that Mafeje advocates non-disciplinarity rather than inter- or trans-disciplinarity. In this regard, Mafeje’s proposal has far-reaching consequences for both teaching and research.

The new non-disciplinary approach makes proposals or has implications not only for a transcendence of Euro-American epistemology and methodology but necessarily holds true for teaching purposes as well. It has to be so, for the simple reason that if disciplinarity, such as is conventionally known, is to be transcended or otherwise dismantled for the purposes of knowledge-production/research, the same must be true for teaching purposes. Thus Mafeje’s new social science ought to entail new teaching or training methods as well. For the sake of accuracy, Mafeje does not use the concepts of inter-disciplinarity and trans-disciplinarity – at least not affirmatively. Nabudere (2008, 2010, 2011) and Sharawy (2008), respectively, still feel that Mafeje does not transcend the western knowledge archive. Indeed, Sharawy (2008: 19) asserts that Mafeje ‘does not uphold the idea of the End of Anthropology in order to liquidate an epistemological order, but rather to put in its place a more appropriate alternative to the concept, which, in his opinion, leads to anthropological theorising of another kind’. Again, here the question seems to turn on whether Mafeje succeeds or fails, and not on his *attempt to liquidate* an epistemological order. His *attempt* to liquidate epistemology was made clear – the search an epistemological rupture is a case in point. Charitably, Mafeje’s interlocutors are correct, at least in one respect, in claiming that he does not transcend the western knowledge archive. But the reasons they adduce in support of this claim are faulty. For example, they say he advocates ‘inter-disciplinarity’. That is incorrect. A much more suitable example of Mafeje’s failure to transcend the western knowledge archive is his appeal to Marxism as the ‘best anthropology that there is’. In this regard, Sharawy and Nabudere are on to something. But this is a position Mafeje modified in his later critique of the social sciences, since he no longer appealed to Marxism *per se*.

For example, in the monograph *Anthropology and Independent Africans* (1996), Mafeje argues that ‘of interest to us in the present context is that all what is said above was not anthropological... Nor was it interdisciplinary... It was *non-disciplinary*...’ (Mafeje 1996: 28,

emphasis in original). In his response to his critics, 'Conversations and Confrontations with my Reviewers', he argued that 'interdisciplinarity leads to theoretical hiatus. It will require a major epistemological break-through as good as positivism which instigated the rise of the disciplines and led to the fragmentation of social theory to achieve any coalescence' (Mafeje 1998b: 102). He had argued earlier on in the abovementioned monograph that: 'The attack on Anthropology was heartfelt and justified in the immediate anti-colonial revulsion. *But it was ultimately subjective because the so-called modernising social sciences were not any less imperialist and actually became rationalisations for neo-colonialism in Africa*, as we know now. However, the important lesson to be drawn from the experience of the African anthropologists is that Anthropology is premised on an immediate subject/object relation' (Mafeje 1996: 19, emphasis added). This is consistent with Mafeje's critique of the social sciences generally and of anthropology in particular. Yet in the light of criticisms, Mafeje slightly revised his position (see Laville 1998; Mafeje 1998; Moore 1998; Nkwi 1998; Prah 1997b; Sharp 1998; Vilakazi 1998). On the racist nature of anthropology he was consistent, but on the question of Eurocentrism in other disciplines he backtracked – an inconvenient afterthought that could easily have cost him the debate. Mafeje observes: 'I reserve the right to put theoretical/intellectual questions to the practitioners of the craft. This is done in the belief that anthropology as a discipline is founded on alterity which historically has issued into racism, which is not true of other social sciences such as economics and sociology. In fact, if anthropology were to dispense with alterity, it would be indistinguishable from peasant/community/small group studies conducted by early sociologists in Europe and America. ... Thus, the issue is not social sciences in general and their positivism but rather the dissolution of the racist anthropological paradigm' (1998b: 101).

The belated concession that the other social sciences are less Eurocentric was a blunder which nevertheless does not diminish the overall substance of Mafeje's critique of the social sciences. Perhaps Mafeje might be justified in making such a concession when one considers some of the pioneering works of some African social scientists. For example, Oyewumi's (1997) work is social science but hardly Eurocentric. Akiwowo's sociology was social science but far from being Eurocentric. Similarly Ifi Amadiume's (1997) works fall within the social sciences but hardly Eurocentric; she rejected Anthropology in favour of Social History. Cheikh Anta Diop's ([1955]1974, [1981]1991) works were Historical Sociology and anything but Eurocentric. The point being that Mafeje may have been trying to make a distinction between Eurocentric Social Science and Social Science, as such. One might argue Mafeje's primary point is that it is difficult to conceive of Anthropology without racism (epistemology of alterity)

whereas you can think of Sociology or Economics without being, *ipso facto*, racist. The anthropological enquiry is premised on the researcher as ontologically distinct from the subject of his/her enquiry, whereas the Western sociologists study the subjects of their enquiry as ontologically similar or the same as them.

Yet this does not explain why social scientists from the Global South today still speak of ‘epistemological decolonisation’ or ‘curriculum transformation’. The fact that there exists ‘hardly Eurocentric’ social sciences from African scholars is no reason to suppose that overwhelmingly the social sciences are not Eurocentric. It would not explain why, in his own work, Adesina (2002, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2008a, 2008b, 2010) advocates African sociology. It is precisely because of the dominance of the Eurocentric social sciences that he seeks to re-centre African sociology. The assumption that the social sciences cannot be transcended, in the manner of Mafeje’s non-disciplinarity, is to assume that the social sciences as are currently known are trans-historical – i.e. they have been there since the beginning of time. That is not the case. As pointed out earlier on, for example, the discipline of anthropology is the child of colonialism and imperialism. At any rate, Mafeje’s later critique of anthropology seems to centre on the lingering problem of alterity years after the discipline had undergone the epistemological crisis. It should be borne in mind that in critiquing anthropology, and the social sciences generally, Mafeje is in search of an epistemological break and therefore new paradigms. Regardless as to whether Mafeje seemed to have backtracked in critiquing all of the social sciences, in the light of his critics, the substance of what he sought remains enduring. He was not critiquing anthropology (and other social sciences) for its own sake, he sought to replace it with something else. Hence ‘deconstruction’ and ‘reconstruction’ (Mafeje 1996, 2001a). He sees such an undertaking being accomplished through sound research and deep familiarity with one’s ‘ethnography’. He says for example: ‘as our study on the interlacustrine shows, without a serious return to the study of African ethnography, it is not likely that any important breakthroughs will be made in African social science’ (Mafeje 1995c: 168). As such, what exists currently is anthropology in Africa as opposed to African anthropology (Mafeje 1998b).

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter was concerned to dispel the standard view or the conventional view that Mafeje critique of the social sciences was limited to a critique of anthropology only. The chapter sought to demonstrate that such a view is partial reading of Mafeje’s in that the latter was quite clear

that all the social sciences are Eurocentric and imperialist. Importantly, the chapter attempted to show that the claim that Mafeje's critique centred on anthropology only, turns Mafeje into a reformist rather than the revolutionary scholar that he was. Equally, the object of this chapter was to emphasise the fact that his critique of the social sciences is best understood as 'programmatic' rather than his 'thematic' critique of anthropological categories such as the ideology of tribalism etc. as discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter proceeded as follows: (i) it underlined Mafeje's serious treatment of the sociology of knowledge and his totalising critique of social change; (ii) it offered his critique of positivism and functionalism in anthropology; (iii) it re-centred his notions of idiographic versus nomothetic enquiry in the social sciences; and (iv) it underlined his search for an epistemological break and the critique of the lingering problem of alterity in anthropology. The next chapter deals precisely with Mafeje's study of 'African ethnography' and his search for methodological and epistemological breakthrough. Mafeje uses the term ethnography in what seems to be two ways. Firstly, 'ethnography', such as he conceives of it, has socio-cultural connotations. In fact, it is his preferred substitute term for the nebulous concept of culture. Secondly, by ethnography he refers to non-disciplinary and it becomes the substitute candidate for the social sciences as they are conventionally known.

Chapter Five

On Methodology and Epistemology: Reading *The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations*

5.0 Introduction

Archie Mafeje's *magnum opus*, *The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations* (1991a), is a book that one must read and understand if s/he is to grasp the unit of his thought. In it he moves between the abstract and the concrete with great aplomb. He discusses with a certain deftness Marxian categories and subjects them to critical scrutiny using the Great Lakes region as a case study. It is a highly theoretical book and such issues as he discusses are quite complex. But complexity is to be found in ideas and not in prose; for Mafeje writes with great facility – exact and everywhere intelligible. It is a well-executed study. About this book and Mafeje's monograph, *The Agrarian Question, Access to Land and Peasant Responses in Sub Saharan Africa*, Samir Amin (2008: 12) says: 'I consider these two contributions to be quite exceptional in terms of the quality of information provided and the rigour of their analysis'. Following from the previous chapter, this chapter is concerned to show the genius of Mafeje's project (i.e. the transcendence of Eurocentric knowledge) through his study of the interlacustrine kingdoms. Specifically, the chapter seeks to demonstrate how Mafeje actualises his project of advancing new methodologies and epistemologies in Africa. No better study than the abovementioned book demonstrates Mafeje's attempt in this regard. This chapter is not a mere 'book review'. But rather, it is a detailed discussion of the leading ideas in Mafeje's difficult and back-breaking attempt at arriving at the conclusion that western knowledge can be transcended. Indeed through his study of the Great Lakes, he argues, a 'deeper ethnographic and historical awareness should give us enough confidence not to be tyrannised by concepts' (Mafeje 1991a: 118–119).

5.1 The Problem and its Matrix: Conceptual Orientations

Although Mafeje sets a great deal of stock by ethnography, or sound empirical research, he does not believe that knowledge-making or theory-building necessarily resides at the level of 'facts' (Mafeje 1991a). One can, he argues, conduct empirical research without being an 'empiricist' (1977a, 1991a). Mafeje is of the view that real knowledge occurs at the level of interpretation of facts. This in turn presents two likely possibilities. Firstly, data may confirm old knowledge or it may give new meaning to established facts. In other words, it may not necessarily tamper with the status quo. Secondly, it may yield new information which may break or rupture completely with conventions to the point of new knowledge systems

altogether. This is the epistemological rupture – and it does not occur without resistance or contentions. Mafeje’s interest resides in pursuing this epistemological rupture. For him, this is where real knowledge occurs.

Although the older generation of anthropologists produced valuable monographs, with highly informative data on Africa, their works constitutes no such epistemological ruptures as are pursued by Mafeje. Anthropologists may have had their own differences and disagreements, but ultimately they were working within the same paradigm. Such concepts as they deployed were so fixed and standardised as to be predictable. Data was used to validate theory as against generating the latter from the former. One of the major problems with anthropological research of this kind, in Mafeje’s view, is the use of taxonomic categories which are, perforce, ‘empiricist’ and ‘static’. For Mafeje, such categories ‘substitute bounded forms for processes’ (Mafeje 1991a: ii). This makes anthropology ahistorical just insofar as it seeks not only to study the immediate and observable, but also compartmentalises social phenomena. Mafeje is not alone in impressing this point. Magubane argues just the same and calls this the ‘restriction’ as opposed to a ‘release’ of ‘sociological imagination’ (Magubane 1968).

Characteristically, in his study of the interlacustrine kingdoms, Mafeje resisted the urge to study that society armed with theory or ‘given epistemology’. He was interested in learning from the society itself and thus build theory from the ground up. While decidedly critical of anthropology, it is clear that he borrowed from it insofar as he uses inductive logic. Magubane, on the other hand, seems to have been against the idea of conducting research without a guiding theory. He argues that ‘only by endowing his work with “theoretical” significance can the practical researcher conduct his activities with some reassurance’ (Magubane 1973: 1706). Magubane’s concerns notwithstanding, the significance of Mafeje’s inductive approach will become clearer later on. Mafeje avoids preconceived schema by using a ‘discursive method’. He observes: ‘Using a discursive method, I allowed myself to be guided by the African ethnographies themselves. In trying to decode them, all pre-existing concepts became suspect and were subject to review. In the process a number of epistemological assumptions, including Marxist ones, ceased to be self-evident and became objects for intellectual labour’ (Mafeje 1991a: iii). Some of his critics, as will be shown later on, do not find this submission satisfactory (Moore 1998; Nabudere 2010, 2011; Sharp 1998). What is most important and enduring in Mafeje’s approach is to understand societies on their own terms. In doing so, it should not be supposed that Mafeje is interested in, or otherwise promotes, ‘sociological particularism’. He was against such an approach. Instead, he adopted ‘a totalising critique’.

That is to say, having gathered data on its own terms, he relates it to the wider sociological and historical context which informs it. He reads it 'inside outwards'. The idea of taking one's research subjects on their terms, according to Mafeje, often invokes the question of empathy versus critique. The two need not be in conflict, of course. Indeed studying one's subjects on their own terms need not lead one to 'phenomenological affirmation of the internal subjects' (Mafeje 1991a: iv). Empathy can in fact also sharpen one's critique. Mafeje is thus not engaged in the fallacy of 'insider/outsider' argument (Achieng 2015).

Be it noted that the search for an epistemological rupture is not purely accidental or otherwise confined to intellectual or theoretical pursuits. It also speaks to wider societal issues especially for those who are in the social sciences. The search for epistemological breakthrough usually derives from 'disaffection with existing forms of practice and theory' (Mafeje 1991a: 1). This is the 'crisis' alluded to in the previous chapter. For Mafeje, in the absence of a dominant or over-arching epistemology, the search for a new paradigm often leads to 'theoretical incoherence'. This is usually demonstrated by a growth of different schools of thought. Such schools tend to be short-lived intellectual fads. This does not necessarily mean that proponents of such schools of thought are fond of fads or are incompetent. Quite apart from that, they are usually engaged in sincere and genuine search for alternatives which at times go beyond the confines of the academy. For social scientists this has to be so, chiefly because of the sociology of knowledge. Mafeje concurs that 'it must be admitted that the social sciences are particularly susceptible to their social and ideological environment. ...In other words, social scientific questions are put on the agenda by current social struggles' (Mafeje 1991a: 2). Mafeje says this without being reductionist or empiricist in that he leaves room for theoretical 'projections' which may not be based on a 'reflection of reality' but on transcendence thereof. Be that as it may, such transcendence, according to him, is itself backward-looking insofar as it rationalises social phenomena *ex post facto*. This argument is partially true. Not all social science is subject to 'background assumptions which are historically and culturally determined' (Mafeje 1991a: 2). Certain scholarship is ahistorical and acontextual. Here Mafeje runs the risk of advancing an internally inconsistent argument insofar as he had already critiqued anthropology and its taxonomic categories for being 'utterly unhistorical' (Mafeje 1991a: ii).

Closely associated with this problem is the question of particulars and universals. Does idiographic enquiry yield deeper insights into societal problems than nomothetic enquiry? In other words, does local knowledge/history provide better insights into societal problems than universal theory? This issue was discussed very briefly in the previous chapter. This chapter

will attempted to characterise it more fully. Be it noted, too, that the two need not be in conflict if one is not dogmatic about any one of them. One can be empirically grounded without being an empiricist or a positivist as such. Equally, even Marxists who are set against empiricism and positivism still resort to ‘the historically concrete’ (Mafeje 1991a). Indeed theory-building or the pursuit of an epistemological rupture often relies on concrete analysis, as Mafeje demonstrates in his study. Strictly speaking, the universality of any theory is limited by its context or failure to answer or explain any given social phenomenon. By the same token, empirical findings or ethnographical studies are limited by their own context. Attempts to draw attention to certain interconnections via ethnography are, however, important. Yet to try to universalise such studies can make them ‘analogical in procedure’. While there is nothing wrong with analogies and metaphors, ‘truly universal concepts in the social sciences are rare and treacherous’ (Mafeje 1991a: 3). Not only that, social phenomena which seem to share the same logical pattern or structure at any one time, may not unfold or occur the same way under different circumstances. In a word, context matters a great deal in sense-making.

In this regard, Mafeje invokes the notion of ‘authentic interlocution’. Authentic interlocutors are so designated because they take their objects of enquiry or units of analysis on their own terms (Nyoka 2012b). Mafeje encounters criticism from John Sharp (1998). For Sharp, nothing follows from the fact that the researcher tells the story of the subjects, about whether or not such a story is authentic. Better still, the participants need not necessarily be the best narrators of their own story. Nor is the researcher, because of his/her background, necessarily the best narrator of the story. Moreover, Sharp argues, not only does this come close to committing the fallacy of ‘insider/outsider’ dichotomy¹²¹, but also it becomes a ‘taxonomy that draws an essentialist distinction between Europe and Africa’ (Sharp 1998: 72). In other words, in Sharp’s view, Mafeje commits the *tu quoque* fallacy insofar as he presents the same taxonomic categories he sought to discard. Sharp’s objection is important. But it seems to miss what Mafeje has in mind. There are two key issues here. Firstly, it needs to be said that Mafeje advances a similar argument, as Sharp does, against the notion of ‘action-research’ (Mafeje 1984). The major problem, however, with objecting to ‘authentic interlocution’ in the manner that Sharp does, is that it runs the risk of questioning the process of empirical research *tout court*. Embedded in it, too, is the presumed irrationality on the part of the research subjects. The inverse, of course, being the paternalistic and all-knowing

¹²¹ John Sharp interview with the author 30 March 2015. Pretoria

researcher. The general point Mafeje seeks to impress is that one ought to be cognisant of the history and context or the specificities of both in space and in time.

Secondly, the claim to the effect that Mafeje is advancing an essentialist distinction or committing the ‘insider/outsider’ fallacy is simply uncharitable. Mafeje is at pains, in as much as he critiques them, to show that not only is he indebted to the ‘first generation’ of European ethnographers (Richards *et al* 1959), but also the French Marxist anthropologists (Godelier 1972, 1974, 1977; Meillassoux 1972, 1973) whom he engages much more approvingly and charitably than their older British counterparts. Indeed, Mafeje argues that ‘irrespective of whatever prejudices Samir Amin might have against anthropologists, researchers such as Meillassoux and his followers must be taken seriously. Their work is the best attempt to reconcile Marxist analytical categories with vernaculars in pre-capitalist societies. Their deep idiographic knowledge, far from diminishing their capacity to produce nomothetic propositions, has helped them to generate new concepts, without being eclectic. Indeed, part of our inspiration is drawn from Meillassoux’s work which marks a radical departure from traditional anthropology’ (Mafeje 1991a: 10). Thus the claim that Mafeje is making essentialist appeals to the effect that only Africans can study Africa simply is not true. Theoretically, this whole issue hacks back to Mafeje’s proposal itself about immersing oneself in the narratives of those whom you study. As such, the merits and demerits of his proposal ought to be assessed on those theoretical bases and not in *ad hominem* terms as Sharp does. The question, then, turns on whether or not this is at all possible and not on the question ‘Who Speaks for Whom?’ as Sharp (1998) erroneously titled his response to Mafeje. Whether Mafeje succeeded or not in this task awaits further analysis.

In the interim, it should be noted that although an epistemological break entails a paradigm shift, paradigms need to be sustained by new theories and new concepts. While certain studies and paradigms may set important parameters, their sociological and analytical value can only be realised when one has deep appreciation of their internal logic or dynamics. It should be noted, however, that ‘insistence on historical specificity is not a refusal to be analytically universal’ (Mafeje 1991a: 7). Nor is it a sign of parochialism. Instead, it is meant to ensure ‘reliability and sensitivity of analytical tools’ just as it ‘sets the range of their applicability’ (Mafeje 1991a: 7). Thus, comparative studies cannot be mere analogies. They ought to be informed by or drawn from local history. Such studies can, according to Mafeje, ‘be deciphered only through authentic local interlocutors’ (Mafeje 1991a: 7). This is as much a problem of knowledge as it is a political problem – very much like struggles for national liberation. It will be objected to this notion of local interlocutors as being the only ones who

can decipher studies, by pointing out that this is precisely the point to which Sharp objects. Such an objection to Mafeje would only hold if one ignores his frequent refrain that, in arguing for authentic voices, he does not seek 'to draw invidious distinctions among people'. As a matter of fact, even if Mafeje was saying the opposite, there is still a greater need for Africans to re-centre their being and write about their lived experiences such as they understand them. This is the whole point of knowledge decolonisation in any case.

In the last analysis, Mafeje believes that Africa is in a good position, as a site for research, to overturn certain theories and definitions. Indeed, his study is pitched at the level of methodology and theory precisely to overturn, or otherwise question, what had gone on before in African studies. Broadly conceived, the study critiques the needless dichotomy between nomothetic propositions and idiographic knowledge. At the intermediate level, Mafeje critiques disciplines such as anthropology, history and economics for being so particularistic that they fail to relate their problematic to its wider and historical context. In short, 'they failed to capture the totality of the social existence of the communities under study' (Mafeje 1991a: 9). A good example of this is the excessive focus on micro-studies or institutions such as 'tribes' without studying the social whole. Fundamentally, Mafeje's study seeks to reconceptualise social phenomena which had been studied in Eurocentric terms. The point is to show that African societies were studied using concepts and theories derived from Europe, so that when the interpretation of such societies does not conform to such theories, they are viewed as deviant and anomalous. Yet, strictly speaking, an epistemological rupture occurs precisely when data contrasts with given theory or epistemology. In this sense, theory ought to give way to data when the two are in conflict. Mafeje refers to the problem of superimposing theory on data as 'inarticulation between universal language... and vernacular' (Mafeje 1991a: 9). This is a lack of authentic interlocution. Thus in order for the interlocutor to be authentic or otherwise decode the 'texts', s/he must have a deep appreciation of the historical context. The problem with universalists and empiricists alike, has been to treat issues as though they were self-evident. They arrive at this point by taking different routes. The former comes with the confidence of theory while the latter reads the concrete superficially and take it as is. Mafeje's attempt is to try to reconcile universalist categories with 'vernaculars'. Deep idiographic knowledge can produce nomothetic propositions through generating new concepts without being eclectic – i.e. theoretically weak. Although Mafeje studies the interlacustrine kingdoms, the broad title about 'African Social Formations' means that such issues as he pursues or such questions as he poses, hold true for much of sub-Saharan Africa. Though this remains true,

Mafeje is careful not to generalise so as to leave room for ‘unexplored theoretical possibilities’ (Mafeje 1991a: 10).

5.2 The Ethnography and Social Formations of the Interlacustrine

Having set the scene with the conceptual and sociological overview of the thrust of his study, Mafeje attempts to make good on his claim to search for an epistemological break. His starting point is to overturn the concept of ‘ethnography’ such as is known by anthropologists. In his usage, the term departs from its standard usage in that he does not limit it to the study of ‘tribes’ or ‘tribal identities’. Nor does he use it ‘as a scientific description of races of men’ (Mafeje 1991a: 13). Instead, he assigns to it cultural and social connotations. Further still, unlike anthropologists who have done the same, Mafeje does not seek to isolate patterns of socio-cultural organisation of communities. That is too narrow for Mafeje. The point, according to him, is to relate such communities to their wider sociological and historical context. As indicated earlier, taxonomic categories tend to favour discontinuities even where none exist. In this way, they atomise societies in an ahistorical manner.

It is true that different forms might entail different qualities or processes. But forms are not what Mafeje is interested in. Mafeje is interested in similarities in processes or qualities. That is to say, he is interested in the content or essential characteristics of societies. It is at this level where similarities and differences ought to be made. In their search for taxonomy, anthropologists who conducted research in the interlacustrine kingdoms tended to focus on forms as opposed to substance and underlying features of those societies (see Richards *et al* 1959). This led to speculative studies which bordered on racism. In this regard, anthropologists tended to contradict themselves in that they identified a number of ‘tribes’, yet in spite of the diversity of the said tribes they sought to assert ‘ethnographic unity’ (Mafeje 1991a: 13).

Mafeje’s ethnography relates to ‘learnt habits’ such as language, which facilitates social and cultural creativity. In his view, this has nothing to do with race or ethnicity. This, according to him, is the perspective which befits the interlacustrine people. One of the major problems with anthropological research has been to conflate the notion of ‘tribe’ (if by that one means a form of political organisation) and a linguistic group. For Mafeje, ethnographic evidence points to the contrary i.e. the two do not always correspond. People may speak the same language but still fall under different or independent chiefdoms and ‘tribes’. The same holds true in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, where amaXhosa speak the same language but in practice are divided into independent chiefdoms i.e. amaMpondo, abaThembu, amaBhaca etc. The failure to appreciate the theoretical implications of this ethnographic detail has led to such conceptual

muddles as referring, for example, to the interlacustrine kingdoms as ‘multi-kingdom tribes’. On the other hand, there are such cases as Bunyoro, Ankole etc. where there are ‘unitary kingdoms’ in what are clearly ethnographically diverse communities. Thus, to the anthropologist, ‘the co-existence of the Bairu and Bahima in Bunyoro and Ankole or of the Bahutu and Batutsi in Rwanda and Burundi constituted something of an anomaly’ (Mafeje 1991a: 14). Yet this need not be the case. These societies appeared anomalous precisely because of anthropological atomisation of societies.

As has been mentioned, Mafeje’s conception of ethnography has nothing to do with race or ethnicity. He gives two further reasons for this. Firstly, people who comprise any one ethnic group would, under different circumstances or epoch, fall under a different group or be known by a different name. Secondly, it is possible that the same group of people might, as a result of migration, ecological conditions and interaction with other groups, even within a given region and epoch, still ‘account for ethnographic variation’ (Mafeje 1991a: 15). Thus Mafeje questions the distinctness and purity of ethnic or tribal identities. He argues that distinctness of ethnic identities should never be overstated because fusion with other groups make for cultural continuities and reproduction. This would mean that the interlacustrine people, for example, had for some time ceased to view themselves as bounded societies or kin-based groups. For example, by the 15th century the Bunyoro-Kitara ruling dynasties had sought to impose their authority on others in the region – some of those groups had similar cultural, linguistic and modes of social organisation (Mafeje 1991a). This raises the question as to the meaning of the concept of ‘society’ and criteria used to ascertain its boundaries. This, for Mafeje, has theoretical implications. For one thing, anthropologists have used the term to designate bounded units so that it coincides with ‘culture’ (or Mafeje’s ‘ethnography’). Yet Marxists have, correspondingly, rejected the term as ‘unscientific’ and ideologically-laden. In its stead, they use ‘social formation’ (Mafeje 1991a).

For Mafeje, a social formation is not the same as an articulation of modes of production. His use of social formation departs from that associated with Balibar or Samir Amin. As regards social formation, Mafeje (1991a) refers to what he calls, respectively, ‘articulation of the economic instance’ and ‘the instance of power’. He avoids Balibar’s and Amin’s use of the term on logical grounds. Logically, Mafeje (1996: 33) maintains, ‘we could not use an articulation of abstract concepts such as “modes of production” to designate the same concrete social reality they are meant to explain’. One cannot define a concept and still have the very same concept within its definition. The economic instance has a concrete referent because it relates, primarily, to the level of production not the level of theory and abstraction. Equally,

class struggle is a concrete reality occurring at the level of social relations and reproduction among members of competing classes or ‘representatives of competing modes of production’ (Mafeje 1991a: 16). This is what Mafeje calls the ‘instance of power’ which ensures the continuation of struggles and ideological affirmations. This, according to him, is not only concrete or applicable at the level of praxis, but also it is theoretically or ‘universally’ applicable. Thus, ethnography and social formation, such as Mafeje conceives of the two terms, can be understood or explicated through a concrete historical analysis of the interlacustrine kingdoms. In his homage to Mafeje, Samir Amin says: ‘I agree with Mafeje’s definition of social formations as a bloc covering the economic and political realms. But it does not fully and necessarily substitute for the structuring of specific and differing modes of production’ (Amin 2008: 14). On the face of it, Mafeje’s discussion of the ethnography and social formations of the interlacustrine seems rather convoluted, but as will be seen later on, it lays the foundation for his methodological and theoretical contribution.

Due to lack of centralisation, the interlacustrine kingdoms were said to be ‘segmentary’ or ‘acephalous’ societies. Culturally, or ‘ethnographically’, ‘lineages’ as a form of political organisation characterised the interlacustrine kingdoms. This applies, primarily, at the local level and it remains the case even in the centralised kingdoms. In this regard, these societies can be said to have been in transition from one form of political organisation to another. Thus, the fixed anthropological binaries between ‘segmentary’/‘acephalous’ and ‘centralised’ states obscures this historical process. Mafeje cautions that in describing these societies as transitional, he is not at the same time implying that they should be viewed in an ‘evolutionary’ way. For example, not all segmentary societies in the interlacustrine kingdoms were ‘destined’ to become centralised kingdoms as a form of political organisation. They were, instead, exposed to ‘centralising tendencies’. The whole process should be understood in sociological and historical terms as against ‘natural’ or biological evolution. To understand this, one needs to consider the case of Bunyoro-Kitara, Ankore, Buhaya and Rwanda which were originally decentralised agricultural communities whose ways of living were modified after an imposition on them ‘by empire-building pastoralists who came from outside’ (Mafeje 1991a: 17). It should be noted that for this to happen, the empire-builders need not have come from outside of these areas. Good examples of instances in which empire-builders and ruling dynasties came from within include Buganda, Busoga and ‘all other Bantu kingdoms, stretching from the Congo through Zambia, Zimbabwe and down to South Africa’ (Mafeje 1991a: 17). In fact, the rise of certain clans and lineages to establish royal clans and ruling dynasties is characteristic of the Bantu-speaking communities from the 15th century onwards. Further, Mafeje argues,

pastoralism is quite common in Bantu-speaking communities in tsetse-free zones. Thus, the anthropological distinction between pastoralists invaders and native agriculturalists 'is, historically, not diagnostic' (Mafeje 1991a: 18).

In addition, the so-called 'Hamitic' pastoralists who were found mainly in the north are archetypal segmentary societies. The anthropological notion of acephalous societies applied to the pastoralists proper. Thus, for Mafeje, the question as how and why, in their southward-bound movement, the pastoralists came to establish powerful kingdoms needs to be explained in sociological and not in racial terms. In any case, the notion of 'Hamitic' pastoralists and 'Nilotic' agriculturalists is historically wanting and theoretically unjustified since through intermingling, both characteristics are to be found in both groups. Also, the long-horned cattle are not unique to Somalia and Ethiopia but are to be found in countries such as Sierra Leone and Namibia. Pre-dynastic Egypt, from which the 'Hamitic' pastoralists supposedly come, was not a pastoral society in any case.

From the 19th century onwards, the interlacustrine region comprised ten main kingdoms and three segmentary societies. All of them spoke Bantu languages. Although the kingdoms are said to have been ruled by dynasties of different ethnic descent, they had more commonalities than differences in their constitutions. It is true that some were heterogeneous (for example, Bunyoro, Ankore, Rwanda, Buhaya, Buha and Buzinza) while others were more homogenous (for example, Buganda and Busoga) (Mafeje 1991a). The foregoing discussion gives rise to the question of class versus caste in interlacustrine social formations. Mafeje argues that from the standpoint of political economy, class and caste are relative terms although, ethnographically, the same might not be true. Historically, it appears that caste-based kingdoms were much earlier whereas those which were class-based came much later (Mafeje 1991a).

Mafeje does not provide a proper periodisation of these events so that one is clear on the specific epoch to which 'earlier' caste system and 'later' class refers. Analytically and theoretically, this is important information. As it is, this does not say much about class structure and its evolution. Was it pre-colonial or during the colonial period? Often, when anthropologists speak of 'class' all they are referring to is social stratification. Mafeje is not unaware of this. As will be discussed later on, he himself discusses the class question versus 'status' in some detail. But in this instance it would be important, without being pedantic, to spell out the period in which class takes root in the interlacustrine social formations. Magubane, for example, speaks at length about the anthropological confusion between class and social stratification in the 'colonial situation' (Magubane 1968). Social stratification is a descriptive

concept which ‘implies sets of positions in a hierarchical arrangement’ (Magubane 1968). It simply entails wage or salary differentiation but not necessarily different class positions. Class, on the other hand, is a much more analytical concept insofar as it relates to primary divisions in society on the basis of individuals’ relationship to the primary means of production. As such, due to its antagonistic nature, class divisions imply political action.

As regards the question of political centralisation, Mafeje uses genealogical charts of the ruling dynasties and concludes that in the case of Bunyoro, this would have taken place somewhere in the 15th century. He says the actual date is ultimately ‘immaterial’ because the social age of a society is not dependent on chronology as such. That may well be the case. But in the context of a search for class and state formation in the interlacustrine kingdoms historical accuracy may very well be important. To ignore this is to deprive the reader of the nature of class formation in that region. In the introduction to his book, for example, Mafeje cites Giovanni Arrighi’s critique of Andre Gunder Frank. Mafeje writes:

His objections to Frank were not only to the fact that he had given a determinate role to exchange instead of production relations in his study of Latin American social formations but also to the fact that in his general analysis *class structure* got subordinated to colonial structure. Arrighi saw this as a form of historicism which militated against dynamic analysis as well as anti-imperialist struggles, since it attributed lack of development in Third World countries to a prior and unchanging cause. He further protested that in this way differences in class-structure in various ex-colonial societies and at different stages of their development could not be grasped. He charged that, instead, in Frank’s work one is presented with an over-generalised postulate which lacks specificity both in historical time and in social content. (Mafeje 1991a: 5, emphasis in original)

One would be extremely uncharitable to accuse Mafeje of having committed the same crimes. Nevertheless, such specificities as are demanded by Arrighi from Gunder Frank are equally required from Mafeje, particularly with reference to historical time and social content.

In any case, at this point Mafeje is concerned to characterise the nature of the distinction between what he calls the ‘heterogeneous’ and the ‘homogenous’ formations. The former, with observable affinities and resemblances, include Bunyoro, Ankore, Rwanda, Burundi, Buhaya, Buha and Buzinza. The latter include Buganda and Busoga. Mafeje writes that in the Banyoro oral tradition, it is said that they had three dynasties: the Tembuzi, the Chwezi and the Babito

(Mafeje 1991a). The big puzzle, according to him, is that there is no mention of the Bahuma (or Bahima as they are called elsewhere in the region) dynasty. Anthropologists and historians only make cursory references to a 'Bahuma aristocracy' which purportedly originates from 'Hamitic' people. This is believed to be so by virtue merely of physical appearance. For Mafeje, the likelihood is that the Bachwezi were chased out of Bunyoro by 'the Babito invaders', possibly in the 16th century the period in which they made their southward-bound movement (Mafeje 1991a). Another puzzle, according to Mafeje, consists in the arrival of the Bachwezi in Bunyoro. On this question, the Banyoro oral traditions are 'utterly ambiguous'.

Mafeje goes on to argue that if the original inhabitants of Bunyoro were agriculturalists as opposed to pastoralists, it is not clear why and how cattle-herding became predominant in Bunyoro. One explanation could be that the cattle came with the invading Babito. But this leaves unexplained the prevalence of Bahuma pastoralists further south in such places as Ankore, Burundi and Rwanda where there was no Babito invasion. Added to this 'puzzle' is the presence of 'light-brown', purportedly 'half Hamitic', people in Bunyoro and Toro. For Mafeje, 'the solution would be to discount the likelihood of the ascendancy of the original agriculturalists to royalty in Bunyoro. In the circumstances the introduction of pastoralism as an elite pursuit must be attributed to the "Hamitic" invaders who, probably, migrated from south-eastern Ethiopia and southern Somalia with their long-horned cattle' (Mafeje 1991a: 21). Mamdani does not credit this account of events in the interlacustrine kingdoms. In fact, he considers it spurious. Against Mafeje, Mamdani argues:

The migration hypothesis was further reinforced by regional myths that predated the colonial period and were recorded by early anthropologists and explorers. They have recently been strung together and framed into a single grand hypothesis by Archie Mafeje in a recent work, *The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations*. The central myth concerns the Bachwezi dynasty in the kingdom of Bunyoro in western Uganda. The Bachwezi are said to have 'migrated from south eastern Ethiopia and southern Somalia with their long-horned cattle', but moved on after 'a few generations' when 'chased out by Babito invaders' from the north. Following the myth, Mafeje suggests a migration in 'a south-westerly direction where ecological conditions are ideal for cattle-keeping'. Mafeje thus links the Bachwezi of Bunyoro with the Bahima of Ankole and the Tutsi of the Great Lakes. While many may be reluctant to accept the restatement of myth as historical fact, few would dare dismiss it as outright fiction. At the same time, one needs to beware that public memory – in this case, myth – also

changes and that this change is not entirely unrelated to official discourse. A context in which official discourse privileged some because they were said to have migrated from elsewhere was certainly an incentive to those concerned to embellish stories about their having come from elsewhere. (Mamdani 2001: 46)

Although Mamdani charitably argues that a 'myth' cannot be dismissed as outright fiction, he nevertheless caricatures Mafeje's argument as 'a single grand hypothesis'. In the process, although, once again, Mamdani charitably acknowledges that the said 'myth' is part of the interlacustrine 'public memory', he nevertheless puts Mafeje in the same camp as the very same colonial anthropologists and explorers the latter criticises. The genius of Mafeje, which clearly eludes Mamdani, consists in taking his objects of enquiry and intellectual interlocutors on their own terms so as to expose internal inconsistencies in their views. In this case, Mafeje takes the supposed 'myths' he supposedly 'strung together' to be part of the interlacustrine 'oral traditions'. Such an approach is less condescending than Mamdani's suggestion. In fact, one of the points Mafeje impresses on the reader is that 'the early recorded accounts by European explorers and ethnologists such as Speke, Baker and Roscoe often substituted fantasy for facts, largely because of lack of respect for indigenous oral historians' (Mafeje 1991a: 19). While Mafeje beseeched African scholars to take ethnography seriously, he was not an empiricist because real knowledge-making does not reside at the level of facts but at the level of interpretation. Mafeje's study is meant to be a critique of colonial anthropology, historiography and the ideology it represents and not, as Mamdani takes it to be, an affirmation of the same. What Mafeje needs to do is to furnish the reader with the arguments of colonial anthropologists on the nature of the interlacustrine kingdoms and then show how these arguments are conceptually flawed. To do this, he need not necessarily furnish any facts of his own about the history of the interlacustrine kingdoms.

Mafeje goes on to say that the Bachwezi were succeeded by the 'darker-skinned' Luo-speakers 'from north of the Nile'. Further, according to the Banyoro oral tradition, the Luo-speakers are not known for pastoralism (Mafeje 1991a). The question then arises as to why both the 'Hamitic' pastoralists and the Luo-speakers, neither of whom organised themselves around kingdoms or kingship institutions, decided to establish kingdoms when they settled in Bunyoro. Towards an explanation, Mafeje posits three basic considerations. Firstly, in order to form a state, there must be a settled population for the purposes of production and generating revenues. In Bunyoro, only the Bairu met this condition. Secondly, although land was abundant among the agriculturalists, they nevertheless lacked cattle. So much so that, when cattle were

introduced, they became 'prestige good' and associated with royal rituals. Whoever had a large herd of cattle enjoyed a high social status. Thus the 'pastoralists' had an advantage over the 'agriculturalists'. Mafeje does not spell out how this advantage was secured. Thirdly, the 'mystique' and 'prestige' associated with cattle ensured or guaranteed a position of privilege for the pastoralists. Against these considerations, Mafeje argues that neither the pastoralists nor the agriculturalists should take credit for the development of kingship in Bunyoro. Instead, the development of the same should be viewed as an outcome of a 'dialectical interaction' between the two groups. The Bairu agriculturalists 'provided the agricultural base and services and the pastoralists, relieved of any onerous duties but in control of prestige goods, indulged themselves, turned the latter into mechanism for political control and ritual mystification' (Mafeje 1991a: 22). Yet one might argue that this would not have been feasible without military domination.

Over and above Bunyoro, this phenomenon is replicated in at least five other interlacustrine kingdoms: Ankore, Burundi, Buhaya, Buzinza and Rwanda. For Mafeje, this is 'an integration of the economic instance with the instance of political power, despite the co-existence of two distinct modes of existence – pastoralism in the hands of the Bahuma and agriculture in the hands of the Bairu' (Mafeje 1991a: 22). Mafeje is quick to caution that this should not be mistaken for a mere division of labour or mixed farming as is the case with the Bantu-speakers of the south. There may have been crossing of political boundaries but this is far from being assimilation of one mode of existence into the other. Mafeje argues that 'the two modes provided a basis for status as well as class distinctions' (Mafeje 1991a: 22). As regards the occupation of land, the two groups adopted a 'usufruct rights' system. This suited both groups so long as they were not violating each other. For Mafeje, this is true of all the other segmentary societies. Thus, if there was no encroachment, naturally there would be cordial relations and interaction between the two groups. In this regard, Bunyoro is exemplary since it was a model for and challenge to other people in the region. Its significance, according to Mafeje, lies in the idea that it pioneered the centralisation of political power in the interlacustrine by synthesising diverse elements. In doing so, it also dispensed with politics of ethnicity. So much so that in the interlacustrine states, people of different ethnic backgrounds lived under the same political authority. Quite apart from being a 'well-integrated empire', Mafeje argues, Bunyoro actually spawned new kingdoms. Consequently, various dynasties in the region trace their genealogy to the founding dynasty in Bunyoro. In instances where original autonomous groups formed a 'veritable kingdom', one could not, Mafeje maintains, refer to

such an entity as a 'multi-kingdom' as did anthropologists. Suitably understood, this case marks 'a different stage of political development' (Mafeje 1991a: 28).

Thus far, the dynasties to which Mafeje refers are descendants of the founders of Bunyoro i.e. the Bahuma and the Babito who, according to him, originate from outside of the interlacustrine. Mafeje adds that they then got 'assimilated' linguistically, culturally and to some degree socially. Having argued that nomadic pastoralists have no known record of establishing kingdoms, he attributes the rise of kingdoms in the interlacustrine to the settled agriculturalists who laid the foundation for exchange of goods and services in the midst of a diverse group of people.

In the foregoing discussion, Mafeje was concerned to understand what he calls the 'heterogeneous formations'. The following discussion centres on the 'homogenous formations' of Buganda and Busoga both of which are traditionally agriculturalists known as 'Bairu'. In the first instance Mafeje finds it difficult to credit Speke's view that the people of Buganda were 'Galla' by origin. According to him, neither the Baganda nor the Basoga have the physical characteristics attributed to the 'Hamitic' genetic stock. Secondly, neither of the two groups of people boast of pastoral traditions. Accordingly, the two groups do not have the baggage of dominant pastoralists and subordinate agriculturalists. Both groups are traditionally agriculturalists, yet they are collectively known as 'Bairu' i.e. of lower social status. Mafeje is puzzled that the two groups which are not only isolated, but also occupied a vast territory are known by the same name. The concept of a 'tribe' of necessity means that a group be known or called by a specific name. The two groups are known, respectively, as Baganda and Basoga although collectively known as Bairu. Mafeje takes the genealogy and the significance of a collective label to be of some importance. He says the term Bairu must be thought of as 'status' or 'occupational reference' as against a genetic stock. This is similar to terms such as 'Mahima'/'Mahuma'/'Muhinda'/'Mututsi' which are associated with status or political office in such places as Bunyoro, Buhaya, Buha and Buzinza. Mafeje thus postulates that if that is true, it would be possible to account for the rise of Buganda and Busoga regions without isolating the Baganda and Busoga from fellow-agriculturalists in the region. He is thus keen to know at what point the kings of Buganda became sovereign authority instead of simply being *primus inter pares* in a segmentary society. Ultimately, Mafeje concludes that the importance of Buganda lies not 'in its chronological but rather in its social age' (Mafeje 1991a: 32). According to him, Buganda reached the same level of development as Bunyoro because of its indigenous agricultural population.

Mafeje goes on to argue that like Buganda, Busoga has no record of stratification based on dominant pastoralists and servile agriculturalists. Furthermore, there is a general consensus that there is a linguistic affinity between Luganda and Lusoga. Yet what is omitted in this narrative is the fact that there is a huge difference between north-eastern and south-western Busoga. At issue is how this division came about. There are three critical issues for Mafeje. In the first instance, Busoga was not a unitary kingdom but it was made up of autonomous political units much like the clan or lineage structure of segmentary societies. Secondly, ordinary people viewed themselves as Basoga regardless of the origins of the ruling dynasties and further refused any 'non-Bantu origins' (Mafeje 1991a: 33). So that, as far as they were concerned, being Bantu or being of Bantu origin carried no negative connotations. This, for Mafeje, not only represents an integration of different peoples, but also of pastoralism and agriculture as a result of ecological conditions. Thirdly, Busoga is a prime example of a simultaneous founding of kingdoms by agriculturalists and immigrant pastoralists. This created a 'common culture'. In Mafeje's view, the Basoga adopted a model of political organisation created by the Baganda in the 18th century. This was a unitary structure with the king, his senior chiefs and 'commoners'. Although Busoga later dominated Buganda and Bunyoro, British intervention supported the Buganda mode of political organisation which they tried to replicate in southern Uganda. This, according to Mafeje, led to a disruption, though not quite the demise, of pre-existing modes of political organisation. Thus, he is interested in studying the nature of the mode of political organisation prior to this disruption.

5.3 Modes of Political Organisation in the Interlacustrine Kingdoms

Before assessing the modes of political organisation, it is important to recollect that, in Mafeje's view, the concept of 'social formation' comprises the economic instance and the instance of power. The two find expression (or, more appropriately, 'articulation') within a recognisable socio-cultural context. Unlike social formations, modes of political and economic organisation are, according to Mafeje, more 'concrete' and are variable even within the same general context. For example, organisational differences between Buganda and Bunyoro-Kitara were not based on principle as such, but on adaptive responses even though the mode of political organisation was more or less the same. Further, Mafeje is well aware of the fact that for some Marxists and political economists, the separation of politics from economics is spurious. 'But after due consideration based on material evidence we came to the conclusion that the relationship between modes of political organisation and modes of economic production is not absolute but relative' (Mafeje 1991a: 11). Mafeje goes on to make a

distinction between a mode of political reproduction in the 'abstract sense' (for example, centralised kingdoms) and mode of political organisation in the sense of 'operational mechanisms' (for example, administrative structures and hierarchies). This then raises the question as to when do practical adaptations, cumulatively, lead to a qualitative change. Mafeje underlines the question of 'variability of forms' in a socio-historical context. In doing so, he resists the temptation of turning historical developments into 'evolutionism'.

Bunyoro was the first to adopt political centralisation in the interlacustrine region. This prompted other kingdoms not only to follow suit, but also to try to tailor the Bunyoro model to fit their own contexts and circumstances. 'This resulted in variations within broad uniformities of language and culture which overrode ethnic differences in most cases' (Mafeje 1991a: 37). Anthropologists (Richards *et al* 1959) thus classified the resultant modes of political organisation as 'one-kingdom tribes', 'multi-kingdom tribes' and 'unitary kingdom with a tribal caste system'. Buganda is the best example of the first category. On the other hand, Busoga, Buhaya, Buzinza and Buha exemplify the second while Ankore, Rwanda and Burundi fit into the third. Mafeje leaves out Bunyoro and Toro, both of which comprised single kingdoms. The two kingdoms are left out because in each of them the boundaries between Bahima/Bahima (an upper stratum of pastoralists) and Bairu (a lower stratum of agriculturalists) 'got so attenuated that these terms were virtually emptied of their original connotations' (Mafeje 1991a: 38). This gives ground for investigating the nature of the relationship between 'status categories' and 'ethnic nomenclature' something which, in Mafeje's view, has implications for the entire ethnic classification so typical in conventional anthropological writings. In general, Mafeje admits, attempts to describe with accuracy the political systems of the interlacustrine region is likely to be spoiled by terminological difficulties. A good example of such terminological difficulties is the awkward concept of 'multi-kingdom tribes'. Tribe, in this sense, has a purely cultural referent and is delimited by a common language. Mafeje argues that, in the past, the term referred to a particular stage or form of political organisation than a mere reference to culture and language.

Theoretically, tribes entail particular forms of political organisation which are kin-based, the chief being the most senior. His seniority is based on him being the most senior lineage of the founding clan. He thus precedes other heads of clans or lineages in his tribe. In segmentary societies, however, the chief is simply the first among equals – *primus inter pares*. The notion of royal clan and ruling lineage entails hierarchy and differential access to prestige goods. Yet, in principle, this is not any different from privileges enjoyed by elders in a lineage structure. Taken together with the distributive function of kin-based groups, this means that

tribal communities were 'pre-class' societies i.e. the hierarchy of their structure does not necessarily mean that there were antagonistic relations amongst members. Contrary to Marxists and anthropologists such as Meillasoux (1972, 1973), elders in African societies did not constitute an exploiting class. Mafeje counters Meillasoux by appealing to the 'cyclical development of domestic groups' i.e. the youth of today are elders of tomorrow. This is historically inevitable, if not determined. Mafeje goes on to say that while terms like tribe and kingdoms are used interchangeably, there are observable qualitative differences between the two formations. Historically, kingdoms appear much later than tribes. Effectively, the former represents a coming together of pre-existing segmentary or tribal societies to unite or submit to a supreme authority. This means that, sociologically and historically, the rise of kingdoms entails the end of kin-bound forms of political organisation. In turn, this translates to the rise of centralised official bureaucracy. According to Mafeje, the council of tribal elders or members of a royal lineage in tribal societies do not constitute an official bureaucracy but simply represent segmentary or particularistic interests. Ultimately, the notion of 'multi-kingdom tribes' is an oxymoron.

Anthropologists who spoke of 'tiny kingdoms' failed to see the blind-spot in this concept in that they mistook a linguistic group for a form of political organisation. It is possible that any number of descendant groups can co-exist under the same cultural or linguistic category. In this regard, there is a possibility of competition where even defeated sons of the same chief could form new chiefdoms or new ruling lineages. This proliferation of political units is possible under the tribal mode of political organisation but this does not necessarily mean that it is contingent on linguistic affinities. The case of amaXhosa, which has about fifteen chiefdoms, in South Africa is also good example of this. Mafeje thus believes that the case of amaXhosa, amaZulu and amaSwati, all of whom fall under the socio-cultural entity Nguni, can be extended, as he clearly intends with his study, to other areas such as the interlacustrine region. In any case, part of the intention of the study is to situate the interlacustrine kingdoms in its wider African context. That being the case, it needs to be said that modes of political organisation do change even though the cultural and linguistic context in which they are found may not. To the extent that this is so, the cultural and linguistic context which is shared by a number of societies, reveals nothing about their social age. The determining factor in the age of a society is the articulation between the mode of political organisation and mode of economic production.

Relatedly, the notion of kinship is not contingent on the size of a social unit. Buhaya and Busoga are good examples of this. Mafeje hastens to point out that 'centralising tendencies

imply incorporation of smaller units by bigger or stronger ones over time, especially if they all occupy contiguous territory' (Mafeje 1991a: 47). This accounts for the rise of single kingdoms in places where several tribes once existed. Mafeje is not here referring to 'empires' but to unitary or integrated structures. In the interlacustrine this had taken two forms: (i) kingdoms in which the citizenry was composed of more than one group; and (ii) those which consisted of only one ethnic group. Bunyoro managed to centralise political authority much earlier than others, and it was its dynasties which initiated the same in southern kingdoms. As such, Bunyoro created what became known as 'multi-ethnic kingdoms'. This notwithstanding, there is no evidence to suggest that it was established through the efforts of any one particular ethnic group or, for that matter, that ethnic groups persisted throughout its history. For Mafeje, the rise of dynasties such as the Bachwezi and the Babito is best understood as a class phenomenon as against an ethnic epiphenomenon (Mafeje 1991a). On this issue, Mafeje adduces no comprehensive argument save to say the term 'Bunyoro' originally referred to a political rank as opposed to the people of Bunyoro. Here Mafeje argues that there were two categories of people who were recognised – Bairu (agriculturalists) and Bahuma (pastoralists) – and at that time the two categories did not translate, as is assumed, to the ruled and the rulers. Although the Bahuma pastoralists enjoyed the prestige that came with large cattle-herds, they were still subject to political control by an official bureaucracy like everybody else.

Political office in Bunyoro, putting aside the royal clan, had little to do with ethnic origin. The mode of political organisation in Bunyoro can be said to have been primarily bureaucratic. Apart from the dynastic Babito, the bureaucracy consisted, in the main, of appointed chiefs. The chiefs can be categorised into three: the territorial chiefs – *bakungu*; the district chiefs – *batongole*; and the village chiefs. Although there existed the usual patron-client relationship between chiefs and their subordinates, it cannot be said that there was a direct exploitation of the tenants as labour. The economic value was extracted in political terms on the basis of the patron-client relationship just mentioned. This raises the question as to whether or not there was a ruling class in Bunyoro. It can be said, Mafeje argues, that in Bunyoro the transition from kinship to the bureaucratic mode of political organisation had been completed. Secondly, while not formal, land property had developed to 'conversion of official estates into heritable property' (Mafeje 1991a: 49).

In Ankore, Mafeje argues, the Bairu and the Bahima undergirded state power without necessarily being its embodiment. The question then arises as to who controlled the state. Mafeje's response is that 'the government of the kingdom centred on the king, his relatives, his wife's relatives and heads of important clans who acted as the king's power brokers' (Mafeje

1991a: 52). The chief minister, known as *nganzi* and war-band leaders, *bakungu*, were merely bureaucratic appointments. Leading warriors were entitled to a share of the booty, so that military prowess was closely linked or otherwise translated to wealth in cattle. All officials were entitled to tribute in the form of agricultural products (from the Bairu) and cattle and dairy (from the Bahima). On the question of land, there never were private or property rights. There were only usufruct rights under the lineage system. Effectively, what this means is that in Ankore, the lines between lineage and bureaucratic mode of political organisation had not been crossed as was the case in Bunyoro, Buganda and Toro. Bahima and Bairu suffered extraction of surplus value through tributes to those in power. It should be noted that this was a case of social stratification along political and ideological lines, as against class division which turns on exploitation of labour and property relations.

Instead of viewing this as a form of ethnic prejudice, even though in Ankore the system centred on the king, his relatives, wife's relatives and heads of important clans, Mafeje argues that this region and its mode of political organisation 'can be referred to as pastoral aristocracy' (Mafeje 1991a: 53). The reason Mafeje adduces is that although tribute was paid to king Omugabe, his relatives and a few privileged appointees, there was a 'wider and supplementary stratum of rich cattle-owners who stood in a patron-client relation to the majority of the producers' (Mafeje 1991a: 52–53). Land tenure and utilisation of land was still under the control of heads of lineages. In Ankore, Mafeje argues, the interplay between kingship and lineage is somewhat unresolved. Elsewhere, Mafeje argues that tribes, due to ethnographic and historical shifts and changes, 'are derived independently of "ethnic" origin' (Mafeje 1991a: 56). For example, in Burundi the Batutsi were divided into 'sub-tribes' such as the Batare, Bezi, Bataga and Mambutsa. The individual identity of these sub-tribes was much more important than ethnic origin. As such, Mafeje maintains, the population of Burundi comprised royal and non-royal Batutsi, Bahima and Bahutu. Still, what Mafeje finds difficult to establish is whether or not social stratification (or 'social differentiation' as he would have it) in Burundi, for example, which cut across ethnic lines, was in and of itself indicative of an emergence of a class society. In Burundi, the king, his officers, princes and entourage received tribute and dues from pastoralists and agriculturalists alike. Yet, in spite of being entitled to tribute and dues, the king and the princes held no property in land. Claims to land resources were determined politically through the general rule of administrative domains. Autonomous local chiefs and ordinary citizens accessed land resources through their patrilineage.

Although property and labour relations could not be used as mitigating factors for division of Burundi society into classes, the term *banyaruguru* referred to the privileged

stratum in society comprising royalty, the princes, bureaucratic chiefs and sub-chiefs. They lived on revenues derived from ordinary citizens. This notwithstanding, 'they were not as yet independent of their patrilineages' (Mafeje 1991a: 58). In Rwanda, unlike Burundi, there was a highly centralised political structure. At the top of the hierarchy was the king, known as *mwami*, and official council of chiefs who played an advisory role. All chiefs were appointed by the king and could also be dismissed. The chiefs were divided into the district and hill chiefs. In turn, these chiefs were further divided into two categories – land and cattle chiefs. The land chiefs, according to Mafeje, were Bahutu who dealt with agriculturalists and the cattle chiefs were Batutsi who dealt with pastoralists. Chiefs collected tribute and dues from the citizenry. These were dairy products and cattle from pastoralists and, from agriculturalists, banana for brewing beer. Dues and tribute were collected from lineage or family heads not individuals as such. This was apparently a way of strengthening kin group and family ties insofar as kinship members assisted family heads. The second role of the chiefs was to settle disputes over land and cattle. Important to note, however, is the fact that while the land chiefs arbitrated in land cases, cattle chiefs did not, by contrast, arbitrate in cattle disputes. The army dealt with cattle disputes. This is so because the army was responsible for raiding for cattle and for protecting national herds. In contrast to other interlacustrine kingdoms, Rwanda had a standing army. Rwanda thus had a mixture of lineage and bureaucratic mode of political organisation.

Be that as it may, Mafeje notes that only the Batutsi were warriors. The Bahutu were herdsmen who rounded up cattle during raids or carried supplies for the warriors. The booty was shared between political leaders and army chiefs, so that only warriors could get the share. Thus although everyone paid dues and tribute, 'non-Batutsi' were denied access to cattle generally. This is so because cattle were a symbol of prestige and power and to distribute it would undermine Batutsi's position as the ruling elite. Still, although this would strike many as a case of ethnic division, Mafeje insists that, quite apart from that, 'this would indicate processes of class differentiation. What is hard, though, is to characterise them unambiguously' (Mafeje 1991a: 60). Mafeje argues that in Rwanda, quite like other pastoral kingdoms in the interlacustrine region, land was not considered property though it was controlled politically. The king had the right of control over the whole country. Yet this did not prevent Bahutu chiefs from acting as representatives of local lineages. The king allocated official estates to chiefs who in turn collected dues and tribute. The other issue is that chiefs were entitled to labour services of heads of families (who were clients of the chiefs or the king) for up to two days a week. This, for Mafeje, signifies some control over the labour process. Still, clients were exploited less as labour than as subjects. Exploitation in this context was not, strictly, extraction

of value as such since the labour relations were not crystallised to begin with. Also, the exploiting ruling elite, with the exception of the king, had no formal mechanisms of 'reproducing itself indefinitely as a class' (Mafeje 1991a: 61).

Illuminating though this discussion is, Mafeje does not concede whether this was a case of ethnicity or not. Instead, he calls it a case of 'pastoral aristocracy' as opposed to a 'Batutsi aristocracy' or a 'caste', because the Batutsi 'were neither rich nor exempt from exploitation by the state and its bureaucracy' (Mafeje 1991a: 61). To prove his case, he appeals to the case of Buganda, which had a centralised system like Rwanda, but was characterised by one ethnic group. The question then is whether or not the elite in Buganda was on the verge of consolidating themselves as a class in ways that transcended the limitations of pastoralism in a kingdom such as Rwanda. The qualitative difference between agricultural and pastoral societies seems to lie in the fact that the former has a labour process and possibilities for conversion of value while the latter involves accumulation of cattle by individuals or families. In the previous chapter, it had been indicated that Mafeje does not think of cattle as property, but rather as 'means of lineage reproduction', 'instruments of production' or 'prestige good'. This was the South African case. In the interlacustrine case, as discussed in the present chapter, he seems to think of them simply as 'prestige good'.

5.4 The Social and Economic Character of the Interlacustrine Kingdoms

In the foregoing discussion, Mafeje laboured to understand modes of political organisation in the interlacustrine kingdoms. Linked to the study of modes of political organisation is the study of modes of social production. In the African context, however, the study of the latter is handicapped by lack of requisite data. This is so due in part to disciplinary division of labour and ideological biases. As regards the latter, it should be noted that Marxists, who champion the notion of modes of production, are new comers to the continent (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1977; Godelier 1972, 1974, 1977; Meillassoux 1972, 1973; Rey 1975). Thus, the study of Africa has largely been the preserve of liberal researchers who have been, to all intents and purposes, reluctant to study Africa from the stand point of political economy. They have focused, in the main, on micro-studies i.e. studying aspects of given phenomena without relating such phenomena to the wider sociological and historical context. To be sure, they have studied African production processes. However, they have rarely situated such processes in the social and political institutions in which such production processes obtain. Especially worrying is the fact that they have overlooked African land tenure systems. Where they have studied them,

they simply dismissed them as ‘communal institutions’ which are a hindrance to Africa’s development. This is true of liberals and Marxists alike. For their part, colonial administrators sought to replace land tenure systems with their own, so as the better to further their ill-gotten gains. Ultimately, studies in land tenure and land use receded to the background. Those who attempted seriously to study these issues, chiefly Marxists and political economists, adopted formalistic approaches with little regard for concrete realities. Significantly, what is missing in all these studies is ‘systematic data on the social and technical conditions for material production in traditional societies – something which was so crucial in the understanding of agrarian societies and their transformations in Europe’ (Mafeje 1991a: 65).

According to Mafeje, social scientists have described the interlacustrine kingdoms, specifically, as ‘feudal’ by virtue of their kingships, bureaucracy and fiefdoms or clientage. He argues that some social scientists point out that political centralisation means that the labour force withdraws from primary production into administrative activities, something which translates to extraction of economic value by the political bureaucracy. Mafeje objects that this does not suffice because issues of tenure, the ‘seigniorial mode of estate management and fiscal arrangement’, has to be known and studied before one can declare, *a priori*, that there obtains in the interlacustrine kingdoms a ‘feudal’ system (Mafeje 1991a: 66). Goody (1971) refers to this as the ‘economic approach to feudalism’ as opposed to the political approach about which Mafeje speaks. Yet, Mafeje points out that to separate the two might just be undialectical. Thus, he is concerned to study, along with modes of political organisation, other modes of production such as they bear on production relations. Mafeje argues that one cannot study agrarian societies without taking into account land and its use. For a long time, Mafeje argues, concepts adopted in the study of land tenure were not only Eurocentric but also led to misconceptions. To counter such prejudices, one needs to study ‘the specificity of African social systems’ (Mafeje 1991a). This is the task Mafeje sets for himself.

Firstly, it should be noted that dues and tribute were the only recognisable extraction of economic value in Buganda. Both of these measures were meant to raise state revenues and ensured a high standard of living for chiefs. This notwithstanding, tribute to chiefs meant better political relations between patrons and clients. Of theoretical significance here is that what went through the hierarchies as dues were in fact perishable goods e.g. banana beer, barkcloth, meat, fish etc. What this means is that there was little to no accumulation at the top of the hierarchy. Added to this is the fact that in Buganda, chiefs’ estates and administrative posts were not heritable and upon death or dismissal of a chief, the vacant post reverted to the king to decide. As such, under these circumstances it is difficult to sustain the view that there existed

in Buganda a 'ruling aristocracy' or 'classes' with reference to property relations. Nor could one speak of a 'ruling elite' on the basis of recruitment. Just as chiefs who had fallen out of grace could be demoted to peasant status, a politically successful peasant could be promoted to or elected to the position of a chief.

In southern Busoga there developed the same pattern as Buganda. But apart from Busoga and Buganda, other interlacustrine kingdoms were dominated by the pastoral mode of production as opposed to being 100% agricultural like the two kingdoms just mentioned. Mafeje adds that 'from the point of view of land tenure, most of this was not only nomadic but was combined with agriculture practised by the majority of the population, the so-called Bairu' (Mafeje 1991a: 68). In such places as Bunyoro and Toro, evidence suggests that 'the principle of usufruct rights under lineage supervision' was outside of official estates. In other words, it was not under complete control of the king through chiefs and district governors as in Buganda. Even then, what seems to have been under administrative control were people and cattle as opposed to land. All those who were big cattle-owners enjoyed social prestige – Bahuma – because cattle were prestige good. Mafeje reminds the reader that this was far from being a caste system as anthropological literature suggests. In Bunyoro and other places in the interlacustrine region, as against land in Buganda, cattle were a heritable family asset. Further, there was no limit as to the number of cattle that a family could accumulate. As elsewhere in the region, chiefs collected dues and tribute. In addition to dues and tribute, chiefs in Bunyoro and Toro collected succession, marriage, burial and grazing fees. A very large part of Bunyoro had been taken up by private estates although the king reserved the right to confirm or refuse who may or may not occupy official estates. What this means, therefore, is that in Bunyoro there was a property-owning stratum (or 'class' as Mafeje puts it) which could reproduce itself – as against Buganda for example. Mafeje is not sure whether this 'class' constituted a 'landed aristocracy.'

Mafeje goes on to say that the chiefs and other Bahuma patrons received services and economic value from their clients. This is something which clients did as loyal suppliants as against serfs. Quite like Buganda, there was no bondage. The clients did not consider themselves a labouring class, instead they viewed themselves as loyal followers or clients who still provided public or private services to the chief or patron and did so without losing their autonomy as producers. A possible objection here is: First, Mafeje seems to be relying on the subjective conception of labour service by the 'clients' rather than the more objective focus on labour time performed for the chiefs. Second, who is to say what each and every client thinks or believe? It is not as if an opinion survey was conducted. The counterfactual to consider is

what would happen to the client who refuses to render these services. Third, surely the autonomy of the clients as producers is constrained – the labour time expended in the service of the patrons/chiefs is labour time lost to them; it is the equivalent of expropriation of produce of the clients. In any case, although some refer to this stratum as ‘peasants’, it has neither an independent tenure nor use rights unlike producers who operate within the lineage system. Thus, Mafeje argues that although property–relations in Bunyoro were akin to a feudal system, production relations suggested otherwise. Without so much spelling it out, Mafeje declares that in spite of superstructural differences in favour of Buganda, processes of class-formation were much more advanced in Bunyoro than in Buganda. It is mainly at the level of productive forces that Bunyoro-Kitara had a head-start over Buganda. That is where the first iron-smelting in the region occurred. Discovery of salt also helped improve trade in Bunyoro. Both Bunyoro and Buganda producers were subject to kings and chiefs.

In Bunyoro, less so in Buganda, there was a more intensive exploitation of internal labour. As in Buganda, the objective in Bunyoro was to provide utilities to the chiefs and the Bahuma quite generally – unless, Mafeje argues, ‘cattle are seen as a form of investment in a semi-pastoral economy’ (Mafeje 1991a: 70). Thus whether this means that cattle is capital or something else, will become clear later on in the analysis of predominantly pastoral economies such as Ankore, Burundi and Rwanda. In these three areas, there were much deeper divisions between pastoralists and agriculturalists as against Bunyoro, Buhaya, Buzinza and Buha. Mafeje argues this is due to dominant pastoralists who limited the access of agriculturalists to unproductive cattle. What served to reinforce this was an ideology which drew invidious distinctions between the Bairu and Bahima. Without entering into the specifics of such distinctions, at issue is the fact that the two modes of existence (agriculture and pastoralism) emerged side by side. That they emerged concurrently does not mean that they were equal in stature or that they were held in the same regard. In the first instance, agriculture was considered subordinate to pastoralism and, secondly, agriculturalists – the Bairu – were considered inferior or otherwise subordinate to the pastoralists Bahima. On these bases, the former were excluded from power – particularly in Ankore and Rwanda. This does not, in Mafeje’s view, lend itself to ethnic categorisation or, for that matter, to separate modes of production. It has been noted that he had already critiqued and rejected the view that the distinction between the two strata was ethnic or ideological. For Mafeje, to argue in such a way is to provide a justification as opposed to an explanation.

Mafeje’s view is that the real explanation lies at the level of production and property relations. This, too, is not self-evident but an object of enquiry. In all three kingdoms property

rights in land did not seem to have been the issue. Nor have the Bairu and the Bahima tried to stake personal or permanent claims on it. The emphasis on both sides was on usufruct rights. Even kings did not claim land as resource but cattle which was individually owned by families. In a strict sense, the king had potentially more rights to land than anyone else, but this is a right he hardly used, unless he wished to punish somebody who was guilty of crime by taking the land away. In Rwanda, the king had similar rights over cattle. Thus, Mafeje concludes, the question of the king 'owning' land should be seen as a case of 'suzerainty' over the territory and 'its people'. This is in contrast to Buganda and Bunyoro where the king had a substantive control over land and property in land.

Among the Banyankore and Watutsi kings, quite unlike Baganda and Banyoro kings, the king allowed territorial chiefs and political favourites to administer these duties and the latter were, like the kings, entitled to tribute from their subjects. This was in the form of cattle products, or cattle proper, beer and other agricultural products. Territorial chiefs could also share the dues collected by land and cattle chiefs who fall within their domains. As in Bunyoro, political office was appointive but could still be handed or passed on if the king agreed. Further, unlike Bunyoro, this had no bearing on ownership of land on the part of the incumbent. The prevailing rule was usufruct rights in order to cultivate and that was rested in heads of families. In northern Rwanda, land was considered the right of patrilineages notwithstanding the suzerainty of the king. In sum, ownership was limited only to cattle. Even cattle ownership had a usufruct rights component among pastoralists; this is true of amaXhosa in South Africa as well. Such rights fall under the ambit of production relations.

Among the herdsmen and the cultivators there existed a symbiotic relationship of exchanging pastoral and agricultural products – this could not involve compulsion or exploitation. Be that as it may, the same does not hold for the relations between the rulers and the producers. The king and his members extracted economic value from the producers in the form of tribute and dues. From the pastoralists they got cattle and fresh milk, whilst from agriculturalists they received fresh produce. Moreover, labour dues were required from the Bairu and Bahutu which were in the form of public works etc. as is the case in Buganda and Bunyoro. On the other hand, Bahima and Batutsi commoners were required only for military service. This was, in any case, in line with their social prestige and habitual cattle raids amongst pastoralists. Mafeje goes on to say that in Ankore, Burundi and Rwanda, there were, apart from kings and chiefs, a 'non-producing class' comprising wealthy cattle owners who depended on the services of those who needed cattle or protection. These servants were usually cultivators,

though not exclusively so. This, for Mafeje, is the patron-client relationship of the pastoral kingdoms which had long started in Bunyoro independent of official bureaucracy.

Although this is a relationship or an arrangement of great inequality, it nevertheless gives rise to usufruct rights in cattle. A patron could bestow on his client a cow to milk and whose male offspring he (the client) had full rights. Yet, the female offspring remains the property of the patron in order to ensure that the client could not accumulate. The patron also provided political protection to the client. Additionally, the patron could, following the death of the client, look after the latter's family. This paternalistic relationship, Mafeje argues, 'muffled' class contradictions and had an ideological function which reproduced political power. Ultimately, it was a direct exploitation of the labour power of the client, 'but once again not as intensely as could be expected' (Mafeje 1991a: 73). In the main, the 'fiscal policy', as Mafeje puts it, of the pastoral kingdoms consists in providing perishable consumer goods and personal services for the royal family, the political bureaucrats and the so-called pastoral aristocracy. Although the Bahima and Batutsi were exempt from certain labour dues and owned modest herds of cattle, they hardly constituted an aristocracy. Some of them were in fact nomads who often crossed borders for new pastures. In the kingdoms discussed here, there did not exist, Mafeje submits, a feudal system in respect of cattle. Governors and chiefs did not receive cattle by virtue merely of being office bearers. People gave cattle to the king as tribute, something which made clients of them. Thus Mafeje, having analysed these kingdoms, rejects the anthropological notion of 'feudal aristocracy'. In the context of ownership of large cattle herds, prestige and power, and command of services and loyalty of others, Mafeje concludes that a more appropriate concept is 'pastoral aristocracy'.

Added to the foregoing is the fact that in pastoral kingdoms, accumulation was not dependent on exploitation of labour. At best it was a 'neutral process' which afforded political advantage to a few individual members of the communities. Mafeje stresses the view that there were no markets, technology was rudimentary and thus pastoralists as well cultivators/agriculturalists constituted a class of producers who were dominated by a 'pastoral aristocracy'. As such, both agriculture and pastoralism mutually constituted each other and formed a single mode of production in order to meet the needs of this 'pastoral aristocracy'. In Buzinza and Buha, however, where there is a community of Batutsi pastoralists who migrated from Rwanda and Burundi, there existed no pastoral aristocracy. Instead, there is evidence of a 'mixed economy' which involved both Batutsi/Bahuma and Bairu. This was a 'tribal economy', as Mafeje puts it, which was dominated by the 'lineage principle'. Chiefs in these regions had 'dominion' over territory and the gifts to which they were entitled could not be

called 'tribute' given how miniscule they were. In this sense they did not occupy a patron-client relationship/arrangement with citizenry. The chief was thus merely *primus inter pares* and given the nature of the 'redistributory tribal system', he had to give as much as he received. Failure to do so could mean losing his position.

Mafeje goes on to say that in Buhaya, as in Bunyoro, there was a 'semblance of feudalism', given the nature of property relations. There was, he submits, a growing 'landed aristocracy'. As in other parts of the interlacustrine kingdoms, production-relations were dominated by patron-client relations which were, above all else, political as opposed to economic. In this regard, Mafeje invokes a claim made earlier about the distinction between 'exploitation of subjects' and 'exploitation of labour'. The former seems to hold true in this case. Further, taking this distinction into account 'might signify different modes of production, and different kinds of value' (Mafeje 1991a: 76). Here, then, the term 'economic surplus' is of no use since one cannot tell what is surplus and what is not. Having discussed or undertaken a concrete analysis of production relations, Mafeje concedes that he did not make mention of what the people of the interlacustrine actually produce. He thus sets out to discuss these issues in some detail. For the purposes of this chapter, it is not necessarily to follow Mafeje in such an undertaking.

Mafeje mentions, however, the difficulties of long as well as short distance trade which resulted in neither capital accumulation nor technological investment, let alone increasing production using existing technologies. What this led to was 'drainage of existing manpower' (Mafeje 1991a: 82). Without offering concrete reasons why, Mafeje says this did not lead to any dislocation in terms of maintaining utility value. However, British imperialism intervened by devising methods which would stimulate trade. As can be expected, the interlacustrine societies were becoming a market for British manufacturers long before they were given time to discover their own capacity to produce goods and trade. This was, in the scheme of things, part of the scramble for Africa by European imperialists. The interlacustrine kingdoms, as the rest of the continent, were not prepared for this imperial and commercial assault. Militarily and politically, they attempted to resist, but to no success. The fragmented nature of the region made British invasion easy. As such, some capitulated and others turned on each other by assisting Britain.

Unsurprisingly, both pastoralists and agriculturalists suffered under capitalism not least because they were unable and unwilling to turn their instruments of production into capital. If lucky, Mafeje argues, they could have had added value. But the logic of colonialism and imperialism was such that the colonies should not reap the benefits of their own produce. This

would have affected the interlacustrine producers severely given their economic uncompetitiveness. In this way, Mafeje believes that there is a sense behind their conservatism. But this is the logic which capitalism is ‘meant to destroy’. Mafeje reminds the reader that this is in line with Samir Amin’s thesis that ‘capitalism is a necessary stage because it is the only way in which productive forces could be developed further in economies in which utility value predominates’ (Mafeje 1991a: 84). Yet, ironically, the Chinese experiment with socialism has been superseded by capitalism (underpinned by state-capital and private capital). Ideologically, Mafeje observes, Amin would be hard-pressed to justify the cruelty visited on peasants by capital – especially in the Global South. Ideologically, if capitalism is a necessary stage, how do radicals such as Amin justify the cruelty and suffering that comes with it which is mainly visited on peasants and the poor? To be fair, Amin might argue that he was not justifying the attendant cruelty and suffering. For Mafeje (1991a: 84), ‘the fundamental question though is whether the requisite technological conditions for development are inextricably bound with particular modes of production or historical stages’. In the final analysis, Mafeje argues, modes of production do not have to be complete in order to exist as the interlacustrine kingdoms demonstrate. The section that follows deals specifically with the question of modes of production in the interlacustrine kingdoms.

5.5 Modes of Production in Africa Reconsidered

Mafeje begins by declaring that the foundations of every society are economic; so that for people to survive, they have to provide for themselves goods and services. This seems fairly axiomatic yet liberals and Marxists quibble about whether the economy is a determinant of all social existence. Mafeje submits that reasons espoused for such disagreements are ideological as against ‘scientific’. Liberal economists have treated economic growth, for over two hundred years, as an ‘unexceptionable index of social development’ (Mafeje 1991a: 85). Mafeje argues that like their Marxists counterparts, liberal economists put a premium on the economic factor. The difference is largely conceptual. Liberals or ‘bourgeois’ theorists argue that economic self-interest is the driving force behind development. They dismiss or otherwise pour scorn on notions of altruism or selflessness and argue that ‘avarice is the driving force behind development’ (Mafeje 1991a: 85). Marxists, on the other hand, assign development to ‘material forces’ which are impersonal in character. This enables Marxists to ‘decode social systems’ and use abstract principles such as ‘modes of production’ (Mafeje 1991a). This concept has universalistic pretensions. Scholars outside of Europe have, however, questioned the veracity

of these universalistic pretensions by asking the usefulness of the term in areas outside of Europe. In Africa, the initial attempt was to search for an 'African mode of production'. The prefix 'African', though important, was of course insufficient. Africa has its own idiosyncrasies which not only make the prefix insufficient, but also render the concept of 'modes of production' questionable. Towards an attempt at subjecting this concept to critical scrutiny, Marxists and anthropologists such as Meillassoux have conducted concrete studies and came up with new concepts such as 'self-sustaining agricultural societies' and the 'lineage mode of production' (Meillassoux 1973).

Although seminal, Meillassoux's ideas were inconclusive until Amin intervened in the discussion. Amin (1980) argued that to extend either the 'Asiatic mode of production' or even 'feudalism' to Africa was itself a form of imposition of Eurocentric categories which have neither historical nor 'scientific' basis. At the very least, Amin argued, one could speak of feudalism, which was unique to Europe, as an 'incomplete stage' of a more general mode of production, *viz.* 'the tributary mode of production'. In this way, he sought to displace both feudalism and the Asiatic mode of production. Thus Mafeje seeks, following Amin, to comprehend this concept in relation to some parts of the interlacustrine, particularly Buganda and Rwanda. Before undertaking such a study, Mafeje submits that by the 1960s the concept of feudalism had lost currency. There are three reasons for this: 'dependent land tenure between vassal and lord, territorial autonomy of feudal lords within the state, and the organisation of agricultural production' (Mafeje 1991a: 86).

The interlacustrine social formations did not meet any of the three points, and in this sense, they had marked differences with European feudal societies. In European feudalism, the relationship of people to land determined, at least in part, political and social status. Because landlords possessed and disposed property rights, they had permanence to the relationship between them and their serfs. The same was not true in the interlacustrine kingdoms, not even in Bunyoro and Buhaya 'where the nearest thing to fiefdoms existed' (Mafeje 1991a: 86). There were no bonds for tenants and office estates were not heritable. Thus there were no property-relations in land. Secondly, there was no dispersal of political authority through autonomous landlords as was the case in feudal Europe. The opposite was true in the interlacustrine kingdoms. Thirdly, 'whereas in feudal Europe the seigniorial mode of estate management was an important source of private wealth, in the interlacustrine kingdoms the idea of a lord's demesne cultivated by the corvee labour of bonded tenants did not exist' (Mafeje 1991a: 87). What happened, instead, was that office estate-holders depended on the labour of their wives and domestic slaves for subsistence production.

Much of the foregoing studies in Africa had been written mainly by anthropologists who tried to compare African societies with those of European feudalism. Because many of the said anthropologists were trained in the British anthropological tradition, which drew distinctions between history and anthropology, it meant that their studies 'entailed a certain lack', just insofar as they were ahistorical (Mafeje 1991a). The French anthropologists on the other hand, Mafeje observes, could not be accused of the same. Their crime was to attempt to extend the 'Asiatic mode of production' thesis to Africa. Ultimately, for Mafeje, the specificity of African social structures needs to be investigated as against being asserted. Moreover, the substitution of 'Asiatic' with 'tributary' in modes of production entails no substantive changes for Africa but simply for the concept of feudalism. For Mafeje (1991a: 89), the question which confronts African scholars is this: 'does any generalised mode of production apply to pre-colonial Africa'? Here Mafeje invokes the notion of universals and particulars or nomothetic versus idiographic enquiry in the social sciences. This is no mere theoretical issue. It has concrete implications since, as Mafeje correctly puts it, Africa's 'knowledge is still incomplete'.

Amin (1980) has rejected arguments which rely on specificity or 'variety of formations' in order to negate the notion of mode of production – which he considers the 'unifying principle'. Further, he argued that French Marxist anthropologists, in refusing to credit a radical distinction between relations of co-operation and domination and relations of exploitation, ultimately mistook the peasant mode of production and the domestic mode of production. Mafeje argues that Amin's conception of the dividing line between forms of knowledge and anthropology are 'surprisingly anachronistic'. But Mafeje does not reject Amin's work straightaway. Indeed, part of Mafeje's plan is to appraise Amin's 'tributary mode of production' thesis and to use the interlacustrine kingdoms as a concrete case study to test its validity. Mafeje cautions against studies which seek to prove their case by relying on analogies, a practice which he finds 'patently unscientific'. Applying such a method in the case of the interlacustrine kingdoms would constitute, as Mafeje puts it, 'a travesty of facts that can only lead to a theoretical confusion' (Mafeje 1991a: 92). By the same token, a search for an 'African mode of production' may amount to chasing shadows. This is where Mafeje credits Amin's work and the notion of the 'tributary mode of production'.

Yet inasmuch as he is sympathetic to Amin, Mafeje nevertheless feels that the latter's concept is not only guilty of being derivative but also it is negative. It should be noted, however, that Mafeje is not saying that Amin's proposal has negative connotations. Equally, to point out, as Mafeje does, that a concept is derivative is not to question its substance but to question its

novelty. That, of course, cannot constitute a serious displacement of Amin's thesis. The claim that it is negative might be worth investigating. What Mafeje means when he says the thesis is negative is that it proceeds from a negative critique. Apart from that, Amin's thesis, quite apart from the Asiatic mode of production, has a substantive referent (a tributary relationship) which is capable of 'universalisation' i.e. of being theoretically extended to or applicable in other contexts. The veracity of Amin's concept, Mafeje argues, remains untested in 'black Africa' precisely because the region is historically under-researched. Thus the concept must remain a hypothesis until further comprehensive studies have been conducted. In the meantime, Mafeje proposes, the veracity of the term should be tested in sub-regional studies such as the one he pursued in the interlacustrine kingdoms. Mafeje goes on to argue that studies with universalistic pretensions might lose their theoretical and political relevance if they are not supported by concrete investigations.

As such, Amin's thesis, which Mafeje wants to investigate, has a 'three-stage' theory: (i) the communal (in relation to land); (ii) the tributary (also in relation to land); and (iii) the capitalist (in relation to means of production 'other than land') (Amin 1980: 49–50). Mafeje points out, quite rightly, that Amin's reason for excluding land as means of production in the capitalist stage is not at all clear. In any case, Amin emphasises the content of property in terms of social control and not in its juridical and ideological forms. As intimated before, Mafeje is concerned to comprehend the second mode of production, *viz.* the 'tributary'. He is of the view that in the light of the foregoing schema, the interlacustrine kingdoms can only fit the tributary mode and Amin (1980, 2008) himself has treated them as such. There are four 'diagnostic features' to Amin's tributary mode of production. Mafeje eloquently summarises these features as follows:

First, the surplus product is extracted by non-economic means by an exploiting class, as against a dominant group which does the same for purposes of collective use in the communal mode of production. ...Second, the essential organisation of production is based on use value and not on exchange value. This is a natural economy in which transfers, whatever their nature, do not represent commodity exchange. ...Third, the tributary mode of production is characterised by the dominance of the superstructure. ...Samir Amin sees state religion, as against local religions, as an essential feature of tributary social formations. Moreover, class struggle is here muted by the dominance of the ideology of the ruling class. Fourth... one of the attributes of the tributary mode of production is 'its appearance of stability and even of stagnation'. This characteristic

is supposed to be true of all tributary formations, including European feudalism, and is considered to be one of the consequences of the dominance of use value. (Mafeje 1991a: 94)

These four features will be discussed soon. For now, it should be noted that Mafeje is fully aware of the fact that abstract concepts do not always accord with reality, hence he chose the interlacustrine kingdoms as the prime candidate for Amin's tributary mode of production, so as the better to 'separate chaff from the grain' (Mafeje 1991a: 97). Mafeje reminds the reader that the institution of tribute is to be found in all of the interlacustrine kingdoms. On this issue, Mafeje agrees with Amin's submission that the extraction of surplus products in the region was through non-economic means. At this point, Mafeje's worry is that in the context of the region, the distinction made by Amin between an 'exploiting class' and a 'dominant group' is not very clear. These are to be found in both class and classless societies, respectively. Specifically, although it is known that there is a relationship between office and extraction, it is not self-evident that the beneficiaries of tribute in the interlacustrine kingdoms constitute a class. To get around this puzzle, one has to raise the question of property-relations and labour-relations which, theoretically, define modes of production. For his part, Amin relates to tributary property in land or, in his parlance, 'tributary of the land' versus communal property. For Mafeje, it is a serious misconception to speak of land as property in social formations of sub-Saharan. In this region, people only had use-rights and land was used as an instrument of labour not as property.

In the scheme of things one could, Mafeje argues, speak of societies in transition from non-property to property relations. Lack of definite property-relations makes them similar to 'communal social formations'. This is similar to the development of 'capitalist agriculture' in other parts of sub-Saharan which do not necessarily have individual property rights in land. Akin to this is the development of industry under state capitalism. Thus, Mafeje concludes, 'it is apparent that control over resources and labour can take forms other than property and that private appropriation of value is not contingent only on private property' (Mafeje 1991a: 98). Mafeje goes on to argue that the other side of modes of production is labour-relations. In the interlacustrine, the labour process took three clear forms concurrently. First, it took the form of family subsistence production and this applied to all families, including the king whose wives and domestic servants took the responsibility of farming. The difference was division of labour along gender lines. Women did agricultural production while men were pastoralists – 'with a few exceptions such as among the Bahutu' (Mafeje 1991a: 98). The second aspect was

clientage. The patron-client relations was a personal and free contract in that a man who was not well resourced would offer his services to the wealthy in exchange for political protection and material support. But because the client gave more than he received, one could say, following Mafeje, there was here extraction of economic value *sans* expropriation or bondage. This highlights the importance, he says, of political dominance over property relations.

In all of the interlacustrine kingdoms, office-holders treated their vassals as people who owed them tribute which was shared in ascending order. This was in the form of perishable goods. Tribute and dues constitute the third category of the labour process. What separates this category from the other two is that the latter two 'were part of the fiscal policy of each kingdom and underwrote a high standard of living among its office-bearers' (Mafeje 1991a: 99). But, typically, tribute was in the form of perishable goods and the office-estates were not heritable. Thus, although it cannot be said that there were strict 'labour-relations' in the interlacustrine kingdoms, exploitation was rife, if not the norm. What this means is that there was a move away from relations of domination, though they existed in small measure, to relations of exploitation and such relations were not, Mafeje insists, remotely close to Marx's concept of 'generalised slavery'. Not every man had a chance of becoming an officer or an estate holder. Also, the governing bureaucracy was bound to look for ways to perpetuate its domination. As regards Amin's first postulate, Mafeje acknowledges that in the absence of property-relations or defined labour-relations, one cannot conclude that tribute recipients constituted an 'exploiting class'. This is true in spite of the fact that there was exploitation in the interlacustrine kingdoms. Extraction was not strictly identifiable in terms of relation either to property or to labour. There was extraction, Mafeje concedes, but the question as to the sort of exploiters who existed in the interlacustrine kingdoms must be answered 'scientifically' and not 'ideologically'. The biggest asset in the arsenal of exploiters was political control. Yet it is difficult to credit this as constitutive of class-property in the conventional sense of the term. Mafeje agrees with Amin's second postulate that in the tributary formations the organisation of production is based on use-value rather than exchange-value. Additionally, the majority of the interlacustrine kingdoms were never involved in trade, local or long-distance, until the colonial era.

Mafeje partially agrees with Amin's third postulate. He concedes that in the interlacustrine kingdoms the tributary mode of production was characterised by the dominance of the superstructure i.e. Christianity and Eastern religion facilitated the 'extraction of the surplus' and cemented relations of exploitation. But the real question, for him, turns on whether there were state religions or not. This, for Mafeje, brings one back to the question of political

domination versus class exploitation or labour-relations. Mafeje says the interlacustrine kingdoms fall short of Amin's criteria of religion. Mafeje rejects outright Amin's fourth postulate about 'stagnation' or 'stability'. He does so on theoretical and logical grounds. Mafeje is not denying that societies can be described in those terms, the issue according to him is that such characterisations cannot be offered as theoretical categorisations. One cannot describe the interlacustrine kingdoms as if there are no discernible differences among them. Yet it should be said that Amin's idea of 'stagnation' or 'stability' is in reference to each of the interlacustrine kingdoms as distinct entities in historical terms. It is on this ground that it can be faulted, and not that about differences among the kingdoms. Mafeje (1991a: 105) advises that it is in conducting systematic regional studies, which do not compartmentalise social anthropology and economic historical development, that one may 'establish the necessary rules of exclusion, without relativising theory'. In other words, while one should insist on regional specificity, one should not at the same time insist on taxonomic categories which are only empiricist in character. Generalising must be accompanied by alertness to differences in quality and a search at all times for new concepts or theories from one's research findings. Thus in this regard, Mafeje's intention is to find a suitable categorisation of the interlacustrine kingdoms.

Mafeje is thus interested in rethinking modes of production in Africa altogether. This, for Mafeje, is part of 'a painful struggle to understand the present as history' (Mafeje 1991a: 107). The said history is African history as part of a universal history. Mafeje is concerned to understand this history in a generative way and not in reductionist terms. In doing so, he draws attention to specificities of historical instances. He is the first to admit that not only does this assignment lead to unconventional usage of terms and concepts, but also it becomes controversial. As regards modes of production in Africa, Mafeje begins by stating that household economy was the general feature. There were family herds and fields, an empirical feature which differs sharply with the Asian village economy and integrated tributary social formations. In Africa, Mafeje points out, social formations were, as is the case today, 'balkanised and combined unevenly'. It is for these reasons that, theoretically, Marxists and liberal economists alike, referred to African societies as societies without an economic system. Further, what made this household economy 'communal' is the right of access not necessarily that of property as is the case in other parts of the world. As such, the chief-client or patron-client relation was a political rather than an economic relation. Thus societies without recognisable property-relations in land are hard to explain in classical European theories – Marxist or otherwise.

The temptation to use classical European theories has led to a number of misconceptions and distortions. The concepts of class and property, for example, are hard to credit since African social formations are characterised by the use-right principle. The notion of use-right in land does not necessarily lend the land tenure system in these societies to ‘communal ownership’ of land. The very notion of ownership has a lot to do with fixation with the concept of ‘property’. The African social formations did not deal with land in terms of ownership but in terms of *dominium eminens*, a principle which guaranteed use-rights. This practice was organised along family units. The absence of property-rights in these societies does not translate to absence of exploitation and domination. The issue has already been discussed. The issue, for Mafeje, turns on how one conceives of the processes of exploitation and domination in societies such as the interlacustrine kingdoms. Communal social formations are characterised by kinship hierarchies not classes which have a redistributive function. This raises two main questions: (i) Does exploitation imply the existence of classes in society? (ii) Is the existence of classes dependent on property-relations? As Mafeje has pointed out, exploitation in the interlacustrine region was quite rife even in the absence of classes. This raises a further question about dialectical and historical materialism since, for orthodox Marxists, these are core principles in class analysis. Mafeje points out that dialectical materialism as an epistemology cannot be limited to class societies only. The problem is simply that analytical categories in historical materialism presuppose the existence of classes. The case of the interlacustrine kingdoms calls for thinking of such analytical categories anew.

In the search for new concepts, Mafeje discards the concept of class in relation to the interlacustrine kingdoms and retreats into the non-Marxist but Weberian concept of ‘status’. In the context of an analysis of pre-capitalist societies such as the interlacustrine kingdoms, Mafeje is justified in abandoning the concept of class. With regards to the concept of exploitation, Marxists tend to get entangled in logical and conceptual knots. On the one hand, they denounce exploitation on political and moral grounds. Yet, on the other hand, they deem it a necessary condition for development and intensification of technological advancement. The upshot of this line of thought is that not only do Marxists ‘make a virtue of what they otherwise reject ideologically’, but also they ‘go out of their way to find “classes” even where none exist’ (Mafeje 1991a: 116). Elsewhere, Mafeje (1981: 130) says to Harold Wolpe, ‘to conduct class analysis we do not have to invent classes, but rather to be alert to possible mediations in the process of class formation’. Important though this is, Mafeje said it at the cost of admitting that there was class analysis to conduct in the first place. In the final analysis though, ‘exploitation need not be equated with class any more than productive use of economic surplus is correlated

with class' (Mafeje 1991a: 116). Quite apart from classes, what was much more prevalent in the interlacustrine kingdoms were 'hierarchies of dyadic relations' and so 'we cannot infer class simply from extraction of value' (Mafeje 1991a:122). What seems to be important is how the value is realised and used 'i.e. the processes of reproduction and production' (Mafeje 1991a: 122). In the context of the interlacustrine kingdoms, one 'can only think of classes in the process of becoming' (Mafeje 1991a: 122). Mafeje is well aware of the fact that he is skating on thin ice. For one thing, he admits that exploitation was widespread in the interlacustrine kingdoms, and yet he is also disinclined to make sweeping statements and categorise the exploiters as a 'class'. This has to be so because the notion of 'class-exploitation' presupposes not only the existence of classes, but also the existence of property and labour-relations. None of these features were found in the interlacustrine kingdoms.

Apropos modes of production in Africa, Mafeje's position can be summarised as follows: (i) To the extent that, in the past three hundred years, the interlacustrine had dispensed with kinship as a core feature of political organisation, and to the extent that they substituted 'reciprocal economic relations' for 'extractive relations between rulers and the ruled', the concept of 'tribes' was no longer applicable to them (Mafeje 1991a). (ii) To the extent that there were no individual property rights over land, and no 'seigniorial relationship between the lord and vassal or serf for private exploitation of estates', and to the extent that there were no autonomous landlords to dominate within social formations, the interlacustrine kingdoms cannot be described as feudal (Mafeje 1991a: 122–123). (iii) Having assessed Amin's four diagnostic features of the tributary mode of production, Mafeje is able to affirm the view that the interlacustrine had entered the 'tributary mode of production'. Firstly, the organisational principle which defined economic and political relations in the interlacustrine was that of 'tribute' to the rulers. This was a way of extracting economic value from the citizenry and also a way of ensuring relations of political dominance. Secondly, although there were no property-relations and labour-relations in the interlacustrine kingdoms, the tributary method of extracting value was extra-economic. Thirdly, and consistent with the second point, there was a dominance of use-value which did not altogether 'preclude conversion of utilities from one form to another by whatever means' (Mafeje 1991a: 123). Though Mafeje endorses the foregoing features of Amin's diagnostic features of the tributary mode of production, he nevertheless argues that the aspects which concern religion, dominance of the superstructure and the tendency toward 'stagnation' are 'arbitrary' and 'redundant'. (iv) In the same way that Mafeje rejects the concept of feudalism in characterising the interlacustrine kingdoms, he rejects the concept as an important feature in the concept of tributary mode of production. The

only thing that the tributary mode of production shares with feudalism is the dominance of use-value. Important to note is that in the interlacustrine kingdoms there was no private-property in land or exploitation in the form of labour-relations. Thus feudalism cannot be one of the features of the tributary mode of production.

(v) Mafeje argues that Amin not only subsumed feudalism under the tributary mode of production, but also argued that it was ‘incomplete’ due to its ‘fragmented political authority’. For Mafeje, this is to privilege the superstructure at the expense of the base. In this regard, Amin adopted an ‘un-Marxist’ procedure. (vi) Linked to point number five, Mafeje argues that it might be much more appropriate to think of modes of production as transitional as against being incomplete. To the possible question: ‘when are modes of production complete?’ Mafeje responds that one could reply that: modes of production can be thought of as complete ‘when they are able to reproduce themselves indefinitely’ (Mafeje 1991a: 124). Yet, modes of production do not reach a point of completion. This is so because they are ‘subject to decay’ as a result of internal contradictions. Conceptually, however, Mafeje insists that modes of production have to reach a point of completion because incomplete concepts are decidedly ‘ambiguous’. (vii) Instead of adopting the usual Marxian parlance of extraction of ‘economic surplus’ or ‘surplus-value’, the capacity of the dominant group to take more than they have produced, Mafeje used the concept of ‘economic value’. This is so because the two concepts cannot hold in an environment with ‘determinate production-relations’. In the interlacustrine kingdoms this situation did not obtain. (viii) Logically and empirically, as regards Mafeje’s proposed usage of the concept of ‘social formation’, the instance of political power and the instance of economics are articulated through tributary relations as against the co-existence of two modes of production – pastoralism and agriculture. All production in the interlacustrine kingdoms was geared towards subsistence as opposed to trade. Hence, for Mafeje, (a) social formation had nothing to do with mode of production; and (b) pastoralism and agriculture were not modes of production, but rather were ‘amenable’ to modes of production such as the tributary and the lineage modes of production. In other words, pastoralism and agriculture were subsumed under these modes of production as against being modes of production in themselves. Mafeje contends that they were, instead, ‘modes of existence’. (ix) The concept of ‘articulation of modes of production’ is misleading because modes of production are not characteristic of all social formations. Also, it could lead to the position that modes of existence are modes of production – as is the case with pastoralism and agriculture. In the interlacustrine kingdoms, pastoralism and agriculture were not two distinct modes of production but a single mode of existence which represented one mode of production, *viz.* the tributary mode of

production. (x) Finally, one of the most important methodological lessons of Mafeje's study is that ethnographic detail can help avoid crude and mechanistic interpretations of society. Quite apart from advocating relativism and parochialism, this method helps generate new concepts and theories as evidenced by Mafeje's study of the interlacustrine kingdoms. It is important to underline this point because, for Mafeje, there is no negation without affirmation or deconstruction without reconstruction. The section that follows characterises this dynamic more fully.

5.6 Deconstruction and Reconstruction

According to Mafeje, it is important to note that the quest for non-disciplinarity, is not or will not be easy to achieve since it is fraught with epistemological, theoretical, methodological, psychological and emotional problems.¹²² Firstly, the search for new paradigms is made much more difficult by the fact that 'epistemology' guarantees certainty and is thus intolerant of uncertainty and violation of tenets. Strictly speaking, this refers to paradigms rather than epistemology. Yet, Mafeje believes that non-disciplinarity might be achievable because in recent years, the accent has been on 'free styles of thinking and the breaking of disciplinary boundaries' (Mafeje 1996: 23). Secondly, Mafeje says theory is a term which lacks a fixed meaning and as such nobody adheres to it strictly. It is true that there may be lack of adherence to specific theories among academics, but that is a different proposition from the idea that theory as such lacks a fixed meaning. At any rate, Mafeje argues, various disciplines have different ideas about what constitutes 'theory'. This surely must be so since not only do disciplines deal with different subject matter (even when they deal with the same subject, methodologically, they approach it differently) but the same is also true *within* disciplines i.e. scholars are likely to adopt different theories based on their epistemological and ideological inclinations based on the dictates of their respective subject matter. Thus, there can be no consensus as to what theory scholars should or must adopt. Thus, lack of consensus on what theory is, contra Mafeje, should be welcomed and not lamented. One has to make a distinction between the idea of theory *qua* theory and the idea of consensus around specific *theories*. It is a distinction between what theory is and which theory better explains this or the other issue. It is for the very same reasons why diversities of epistemological approaches to making sense of societies will generate diverse theories of society.

¹²² Parts of this section of this chapter are taken from my paper: 'Mafeje and "Authentic Interlocutors": An Appraisal of his Epistemology', *African Sociological Review*, 16(1): 2-16.

Mafeje concedes, however, that it is the role of theory to make apparent and explain hidden connections in a given phenomenon. It is for this reason that there are many theories within any one discipline. Thus in abandoning theory, a great deal of work within disciplines will be ‘academic without being intellectual’ (Mafeje 1996) or simply empiricist. It should thus be noted that Mafeje is not against theory but, instead, simply rejects the idea of a ‘theoretical framework’ as a presupposition on which field research should be based. Here Mafeje broaches without being explicit the distinction between deductive and inductive reasoning. It is clear that on the basis of his own approach to research, Mafeje arrives at his conclusions through inductive logic. Thirdly, methodology (which is a highly theoretically laden concept) is a term of abuse which is usually and wrongly used as a collective noun for methods/procedures and techniques. Yet methodology refers to ‘essential choices in knowledge-making’. Methods, by contrast, are a matter of convenience which are largely driven by given problems under investigation. In mistaking methodology for methods, the former loses its ‘higher theoretical status’. While this is true, the argument raised by Mafeje is fairly conventional. Methodology is a higher order philosophical evaluation of methods (as techniques of research). One suspects that the reason why many refer to method as methodology is because the former sounds high-minded. Ultimately, this is a fairly conventional thing to say. Fourthly, although some academics might consider emotional and psychological constraints to be extra-curricula, such issues are in fact at the core of the deconstructionist problematic. Disciplinary adherents, although sometimes critical of their disciplines, are still unable or otherwise unwilling to dispense with their ‘beleaguered’ disciplines. Reasons for this are not only intellectually founded, but also are emotional and psychological. Academics have, according to Mafeje, vested interests in their disciplines. Thus although some anthropologists might denounce anthropology for its role in colonialism, they would still insist on pursuing anthropological work.

Thus in the spirit of deconstruction and as regards Mafeje’s study of the interlacustrine kingdoms, he adopted non-disciplinarity as opposed to a disciplinary or even interdisciplinary approach. As his work demonstrates, in the study of the interlacustrine kingdoms Mafeje used a ‘discursive’ method. Yet it must be said that he benefitted from his anthropological background. Mafeje argues that had he adopted an interdisciplinary approach in conducting his study, he would have been ‘bogged down in intractable methodological problems’ (Mafeje 1996: 28). To avoid such problems, he simply ‘used the discursive method’. In the second instance, he was ‘not unduly concerned’ about epistemology. He rejected positivism and gravitated towards Marxist thought-categories – though he subjected them to critical scrutiny.

First, it is important to appreciate that this was at the time of Mafeje's flirtation with post-modernism/post-structuralism. Second, all that discursive method means is 'exploration of meaning produced by language use and communication'; it is an analytical approach rather than a research technique for generating data. Third, related to flirtation with post-modernism is that when Mafeje talks about epistemology he actually means positivism/functionalist. Marxist historical materialism/dialectical materialism with which he constructed much of the meaning-making of the interlacustrine kingdoms is *an epistemology; it is a method of knowledge, an approach to how we may know the world*. One has to make a distinction between the rejection of particular epistemologies and the claim of rejection of epistemology. Even hard core post-modernism (with all its rejection of grand-narratives – which itself is a grand narrative – and certainty) is an epistemological approach to making sense of the world around us. It never claimed that the world is unknowable. Here of course, Foucault would be justified in claiming that he is not a post-modernist. If 'discursive method' is Mafeje's way of making sense of the interlacustrine data then at that very moment it becomes his epistemological framework. Post-modernists put a lot of stock by 'deconstructionism' but anyone familiar with Marx's *Grundrisse* would recognise the *method of abstraction* as reconstruction through deconstruction. Mafeje did not, however, commit himself uncritically to a Marxist epistemology. Although inspired by it, he allowed his work to 'speak for [him]'. In spite of all this, Mafeje concedes that 'dispensing with existing epistemologies does not solve methodological problems in the intermediate term and the long-run' (Mafeje 1996: 28). Instead, 'it creates space for the emergence of new styles of thinking. To survive, the so-called emergent styles of thinking must not only be aware of one another but also of new styles of thinking within existing epistemologies' (Mafeje 1996: 28). To test these 'deconstructionist' ideas Mafeje used, as demonstrated in this chapter, the interlacustrine kingdoms. It could have been any other society as he says 'I could have used the Nguni or the Sotho in South Africa for exactly the same reasons that I chose the Interlacustrine' (Mafeje 1996: 33). Mafeje was engaged in this process as an authentic interlocutor.

Thus methodologically, being an authentic interlocutor entails adopting what Mafeje (1991a, 1996, 2001a) calls a 'discursive method'. In adopting the discursive method, the researcher carries out research 'without any strict strictures'. This means abandoning epistemology as such. In the following quote Mafeje gives the broader context of his approach:

By the time I reached Dar es Salaam at the end of the 1960s my work had become more thematic, less ethnographic, and more consciously deconstructionist... What is of

interest to us in the present context is that all what is said above was not anthropological, although it might have benefited from my anthropological background. Nor was it interdisciplinary, except the work I did in Uganda, which was more frustrating than anything else. It was *non-disciplinary* but drew from the insights of researchers in the different social sciences in Africa specifically sociologists, economists, historians, political scientists, social geographers, lawyers (especially those interested in land tenure), philosophers, and literary critics. If I had attempted to be interdisciplinary, instead of simply learning from others, I would have got bogged down in intractable methodological problems, as each discipline would have demanded its pound of flesh. To avoid all this, I simply used the discursive method (not in its unflattering English sense but its original sense of *discursus* meaning a reasoned discussion or exposition)... I preferred to let my work speak for me... This as it may, dispensing with existing epistemologies does not solve methodological problems in the inter-mediate term and the long run. What it does is to create space for the emergence of new styles of thinking. (Mafeje 2001a: 55-6, emphasis in original)

In the foregoing quote, Mafeje spells out for the reader his approach to the social sciences. The problem, however, is that although he set out to ‘deconstruct’ and thus dispense with pre-existing knowledge, mainly positivism, his method was itself grounded on positivism. Here Mafeje made the mistake of thinking that his existential baggage had no influence on his ideas. In doing so, he came close to saying one could be the proverbial fly on the wall. That is an impossibility which Mafeje inadvertently overlooked. His detractors point out that his method is already prefigured in the works of earlier positivistic anthropologists (Moore 1998; Nabudere 2008, 2010, 2011; Sharp 1998). Nabudere makes the following observation:

But Mafeje operates as a neutral researcher or scholar standing outside the new epistemology because he informs us that in discarding the old concepts and approaches he also adopted a ‘discursive method’, which was not predicated on any epistemology but was ‘reflective of a certain style of thinking’. It is with this ‘style of thinking’ that he is able to study the peoples’ texts so that he can decode them and make them understandable to the other scholars as systemised interpretations of existing but ‘hidden knowledge’. But in such a case how different is he from the colonial scholar who claims to be ‘neutral’ and ‘objective’? (Nabudere 2008: 10)

Although Mafeje does not claim neutrality as such, Nabudere felt that he was liable to the same charges he (Mafeje) laid against his interlocutors. Here Mafeje hoisted his argument with its own petard just insofar as he inadvertently comes close to saying he had no alternative to existing epistemologies. Elsewhere Mafeje argues thus:

As I conceive it, ethnography is the end product of social texts authored by the people themselves. All I do is to study the texts so that I can decode them, make their meaning apparent or understandable to me as an interlocutor or the 'other'. What I convey to my fellow-social scientists is studied and systematised interpretations of existing but hidden knowledge. In my view, this was a definite break with the European epistemology of subject/object. ...It was simply a recognition of the other not as a partner in knowledge-making, but as a knowledge-maker in her/his own right. Whether I discover this through conversations as Griaule and Dumont, through interviews, recordings, participant observation, oral traditions, artistic expressions, or written accounts, it is immaterial. Because all these are so many different ways of reaching the same objective, namely, understanding the other. (Mafeje 1996: 35)

Mafeje's critics never found this argument satisfactory. Dispensing with the subject/object is a central point in feminist epistemology and therefore not altogether new (see for example Oakley 1974). Adesina (1988) also grappled with similar issues in his doctoral thesis on the work and work-relations in the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation. In his thesis, he argues among other things that making sense of the world of work is both an auto-reflection on his own experience of work as well as co-production of the knowledge of the workers' experiences with them (see Adesina 1988). What he reports is not an observation of the other but the auto-reflection and co-produced reflections. Thus the way in which Mafeje framed his argument here, ends up reinforcing the subject/object distinction in spite of himself since he becomes the subject (researcher) seeking to 'understand the other' (the research object). John Sharp (1998: 67) takes Mafeje's 'ethnography' to be drifting 'along phenomenological lines' and is thus perplexed by the latter's approach which reads the interlacustrine kingdoms inside outwards through a process of 'eliminating the ethnocentric proclivities of these existing accounts [of the interlacustrine kingdoms]' (Sharp 1998: 69). Sharp argues that such an approach has little to do with the phenomenological conception of ethnography which Mafeje proposed. The reason why Sharp is puzzled is simply because he does not take into account the fact that Mafeje (1991a) had already indicated that his approach is not mere phenomenology

in that he relates the particular to its universal whole. In the early pages of his book on the interlacustrine kingdoms, Mafeje critiques Peter Rigby (1985) precisely for adopting phenomenology which ends up being ‘an affirmation without negations’ (Mafeje 1991a: iv). Secondly, Mafeje’s ethnography cannot be said to be phenomenological since he realises the dangers of the supposed clash between sympathy and critique. Again, Mafeje critiques Rigby for coming up with a study which ‘starts off as a critique of the wider environment [but end] up as a phenomenological affirmation of the internal subjects’ (Mafeje 1991a: iv). In this sense, contrary to Sharp, Mafeje cannot simply affirm the subjects’ views without subjecting them to critical scrutiny. More generally, the claim from Mafeje’s critics was that his critique of anthropology was not new and that his approach is not at all different from what he was criticising, *viz.* positivist social science (see Moore 1996, 1998; Laville 1998; Nabudere 2008, 2010, 2011; Sharp 1998). Mafeje’s critics raise a valid point, one which, however, questions the novelty of the idea as against its substance. That is a procedural or formal critique which, by all accounts, does not seem to have displaced the substance of what Mafeje wanted discussed. Indeed, in many respects, as Mafeje pointed out in his riposte, his critics ‘trivialised the *problematique* I wanted investigated’ (Mafeje 1998b: 96). Conceptually, it needs to be said that Mafeje’s position was rather flawed. He did much to denounce positivism for its double-standards, yet his own position came dangerously close to advancing the same positivistic notion of a ‘neutral’ researcher. Noteworthy, however, is the fact that in one of his earlier publications, Mafeje argued, critiquing ‘action-research’:

Action-research is an intellectual form of protest against iniquities of bourgeois society, without being a negation of bourgeois society. Its supposition that knowledge could develop spontaneously as a result of inter-subjective discourse between the researcher and the voiceless is an abdication of responsibility which is confirmed by the need on the part of the researcher to bring from outside knowledge that is not given to the actors. What is the source of such knowledge, it may be asked? Pretences aside, it is apparent that the work of action-researchers is anchored in logical-positivism. Its treatment of the subjective views of the ‘conscientised’ actors as a substitute for or as on a par with scientific knowledge is simply an unrecognised confusion of scientific with socially found knowledge. (Mafeje 1984: 25)

In his persistent search for an epistemological break, Mafeje seems to have retreated from this position.

In a monograph published in 2001 monograph, *Anthropology in post-independence Africa*, Mafeje reflects on his contribution to the social sciences generally, and his critique of anthropology specifically. In it he attempts to modify his position and responds to his critics by arguing thus:

One's intellectual work becomes part of current social struggles. In other words, it dissolves the traditional anthropological epistemology of subjects and objects and solves the problem of alterity, which was the hallmark of colonial anthropology. It transpires, therefore, that inter-subjective communication, like all social communication, does not imply agreement or consensus. (Mafeje 2001a: 64)

The argument is not altogether convincing. In the context of an engaged revolutionary scholar as Mafeje, whose work sought both intellectual and political alternatives, it may be objected to his *ad hoc* argument that even reactionary scholars could advance a similar argument in support of their ideas, however reactionary they may be. Adherents of colonial anthropology could just as well point out that their scholarship is just as well part of a 'struggle' to preserve white supremacy. Logically, this has to be so since their scholarship, too, is part of *their* reactionary social struggle. Although Mafeje may no longer be confronted with the conceptual question of reproducing positivism, he is now confronted with the political question of inadvertently giving ammunition to forces of reaction. On logical grounds such an objection may very well be valid. To counter it, however, one need only provide context by appealing to Mafeje's *oeuvre*. Mafeje was an engaged revolutionary scholar who was partial to Africans and small-producers/peasants. Thus to argue that his rejoinder has the danger of giving ammunition to forces of reaction is to read his work outside of the context which informs it. Mafeje was a committed revolutionary scholar and a staunch advocate of self-determination on the part of Africans. He speaks of 'a determined negation of negations' (2000a: 66), the purpose of which is 'affirmation' or 'reconstruction' (1996, 2001a). Adesina (2006: 242) argues similarly when he speaks of the 'recovery of intellectual and political nerve'. In this regard, one can appreciate the fact that Mafeje's scholarship had purpose, both intellectual and political.

It is for this reason that he had no problem with repudiating established theories and concepts if he found them ill-equipped in explaining certain issues. For example, as pointed out earlier on, he stopped using conventional anthropological terms such as 'culture' and 'society' and used 'ethnography' and 'social formation', respectively. For Mafeje, context is very important in the process of knowledge production.

Herbert Vilakazi finds it hard to credit Mafeje's rejection of the two concepts: culture and ethnography. Vilakazi advances the following argument:

Very simply, the concept of 'society' is bound up with the existence of the 'nation-state'. It arose in the eighteenth century, in the Enlightenment discourse, and reached final crystallisation as a social science concept in the nineteenth century. 'The concept of society itself, however, was formulated only in the course of the rise of the modern bourgeoisie as "society" proper in contrast to the court' (The Frankfurt Institute for Social Research 1966: 7). The 'boundaries' of society, as a concept, are the boundaries of the 'nation-state', which were being drawn and finalised in Western Europe from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. It is an 'ideal type', like the 'state' or 'capitalism', in the works of Weber or Marx... The nation-state is a phenomenon of the twentieth century in Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe; that is why boundaries of nation-states and of 'culture' clash so loudly in these regions of the world. The boundaries of nation-states were drawn very arbitrarily by the imperialist powers... Regarding Mafeje's preference for the concept of 'social formation' rather than the concept of 'society', I wonder whether Mafeje is fighting over something important. Marx had absolutely no problem in using the concept of society; in fact, more often than not, he used 'society' more than he used 'social formation'. Mafeje may have his choice, but I do not see any problem with the use of the concept of society, provided one is aware of its historical nature, as I have indicated. (Vilakazi 1998: 78-9)

This is a well-considered rejoinder by Vilakazi. The problem, however, is that Vilakazi himself concedes that 'society' is a concept bound up to the peculiarly European construct of a nation-state. He continues to argue that it clashes with the concept of 'culture' in Africa and elsewhere. If that is the case, surely Mafeje is more than justified in rejecting the concept. Logically, Vilakazi's argument is blemished by at least two fallacies: the *petitio principii*/'circular reasoning' and an appeal to authority. Strictly speaking, the argument that the concept of society is peculiarly bourgeois and Eurocentric provides sufficient grounds for one to reject it – *a fortiori* in the context of Mafeje's argument and epistemological decolonisation. Vilakazi argues that 'there was throughout the world a constant movement and migration of whole communities, peoples, and ethnic groups from place to place, and continent to continent. There is absolutely nothing comparable to it in our time' (Vilakazi 1989: 47). This is precisely the point raised by Mafeje. There have over time been 'societies' within societies so that the

concept of ‘society’, as is conventionally known, is no longer clear. Thus, it has become so vague that it is hard to handle analytically. Seen from this perspective, it becomes clear that Vilakazi’s argument proceeds in circularity. This is necessarily so because he presupposes the very point at issue in attempting to argue for it. In the second instance, the claim that Marx had no problem ‘in using the concept of society’ is an appeal to authority. Students of the social sciences are taught that one cannot accept a flawed argument X because a prominent professor Y happened to endorse it. Mafeje had, in addition, argued that he was willing to part ways with conventional concepts if they did not adequately explain what they are meant to explain. That he replaced culture with ethnography and society with social formation is the very point at issue. Vilakazi cannot then appeal to Marx when Mafeje stated quite clearly that he was parting ways with conventional Marxian parlance. Regarding Mafeje’s rejection of the concept of culture, Vilakazi had this to say:

While Mafeje’s discarding of the concept of society in favour of the concept of ‘social formation’ is not, to my mind, so important, his discarding of the concept of culture is significant, and causes me considerable intellectual discomfort. Is this a great advance over Anthropology and sociology? It has been said that the greatest advance and most unique contribution of Anthropology to the study of human society by social scientists, in general, is the concept of culture. By culture, of course, we have in mind all those things, material and non-material, which are created by human beings. These creations are passed on from generation to generation, significantly through the learning process. The purpose of culture is to help human beings adapt to nature, to one another and even to themselves as parts of nature... What is Mafeje’s problem with the concept of ‘culture’? (Vilakazi 1998: 79-80)

Mafeje’s (1996: 35) problem with culture is that ‘it has no boundaries and can be diffuse widely in space especially under conditions of improved communication. For this reason, it cannot be used as a designating systematic category – perhaps as a general unbounded point of reference.’ In the final analysis, for Mafeje, deconstruction must entail reconstruction. In ‘deconstructing colonial Anthropology and in doing other things instead, my intention is to contribute to the emergence of a post-anthropological era and by extension an era of deconstruction of all dominating forms of knowledge, including other bourgeois social sciences’ (Mafeje 1996: 37).

5.7 Conclusion

Together with the previous chapter, this chapter can be considered part two of Mafeje's programmatic critique of the social sciences. Significantly, however, this chapter is meant to show how Mafeje sought not only to break with epistemology, but also to demonstrate what he meant when he spoke of non-disciplinarity and the search thereof. The approach adopted in this was to discuss in detail his *magnum opus*, *The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations*. This book is Mafeje's epistemological and methodological statement on what he meant when he spoke of an epistemological break and non-disciplinarity. The chapter can be summarised as follows: it outlined the matrix of the problem through Mafeje's theoretical and conceptual clarifications. Second, it gave an overview of the ethnography and social formations of the interlacustrine. Third, it gave an account of the mode of political and economic character of the interlacustrine kingdoms. Fourth, it offered a reconsideration of the mode of production in Africa. Lastly, it underlined the fact that Mafeje does not offer a negative critique of the social sciences but that in the wake of his deconstruction of the social sciences, he sought to reconstruct something – hence non-disciplinarity. Having laid Mafeje's epistemological and methodological foundation with this and the previous two chapters, the chapters that follow discuss his approach to substantive issues such as land and agrarian issues and then his revolutionary theory and politics.

Part III: On Land and Agrarian Issues in sub-Saharan Africa

Chapter Six

The Agrarian Question and the Land Question in sub-Saharan Africa

6.0 Introduction

Land and agrarian studies form an important part of Mafeje's *oeuvre* (Houghton and Mafeje 1973; Mafeje 1968, 1969, 1973a, 1973b, 1976b, 1977a, 1977b, 1980, 1981, 1985b, 1987a, 1987b, 1988a, 1990a, 1991a, 1991b, 1993b, 1998b, 2003; Mafeje and Richards 1973). The bulk of his work on the land question turns on the agrarian question. This is so primarily because he acknowledges that Africa is still largely a rural continent and that the question of an agrarian economy is likely to persist for a very long time to come (see also Amin 2012; Moyo, Jha and Yeros 2013). Moreover, because Mafeje was writing about the post-independence period, he argued that there is no land question in sub-Saharan Africa but an agrarian one. He hastens to point out, however, that southern Africa is an exception in this regard since the sub-region has a white settler community. Sam Moyo has also conducted extensive work on the land and agrarian question in southern Africa (Moyo 1999, 2005, 2008; Moyo and Romdhane 2002; Moyo and Yeros 2005). Another important point to note is that rural development may not be limited to agricultural activities. Relying on concrete examples, Mafeje's attempt is to overthrow Eurocentric epistemology. This is consistent with his search for an epistemological break or displacement of Eurocentric paradigms. In addressing the land and agrarian question, Mafeje takes seriously historical sociology. This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section sets the scene by discussing the intellectual matrix of the problem of land and agriculture on the African continent. The second section uses the case of Buganda in Uganda in order to get a deeper understanding of the evolution of the agrarian revolution and the land question in Africa. The third section is concerned to understand the agricultural crisis in African agriculture and its causes. The fourth section discusses the dynamics of African land tenure systems. Finally, the remainder of this chapter discusses government responses to the agrarian question.

6.1 The Problem in its Intellectual Setting

The problem with the foreign aid system is that international agencies assume that recipient countries have no professionals to advise their own governments. This is an ideological issue. 'The aim is clear: to create the conditions that would allow modern islands of agribusiness to take possession of the land they [NGOs and donor agencies] need in order to expand' (Amin 2012: 19-20). In this regard, even scientific prescriptions become hard to distinguish from

ideological rationalisations of preconceived assumptions. Often, when prescriptions of international agencies fail, ordinary citizens usually take the blame. Mafeje argues that this '*volte-face* exposes the cynicism of the epistemology of subject-object in bureaucratically conceived strategies for development' (1987a: 6, emphasis in original). It is always possible to find scientific grounds for cooperation between specialists and ordinary people. However this may not always be desirable to those who benefit from currently skewed relations.

Mafeje (1987a) posits at least two reasons for this. First, international agencies and experts are of the view that 'bourgeois science' and their philosophical assumptions are inherently superior. This stems from the historical fact that their views are linked to those of industrial capitalism. Radical scholars from Africa specifically and the Global South generally, agree with Mafeje (Amin 2012; Moyo, Jha and Yeros 2013). Moyo, Jha and Yeros refer to this as a 'sustained myth of industrialisation as the basic objective of transformation' (2013: 93). 'The idea was born in the late nineteenth century among the European vanguard, then consolidated as an axiom during the Cold War, only to be resurrected in the neoliberal period by a professionalised discipline of "agrarian studies"' (Moyo, Jha and Yeros 2013: 9). Amin (2012: 20) observes that 'capitalism, by its nature, cannot solve the global hunger crisis, because it cannot resolve the historical agrarian question of how to mobilise the surplus from peasant agriculture to industry without eliminating that same peasantry from agriculture.' Unfortunately, governments in less developed countries tend to share the views of international agencies and advisers. Advisers from the North come to hold, Mafeje argues, the superiority of their views and in turn degrade local knowledge systems. At the level of knowledge production this manifests itself as what Syed Farid Alatas 'intellectual division of labour' where western scholars collect data from the South and theorise while scholars from the South import theories from the North (Alatas 2003, 2012a, 2012b). Paulin Hountondji (1984, 1986, 1990, 1997, 2009) made the same point earlier and he refers to it as 'scientific dependence'. Syed Hussein Alatas refers to it as 'intellectual imperialism'. This a case where scholars from the North not only come to dominate scholars from the South, but also a case where the latter accept views from Northern scholars even when the latter do not actively superimpose their views (Alatas 2000).

Second, Southern scholars and intellectuals who attempt to validate local knowledge systems are not only ignored by policy-makers in their countries but also fall out of favour with international agencies and their advisers (Mafeje 1987a). This leaves ordinary people without scientists to validate their local knowledge systems. This, Mafeje argues, is a missed opportunity because local knowledge, although usually encyclopaedic, is typically implicit and

therefore in need of scientists and researchers to explicate it and make it apparent to others. The said scientists and researchers become ‘authentic interlocutors’ once they are in a position to do this (Mafeje 1981, 1991a, 1996, 2001a). Thus knowledge production which takes seriously its locale may lead to new paradigms or an epistemological break which were not hitherto known to industrial capitalism. In fact, Mafeje believes that it is precisely ‘in this area [of agrarian studies] that African social scientists are likely to make a distinct contribution. The underlying reason is that their societies are predominantly agrarian and, contrary to all logic, the agrarian question in them is the least studied’ (Mafeje 1988a: 94). Moyo, Jha and Yeros (2013: 94) concur: ‘There is urgent need to think creatively about alternatives in development and, indeed, rethink the fundamentals of modernity, if we are to save it from its own barbarism. What we cannot do is blind ourselves by established conventions, create myths about the past and illusions as to the future.’ Yet, development theorists tend to defend and rationalise particular modes of production either by extrapolation or by simply making ahistorical assumptions. ‘That argument – that is, that capitalism has “solved” the agrarian question in its developed centres – has always been admitted by large sections of the Left, including within historical Marxism... What was always overlooked was that capitalism, while it solved the question in its centres, did so by creating a gigantic agrarian question in the peripheries, which it cannot solve but through the genocide of half of humankind’ (Amin 2012: 14). Eurocentric models divert attention from the needs of would-be objects of development i.e. ordinary African people. Epistemologically, imported models deny any possibility of knowledge systems outside of the mainstream orthodoxies. In land and agrarian studies, when the question of tenure is posed, policy-makers, scholars and government officials alike, typically check to see under which European model it would fall (Mafeje 1987a). What this practice overlooks is the fact that it is in agriculture that different cultural traditions and modes of organisation are likely to be found.

In taking seriously the uniqueness of sub-Saharan land tenure systems, Mafeje is convinced that African scholars might be on their way to overthrow deeply-held assumptions and therefore raise new questions about the agrarian question in this sub-region (Mafeje 2003). The opportunity to take up the land and agrarian question at an epistemological level is lost due to uncritical reception and embrace of Eurocentric theories with ‘universalising tendencies’. One of these universalising tendencies ‘concerns the role of industrialisation in overcoming “backwardness” and resolving the agrarian question. This is a tremendously resilient idea, basic to Eurocentric modernity’ (Moyo, Jha and Yeros 2013: 94). This is notwithstanding the fact that a rigorous analysis of ‘African agrarian systems shows that there

is more than one way to agricultural and rural social development' (Mafeje 2003: iii). Strictly speaking, what Moyo *et al* are concerned with is a mode of industrialisation that derives from 'the anti-popular and militaristic terms of monopoly capital' (Moyo, Jha and Yeros 2013: 94). They accept the salience of industrialisation, just not one based on the logic of monopoly capitalism: 'It is true that industrialisation remains necessary for the advance[ment] of humanity, but not on any terms and certainly not the anti-popular and militaristic terms of monopoly capitalism' (Moyo, Jha and Yeros 2013: 94). Indeed, the position they endorse is one in which 'industrialisation [is understood] as an aspect of a larger strategic objective, which condensed economic, political and ideological power, or mobilising the peasantry' as part of the process of 'unlocking the energies of liberation' (Moyo, Jha and Yeros 2013: 96). The restoration of national sovereignty is at the heart of their argument. Mafeje was concerned to critique Eurocentric claims often made when studying the agrarian question in Africa.

Taking the matter raised by Mafeje seriously is not only one of the fundamentals of democratisation of the world but also it is important for intellectual pursuits. Mafeje is concerned with five issues: (i) To interrogate Eurocentric theories and concepts on land tenure systems in sub-Saharan Africa; (ii) To understand the importance of African systems of land tenure and social organisation for production. He does so by taking these systems on their own terms. 'This constitutes a study of African attitudes toward land, its acquisition and uses, and its management for social reproduction and production' (Mafeje 2003: iii); (iii) He sets out to demonstrate how Africans have adapted and modified their ways of doing things as a result of changing economic conditions. This is quite important in the context of capitalism and the introduction of the market for agricultural products. Taking this into account entails a critical evaluation of the theories and concepts which have long been advocated by 'Eurocentric' scholars and resultant policies thereof; (iv) To clarify issues at hand so that one is able to explain why African 'peasants' behave in the seemingly unpredictable ways they do – even towards their governments; and (v) to understand 'the prospects for a genuine agrarian transformation in sub-Saharan Africa' (Mafeje 2003: iii). Above all this, Mafeje sets out to explain that such concepts as 'ownership' of land in sub-Saharan Africa are foreign to customary law. Property, among Africans or in customary law is held and transmitted through 'lineages or unilineal descent groups'.

Mafeje (2003) argues that for the longest time, agrarian studies in sub-Saharan Africa have relied heavily on categories derived from Europe, Latin American and Asia. For example, the concept of land reform is relevant only in the context of southern African settler societies. Yet, at all times European scholars working on agriculture in Africa use it quite freely as though

it were universally applicable. This casual deployment of concepts is a trend dating back to colonial times and continues to find expression through organisations such as Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the World Bank. This notwithstanding the realities of sub-Saharan Africa. Important to note is the fact that the concepts used in analysing African land tenure systems originate from European jurisprudence. This has, of course, led to a number of misconceptions. Chief among them is the notion of ‘ownership’ over land and the notion of land as ‘property’. The two concepts, in European jurisprudence, are meant to delineate physical portions of the land upon which one would have jurisdiction as well as exclusive control. Yet, in sub-Saharan Africa the same is not true since the holder of the land could be anything from territorial authority, the clan, the lineage, the household, or production unit ‘but never the individual’ (Mafeje 2003).

In this regard, a distinction is made between repository and use-rights. Holders of land are organised in such a way that they are vertical groups or hierarchical as against the popular notion of ‘communally owned land’. In short, land is not owned by the community as whole – it is only grazing land for livestock that is shared by communities (Mafeje 1981). For Mafeje, African villages, unlike Asia and Europe, were not economic units but socio-political units bound together by kinship ties and neighbourliness. So that the allocation and use of land depended on one being a member of the units just mentioned. Thus it is conceptually erroneous to suggest that African land tenure systems are ‘communal’. Closely linked to this is the question of ‘collective rights in land’. Mafeje argues that ‘bourgeois’ theorists conceive of these rights as ‘free for all’ under the impression that land in Africa is communally held. That is not entirely accurate. A more accurate view is that collective land rights are protected by solidarity landholding groups, so that any unauthorised transfer of land could lead to conflict or violence. This point is often lost on theorists and African governments who speak of land reform.

For Mafeje (2003: 2), ‘African jurisprudence, recognised rights of possession determined by prior settlement and membership in given social groups, use-rights contingent on social labour, and rights of social exchange underscored by implicit reversionary rights’. Moreover, African social thought distinguished between the soil and what the soil produces i.e. crops and vegetation. Thus, Mafeje argues, ‘what was transferred to the user was not the soil itself but what it could produce’. The emphasis seems to have been on arable land as against land more generally. Land *per se* was always considered ‘part of human existence and generally taken for granted’ (Mafeje 2003: 2). This, however, did not undermine its value. Land was not

simply considered a concrete or physical entity but rather a social endowment that could not be done away with. Physically, it may be fixed in space but its value transcends time.

Policy-makers and legislators have sought to impose western concepts on African societies. Land as 'property' is one such concept. The concept mutated from 'communal property' into 'common property'. The juridical notion implied by the concept of property is too restrictive to account for or otherwise explain the inclusive nature of rights in land in the African context. Quite apart from being juridical, the rights which a clan asserts over a domain are in part political and ritual. 'In contrast', writes Mafeje (2003: 3), 'the rights that a lineage may claim over land are concrete and vindicated by actual ties of consanguinity and corporate interests'. There are, moreover, 'extended family rights of use' whose control over the soil is centred on the male figure in the household. This works differently in the Yoruba context where women play similar roles and have usufruct rights in land, as well. 'While in this instance the claim over the land is vindicated through social labour, it would be erroneous to suppose that the latter confers "property rights" on the user' (Mafeje 2003: 3). Although the literature abounds in such terms as 'family estate', what is appropriated by the users are only crops and livestock – examples of social labour – not 'property' itself. Furthermore, although western narratives hold that the family is the 'ultimate unit of production and consumption in agrarian society', the same does not hold true in African societies. In the African context it is usually 'households' that conform to this narratives. Families are, Mafeje maintains, 'the repository of *heritable rights*'. In order to explain and understand this paradox, one ought to take seriously the fact that social organisation in Africa turns on the question of lineages (Mafeje 1991a, 1995c, 2003).

Land is held by and passed on through lineages or unilineal descent groups. Lineages and clans are typically exogamous. As such, transmission of land or 'property' excludes spouses – be they man and woman. As regards 'the relationship between social labour and rights over its product', there is an apparent contradiction and a great deal of injustice to women and non-kin members of African households. The problem lies in the exclusionary nature of the rule. Households are the basic units of production in agriculture and women are key anchors in many of them. Thus the exclusion of women and other non-kin members in transmission of property is a source of great injustice and controversy. The prevalence of the problem may be true in Africa but hardly universal – the Yoruba case is an example. Inheritance in women's families is important to consider: both paternal and maternal. Out-marriage does not obviate this. Similarly, men do not have right of 'inheritance' in their wife's patrilineage. Although in most parts of sub-Saharan Africa land is customarily allotted only to married men, it is usually

women who cultivate it. Yet the latter have no jurisdiction over family or lineage 'property'. Simply put, 'married women produce value for their husbands' groups' (Mafeje 2003: 3; Boserup 1974). Women only benefit from claims to use-value from their paternal side of the families. The composition of households is not only based on descent but also on other relations and it is thus variable and inconsistent something which makes it difficult to determine access to land based on descent. Also, the separation of social labour and its value has hindered mobilisation of labour and resources in African agriculture especially in recent years of market-based economy.

6.2 The Evolution of Agrarian Revolution and the Land Question: The Case of Buganda

Mafeje argues that in spite of the agricultural revolution and subsequently the industrial revolution in Europe, the world is still faced with the old problem of how to earn a living from agricultural activities (Mafeje 1973a; 1976b). Given subsequent knowledge expertise and technological advance, one would expect that there would be solutions to this problem. The condition in underdeveloped countries shows that solutions are still hard to come by. This is a global capitalist and structural problem in which the more developed countries thwart the development of less developed countries (Amin 2012; Moyo, Jha and Yeros 2013). Mafeje observes: 'Not only is the way ahead blocked by entrenched vested interests, but also vision is obscured by certain historically determined belief systems and perceptual categories' (Mafeje 1973a: 1; 1976b: 23). To illustrate this point Mafeje uses the case of the evolution of land policy and development in the Buganda region of Uganda. As discussed in the previous chapter, Buganda had not been a feudal society in the 18th and 19th centuries or, simply, by the arrival of the colonialists.

Mafeje argues that because Buganda is an agrarian society, land remains the source of wealth and sustenance. The issue, however, seems to be its distribution and manifestations or produce that has gone through a number of changes in the past hundred years. Women were the real cultivators of the soil, yet in order for them to cultivate, they relied on men to acquire the plots (Mafeje 1973a; 1976b). In order for the men to acquire the plots, they had to attach themselves to the political elites who had close relations with the king. This was a system of 'tiered dependence' which meant that the Buganda economy was more than household economy. Having acquired the land, a small producer would have to pay tribute and dues to his overlord and serve him as a craftsman, house-builder and warrior. The chiefs served the king

by supervising the population, collecting taxes and raising armed forces in order to raid neighbouring states. This, Mafeje argues, created an ‘economy of predation’ as against one of production. The spoils were usually shared among the elite and the king.

To the extent that small producers were not obliged to work in their masters’ fields, they were not serfs in the European sense. Also, given that the chiefs of Buganda held their estates as a result of their political appointments and not hereditary rights in land, they were not feudal lords in the European sense. The chiefs had strict control over the land and the population. This meant that they had opportunities for ‘primitive accumulation’ and consolidation of power. Due to their powerful positions, the chiefs and other royal appointees mounted a coup in 1888 and expelled the king. In this way, they were able to establish themselves as new masters of the state. When the British colonialists arrived in Buganda, they accepted them as such. Buganda became a British Protectorate in 1894. The land policy became an issue in 1900. Mafeje states that: ‘It was in that year that Sir Harry Johnston, the British Special Commissioner for the Protectorate of Uganda (Buganda), signed the famous Uganda Agreement with the Buganda new political captains. The terms of the Agreement are a clear indication of the extent to which the chiefs had managed to consolidate their power, at least, against the general population’ (Mafeje 1973a: 5). The land question was foremost in the chiefs’ negotiations with Johnston precisely because it is a source of political power and access to resources.

Johnston had no understanding of the land issue in Buganda. Moreover, the English themselves had considered Buganda a feudal society and their treatment of it meant that it actually came close to feudalism. Land was no longer vested in the hands of the king and the hierarchical structure that was in place prior to the coup and British colonialism. It was vested in the hands of individuals who in turn held on to it perpetually. Following Johnston’s intervention, the land was now allotted in square miles. Mafeje argues that this new system was a ‘double-edged sword’. ‘It at once complemented the feudalist ambitions of the chiefs in Buganda and, at the same time, created grounds for the emergence of capitalism in the area. Cultivation of cash crops made it possible for the individual landowners to acquire wealth by means other than primitive accumulation or predation’ (Mafeje 1973a: 6).

The Agreement of 10 March 1900 excluded the rest of the population from ownership of land. It created three types of land tenure in Buganda: (a) Public land known as crown land (about 6,800 square miles); (b) Land held by the Kabaka [king], chiefs and private landowners known as *mailo* land, divided into official *mailo* (about 700 square miles) and private *mailo* (about 8,000 square miles); and (c) Freehold which was land transferred from the crown to

individuals or corporations (104 square miles)' (Mafeje 1973a: 7). This created all sorts of problems insofar as it inaugurated a new type of property relations. Land became a commodity that could be bought and sold at the discretion of the individual. The land owner had no legal obligation to the king or the people who settled on his land. Also, in a very short space of time, 'land became an important commodity for investment and generation of continuous wealth through exploitation of hired labour' (Mafeje 1976b: 28). By this time Buganda had reached a new economic stage which began with the arrival of cotton from the US in December of 1903.

Round about the same time, the people of Buganda were forced to work and increase production for a British imperial company. In spite of the increase in production, Buganda economy proved to be a case of 'growth without *development*' (Mafeje 1973a: 8, emphasis in original). There was no intention to invest in people. The value of production was shipped to Britain. The landowners and chiefs were the only native beneficiaries. The situation in Buganda began to change when the landowners and chiefs decided not to fulfil their obligations and began to get their revenue purely on dues and tributes from the population. The imperialists and the chiefs had in effect fallen out. Indeed the British imperialists were concerned primarily with production and not the natives – royalty or not. It is recorded that from 1910 to 1915 production was no longer the preserve of the chiefs but that of the small producers (Mafeje 1973a; 1976b). As a result, by 1916 British administrators effectively sided with the peasants against the landowners.

The chiefs were now seen as 'mere parasites' or 'forested plutocracy' who were getting rich through extortion of money and services from the true agricultural producers. While one may speak of agricultural producers in Buganda, in a very strict sense one should not speak of 'peasant production' in that area at least not before 1900. To the extent that one can speak of peasant production, if it existed at all, it came about as a result of 'individualisation of rights in land and the introduction of cotton cultivation for the world market' (Mafeje 1976b: 30). Small-scale production only became dominant in Buganda from 1916 onwards. Moreover, the way in which the landowners operated was not markedly different, in terms of technique and scale, from those of their tenants. What is equally important to note at the structural level is the fact that there emerged in subsequent decades a sizeable number of small producers who worked on independent plots. There are two processes in which this came to be: (a) original estates became fragmented as a result of inheritance and sales; and (b) tenants became 'upwardly mobile' as they purchased land through money earned from cotton.

Immediately after the introduction of cash crop production and new economic gains by the individuals, the Buganda society experienced certain tensions. In order to maximise their

gains, landowners began to make excessive demands on the peasants. To address this problem, measures were taken in 1926 by Lukiiko (Buganda Legislative Assembly) so that 'by legislation at the increased rates of 35 per cent of the cotton cultivated by the tenants, two pounds of coffee for every ten pounds grown and one pound of every ten pounds of any other cash product' (Mafeje 1973a: 10). The administration responded sharply to these measures. There are reported evictions of tenants by landowners and sustained agitation by the king and other minor chiefs and landless individuals all of which gave an excuse to the colonial government to strike at the landowner-chiefs. On 15 October 1926, government declared that it will pass a legislation to secure tenure to small producers and to limit and regulate rents and tribute to landowner-chiefs. In 1927, government passed an act to this effect – the Busulu and Envujjo Law. The Buganda oligarchs were less than happy. Significantly, this law set out to guarantee security of tenure to the small producers so long as they 'met their stipulated obligations of ten shillings dues (*busulu*) per annum and a tithe (*nvujjo*) of four shillings per annum in respect of each acre or part thereof under cotton or coffee' (Mafeje 1973a: 10). The importance of this act is that it protected the small producers from being exploited by the landowner-chiefs.

Although the charter sought to protect small producers from this structural contradiction, the outcome led to another structural problem. This is so to the point that the British colonisers 'created such distortions or contrary motions' to the point of forestalling any agrarian and capitalist revolutions in Buganda. The said distortions and contradictions appear to have the necessary price of 'progress' paid by the people of Buganda since the primary concern of the British was production. This is so because, as noted earlier, they switched loyalties from siding with the native administrators to siding with small producers as soon as they realised that the latter were the real producers and not the landowner-chiefs to whom they came to refer as 'mere parasites' (Mafeje 1973a; 1976b). Objectively, the British had no loyalty to either of the two groups since their overriding concern was production. They minimally protected the small producers primarily on these bases and not out of the sense of goodwill or obligation. The British were colonialists and imperialists after all. In spite of these structural contradictions, production flourished and increased in Buganda. That was the whole point for the British in any case. By the end of the 1920s, production had expanded from cotton to coffee. This quantitative background notwithstanding, there are significant qualitative issues which need to be pointed out. In spite of everything that the British did, there seems to have been small victories for small producers. They determined not only the pace but also the volume of

production in the Buganda agricultural economy. The Buganda of this period was referred to by intellectuals as ‘a firmly established peasant economy’ (Mafeje 1976b: 33).

The aforementioned characterisation is based on the scale or volume of production but not on property and production relations. To begin with, very few small producers or peasants owned farm land because ownership of the same lay in the hands of those who were privileged either by birth or by other financial means. Secondly, the term peasant, such as it was used in respect of Buganda, does not necessarily mean the same in other parts of the world. In the early 20th century the small producers in Buganda were in fact ‘cheap foreign labour’ (Mafeje 1973a; 1976b). By 1934, wage-labour was ‘drawn exclusively’ from people who were from other parts of Uganda. Not only that, the men of Buganda relied exclusively on the labour of women for subsistence. Thus while one should remain critical of the colonial state, one also needs to highlight the process of exploitation internally and how production relations sustained such a process. Mafeje concludes that the Baganda ‘benefitted from and were in part responsible for the exploitation of their weaker or less fortunate neighbours’ (Mafeje 1973a: 12). Not only that, Mafeje states that the Baganda ‘have great contempt for farm labour and generally regard themselves as an “employing class”’ (Mafeje 1973a: 12). Unlike other agricultural communities, either in Africa or in Europe, the Baganda were indifferent to collective production and were extremely individualistic even in the context of family labour which is acknowledged as a backbone of peasant production. This was due to the availability of ‘cheap foreign labour’ in Buganda.

The question then arises: does reliance on hired labour and individualised production make *kulaks* or rural capitalists of the Baganda? Mafeje addresses this question as follows:

First, let it be stated as a general rule that peasants are isolated producers but who rely more on family labour than anything else. In contrast *kulaks* and agricultural capitalists rely more on hired labour than family labour. Nor is it just a question of the type of labour used. It is also a matter of qualitative difference brought about by a distinct combination of labour-power, tools and capital i.e. technologically and historically, the two categories represent divergent tendencies. But the surprising thing in Buganda is that increased production at the time in question did not represent a qualitative change *technologically*. Generally-speaking, the scale and the techniques of production remained the same for all farmers. (Mafeje 1976b: 34, emphasis in original)

It is thus unwise to conclude that the Buganda small producers are peasants. Further, Mafeje argues that entrepreneurship was in any case not a dominant feature of production in Buganda.

There were no measures in place to improve the efficiency of labour or would-be entrepreneurs. In other words, the level of 'real capital' (in scientific and technological terms) of rural Buganda stayed the same. In point of fact, the Buganda economy operated as a 'function' of British industry.

Even when production was at its highest, the people of Buganda were never going to benefit technologically from the British since the division of labour was in any case 'racially determined'. This was the essence of underdevelopment since Buganda was incorporated into capitalist production and world market relations without reaping its benefits. Shortly before World War II, attempts to improve African agriculture were limited only to soil conservation – and introduction of tractors in Buganda. The latter attempt did not succeed due to Buganda's broken terrain and heavy vegetation. In the post-war period small production was no longer seen as a viable option. As in European development, large-scale farming was considered a better substitute. Yet, in 'sub-Saharan Africa, large-scale farming connotes something rather different from what is generally understood by the term in more developed parts of the world' (Mafeje 1969: 22). Unlike Europe, material conditions in Buganda were not technologically advanced for such attempts. Nor did the relations between the Baganda and their labour reach any qualitative changes. Workers continued to be labouring tenants and their skills had not changed since the end of the 19th century. Mafeje argues that 'what we are confronted with here is an overall level of *real capital* which is too low to justify any *capitalist* expansion' (Mafeje 1976b: 36, emphasis in original). There was, however, a very small number of individuals who were engaged in above-average size farming. This was made possible by three factors: '*ownership* of sufficient amounts of land (inherited or purchased), favourable crop prices for a prolonged period, and increased labour inputs consequent on good market prices' (Mafeje 1973a: 15, emphasis in original). They were soon to catch the attention of the colonial administrators who, in turn, treated them with solicitude. These so-called 'professional farmers' were given government aid 'in the form of mechanisation schools, research institutes, training programmes and general extension services' (Mafeje 1973a: 15).

The 'professional farmers' were thus 'adopted' officially in 1953 by the government. Their potential had been identified by the Agricultural Productivity Committee. In 1956, two Farm Institutes were established in order to train these farmers and their personnel. This was a creation of the farming elite, to correspond with the bureaucratic elite which had also been created by the colonial government. While Wrigley (1964) speaks of professionalisation of agriculture in Buganda, Mafeje argues that '[it] would seem that, from the point of view of underdevelopment or "Jim-Crowed" agricultural revolution, what is more important than the

said professionalism is the *differential* treatment of the producers by the government and the emergence of parasitic elitism as part of the colonial heritage' (Mafeje 1973a: 16, emphasis in original). Mafeje's hypothesis is that the parasitism about which he writes is an 'aberrant feature' of 'Jim-Crowed' capitalism. He distinguishes this form of capitalism from 'normal' capitalism in which exploitation is characterised by dynamism 'i.e. it leads logically to fuller mobilisation of resources and, above all, to a release of new energies among the exploiters (capitalists) and the exploited (proletarians) alike' (Mafeje 1973a: 17).

In the case of Buganda, the preservation of 'professional farmers' in the post-independence period did not yield any qualitative change in agriculture or innovation that is consistent with capitalist revolution. It was no more than an addition to the existing strata of parasitic elites. It is thus a question as to whether independence led to any fundamental changes in how production was organised in agriculture. Mafeje argues that independence did not yield any change of attitude in respect of agricultural development. The national government of Uganda and the federal government of Buganda continued with agricultural policies of the British colonialists. They replaced the term 'professional farmers' with 'progressive farmers'. This category of farmers became, or in a very strict sense, continued to be prized clients of the Department of Agriculture. Moreover, in order to ensure capital inflow, the government encouraged non-African investors to enter into partnerships with African producers. Public land was leased for development of 'private estates'.

This was a tacit acknowledgement on the part of the Buganda government that 'progressive farmers' were unable to achieve development. Also, in the absence of a sizeable national bourgeoisie, the government proposed state capitalism as a viable alternative. In truth, the government lacked a clear theory of the same. The national government offered no support or guidance. Buganda continued to be a victim of pre-capitalist technology i.e. human capabilities and skill not just tools. Also, its production relations remained fundamentally traditional albeit with minor imposed production to cater for an international market. In this respect, there was no way that 'progressive farmers' could bring about a capitalist revolution. Mafeje's advice is that: 'A radical revision of production-relations should be seen as a necessary corollary of changed land relations. Land should be made available for *surplus production* and the people who, historically and politically, can afford neither to be capitalists nor subsistence men must be organised and trained to carry out the task of economic development' (Mafeje 1976b: 44, emphasis in original).

6.3 The Crisis in African Agriculture and its Causes

It is generally accepted that African agriculture experiences a crisis, particularly in food production. This problem persists and appears to be a global phenomenon affecting especially countries of the South (Amin 2012; Araghi 2009; Badgley and Perfecto 2007; Moyo, Jha and Yeros 2013; McMichael 2009a, 2009b, 2012; Rosset 2008; van der Ploeg 2008). Yet experts do not fully agree with one another as to what the root causes are. The FAO, on the other hand, declared in its 1986 report, *African Agriculture: The Next 25 Years*, that: ‘Six well-established trends are currently affecting African food production’. The report argues that: (i) There is a bias against agriculture in African government policies; (ii) There is a high population rate in Africa; (iii) The rate at which arable land and harvested areas are being developed has declined; (iv) There is stagnant change of technology something which has led to a decline in crop yields; (v) Degradation of the environment has accelerated; and (vi) Global political economy has made it difficult for a great majority of African countries to balance their budgets (FAO 1986).

Mafeje contends that it behoves the FAO to spell out whether or not by ‘well-established’ they refer to the historical or the statistical sense of the said trends. The distinction ought to be made if one is to make sense of these issues. The latter reveals nothing about the root causes of the problem. If one is to make sense of these trends one has to place them in their historical perspective. The agricultural and food crisis in Africa is not a sudden problem which can be reduced primarily to physical factors (Amin 2012; Mafeje 1987a; Moyo, Jha and Yeros 2013). While such an approach may appeal to African technocrats, politicians and international agencies, it is manifestly mistaken. The fact of the matter is that for these problems to be addressed, there needs to be a radical change in production relations and the social institutions which shape them. From this perspective, it becomes clear that the African agricultural crisis came about as a result of socio-economic factors which ante-date the natural causes such as are outlined in the FAO report. In this regard, history is important.

While the FAO and African governments emphasise physical factors at the expense of the historical, they overlook the fact that physical factors are historically manipulated by human beings. The current global warming is an outcome of human negligence and growth of capitalism and militarism for example (Moyo, Jha and Yeros 2013). Mafeje argues: ‘This is what technological progress and the destruction of the ecological balance is about’ (Mafeje 1987a: 9). The reference made to history is not necessarily a reference to archaeological evidence from thousand years gone by. But rather, it is a reference to what happened over the last hundred years at least. Mafeje argues that there is evidence to suggest that when colonial authorities replaced African inter-cropping with mono-culture, soil preservation was adversely affected. Colonialists did not replace inter-cropping with mono-culture because of a desire to

improve the lives of the African people. But rather, the plan was to enrich the metropole or the industrialised states.

Moreover, attempts to halt nomadic pastoralism (either through sheer force or through arbitrary colonial borders) and limit pastoralists to small portions of land in order to make space for arable agriculture led to the problem of overgrazing. This was an inevitable outcome. In East and southern Africa the dynamic was slightly different. The issue was not pressure on land as such. But rather, there was a deliberate attempt by white settlers to monopolise land. In doing so, they managed to force African subsistence producers into the slave-like capitalist labour market. Extraordinarily, in post-independence Africa this pattern continued and it was maintained in countries such as Kenya, Malawi, Swaziland and Zimbabwe (until the land expropriation of the late 1990s and early 2000s). The difference between the pre- and post-independence land distribution is that in the post-independence period the plan was not to cheapen black labour but rather to ‘modernise’ agriculture by encouraging estate farming (Mafeje 1987a). The former case may be said to be true in the case of Malawi. Also, the claim made by the FAO (1986) that there is lack of technological change in Africa is not entirely accurate. Mafeje argues that there has been technological advancement although the main problem is that the process has been highly selective. In any case, the idea that African agricultural sector must follow the Euro-American model is equally problematic in that the ‘binary of backwardness/industrialisation became the basis of latter-day myth-making’ which assumed ‘the agrarian question was essentially the agrarian question of industrialisation’ (Moyo, Jha and Yeros 2013: 95).

At any rate, in areas where small-scale producers embraced new technologies they were discouraged through official policies – particularly in southern Africa. Gradually, poverty and deprivation meant that new technologies were inaccessible. Ultimately, the question as to what type of technology should be adopted in Africa has not yet been resolved. Since the advent of colonialism improvement of African agriculture has come to mean a direct transfer of technologies from Europe and North America. Over and above technological transfer it has come to mean large-scale capitalist farming. Physically, it is doubtful whether what applies to agriculture in the temperate zones applies to tropical regions. Socially and culturally, there is the question as to whether it is possible to reproduce European modes of social organisation in Africa. Land tenure and family systems are especially important in this regard. Mafeje (1987a) argues that even the so-called progressive farmers (technologically and socially) had made no progress since the 1960s. There is no evidence that they have produced, throughout the 1960s, more than the small producers. This remains the case despite the fact that progressive farmers

were favoured by governments and interested agencies. The extension services given to progressive farmers have not been effective (Mafeje 1987a). Mafeje argues that if the opposite were true, then the rate of social reproduction of progressive farmers would have been much higher than evidence would suggest. To be sure, progressive farmers have not been able to reproduce themselves, as was expected by African governments.

This is not necessarily an indictment on African agriculture in that it is important for African farmers to deal in export crops otherwise failure to do so will lead to their demise. The only period in which would-be capitalist farmers did comparatively well was in the 1950s and 1960s when they got maximum support from African governments (Mafeje 1987a; FAO 1986). In the 1970s and 1980s, African farming was collapsing and going back to subsistence farming. This is ironical given the fact that African governments had always been sympathetic to capitalist farmers as against small producers. In countries like Kenya, Ivory Coast and Cameroon commercial or estate farmers got differential treatment from their respective governments. This, however, did not avert the agricultural crisis, save for Cameroon a country where commercial farmers played a huge role in food production (Mafeje 1987a). As such, the 'urban bias thesis' which the FAO put forward as part of the cause for the crisis does not seem to carry argumentative weight. Mafeje argues that: 'In aggregate terms all the countries in the world are urban-biased and yet all countries in the world have not experienced a deepening agricultural crisis' (Mafeje 1987a: 12). While it is true that there have been 'net transfers of value' from agriculture to urban areas in Africa, in historical terms this is true of all countries in transitional phase from agrarian to 'modern' economies. Thus, it becomes difficult to say what is peculiar about Africa.

It should be said that not all African farmers became casualties of disproportional transfer of value from the rural to urban areas. The advantage of commercial farmers has been that they benefitted from government support, where small producers did not, and were often given space to market their own produce (Mafeje 1987a). Quite often, commercial farmers had political clout and were not necessarily the most productive farmers. Examples of this include what came to be known as 'plantocracy' in Ivory Coast, the Gezira Scheme in the Sudan, the tea estate farmers in Malawi and the 'big ranchers' in Botswana. The medium-sized or self-made commercial farmers of the 1950s and 1960s had a potentially dynamic role to play. Examples of such farmers include migrant cocoa-growers in Ghana, the cotton farmers in East Africa and maize-growers in southern Africa, particularly in the case of Malawi. They did not have a lot of power. Instead, they joined the 'cooperative movement' whose role was more political than economic prior to independence. In the post-independence period, the movement

lost its relevance. This meant that farmers were open to vagaries of marketing boards and other government agencies. This was potentially the only category of African farmers with a capitalist spirit insofar as these farmers were 'go-getters' (Mafeje 1987a). They differ from estate farmers who were not only conservative, but also sought to use resources from government. Many of these estate/commercial farmers were government officials or politicians.

If medium-sized farmers did not have it easy, then the problem was more compounded for small producers. This is so because not only did the latter lack bargaining power, but also were unorganised and their produce was largely undervalued. In undervaluing the produce of small-scale farmers, the African governments unwittingly 'committed the worst strategic mistake since they came to power' (Mafeje 1987a: 13). Two major issues emerged as a result: (i) Small producers took to cash crop production and due to their numbers and over-taxation, became the biggest generator of national revenue; and (ii) continued to be the major food producers in spite of the unfavourable conditions. Within agriculture, they could be said to be representative of an under-privileged sub-sector. African governments gave them no technical or financial support. Mafeje argues that this was a big mistake, both socially and economically, as the food crisis in Africa testifies. It is a known datum that the great majority of African rural dwellers have been poverty-stricken since the advent of colonialism. Thus, the most important question is why they continue to be poor.

The FAO (1986) has referred to 'technological stagnation'. Yet such an explanation raises further questions. Why has this problem found expression mainly in Africa and less so in other regions of the South? Mafeje (1987a) states that one of the reasons could be 'backwardness in the historical sense'. Moyo, Jha and Yeros (2013: 95) take issue with the idea of 'backwardness' 'as the main ailment and industrialisation as the prescribed remedy'. Yet Mafeje believes that the idea of 'backwardness' can be raised without accusing Africans of being inherently inferior or primitive. In objective terms, Africa still lags behind other regions technologically. To qualify this observation, however, one has to take into account the fact that 'technologies are not only culture-bound but are also eminently production-function specific' (Mafeje 1987a: 14). While Africans may be said to be 'backward' technologically, they could still nonetheless have the ability to meet their needs. But given that they are struggling to do so, the question as to why that is the case or what went wrong arises immediately. As intimated above, the FAO (1986) attributed this to such physical factors as demography, ecology, weather, infrastructure and economic factors.

All of these, according to Mafeje (1987a: 14), are legitimate concerns which are nonetheless ‘soft options whose prescriptive value is questionable’. Mafeje’s postulation is that the problem lies in the production function of the African agricultural economies. Further, the production units in the African agricultural economies have been unable to reproduce themselves consistently and progressively. For Mafeje, this inability is ‘historically determined’. The FAO took it as established that there was a thriving capitalist production in Africa and the recommendations of the said organisation were based on this assumption. Yet what they missed was highlighting the link between development of capitalist agriculture and continued landlessness among poor rural dwellers. The FAO missed, too, the declining rural incomes or very low agricultural wages and scarcity of labour in agriculture to begin with. In any case, Mafeje argues, African agriculture need not develop along capitalist lines. The reason why capitalist development succeeded in the developed countries is precisely because ‘it was consistent with itself’. ‘Capitalist modernisation has now reached a stage where its continued expansion requires the implementation of enclosure policies on a world scale similar to those at the beginning of capitalist development in England, except that today, the destruction on a world scale of the “peasant reserves” of cheap labour will be nothing less than synonymous with genocide’ (Amin 2012: 20). In the African context, there are noted inconsistencies between property, production and exchange relations. Secondly, ‘more than in any other region, a major disarticulation in the production function of the agricultural economies’ (Mafeje 1987a: 14–15).

Prior to colonialism, production and catering to the needs of the population were closely linked. However, since the advent of colonial capitalism there continued to be a widening gap between the use of resources or production and popular needs. This includes both subsistence and production of raw materials for ‘nascent industries’. What colonial capital did was to create external demand not only for production for estate and medium farmers, but also among small producers. The upshot of this is that when the African agricultural economy flourished in the 1960s it did so not because there was growth of domestic markets. But rather, it was due to external markets i.e. Euro-American and advanced Asian markets, primarily. By the same token, when external markets/economies collapsed or fluctuated, they led to the worst crisis in African agricultural economies. What most advanced agricultural economies did was to subsidise their farmers and dump surplus in developing economies and therefore reduced the latter’s revenues even further. It should be noted that advanced agricultural economies already suffer from ‘chronic structural surpluses’. African agricultural economies, on the other hand, suffer from ‘structural deficits’ (Mafeje 1987a).

Mafeje suggests that there are two structural issues at play. In the first instance, the agricultural sector needs the urban area as its market. Equally, the urban area needs to be supplied by the agricultural sector. The major problem preventing the potential of this economic dialectic from being realised is that the farmers are uncompetitive and their production cost is comparatively high. Yet the urban wages are comparatively low. In this situation, both sides are unable to realise their livelihoods. Mafeje suggests three solutions: '(i) government subsidies for particular food crops; (ii) cheap food imports; or (iii) commensurate wage increases. Government subsidies are always accompanied by price controls which often prove to be a disincentive to the majority of producers' (Mafeje 1987a: 15–16). In this regard, an important question about the nature and future of African agricultural economies imposes itself. The capitalist mode of production has not hitherto yielded any fruits in sub-Saharan Africa. There are a number of structural issues to be resolved in this regard. Furthermore, Mafeje argues that:

[A]s a consequence of the land question, potential or actual labour has not been totally divested of its land rights. Hence, in most cases they combine subsistence production with labour migrancy in search of wages. Here, land rights should not be confused with access to adequate amounts of land in all cases but rather with sustainable kinship claims which militate against the development of individual property in land in the true capitalist sense. Likewise, collectively controlled use-rights over land should not be thought of as incompatible with commercialisation of agriculture and individual appropriation of value. (Mafeje 1987a: 17)

At the theoretical level, it is important to emphasise this point so that one is not led to conclude that development of a market in agriculture or commodity relations necessarily entails an emergence of the capitalist mode of production. The fact that the majority of African agricultural producers participate in the capitalist market does not necessarily make capitalists of them. A similar argument has been raised by other radical African scholars and they argue that African agriculture need not follow the Euro-American capitalist path (Amin 2012; Moyo, Jha and Yeros 2013). Samir Amin observes that 'within historical Marxism, only Maoism understood the size of the challenge. Therefore, those who charge Maoism with a so-called "peasant deviation" show by this very criticism that they do not have the analytical capacity for an understanding of what is actually existing imperialist capitalism' (Amin 2012: 14).

Furthermore, although there exists general exploitation of the small producers through bureaucracy, there is no prevalent or systematic exploitation of hired labour in the sub-Saharan

region. It is mainly commercial and estate farmers (who are in any case very few) who enlist the services of hired labour. Small producers, as will be discussed later on, rely on household labour (Mafeje 1991b). At any rate, even in the case of estate/commercial farmers, such labour as they hire is never on a permanent basis. It tends to be migratory or seasonal. In addition, the relationship between the labour force and the employer might also take a non-capitalist path e.g. the patron-client relationship discussed in the previous chapter. What seems to be an observable feature of sub-Saharan Africa is that the region has not seen ‘a progressive division of labour in agriculture’ (Mafeje 1987a: 18). Quite apart from capitalist development in agriculture, sub-Sahara is characterised by what Mafeje calls the ‘household economy’ (Mafeje 1991b). This has been mischaracterised, or labelled interchangeably, with related terms such as ‘family farming’, ‘peasant production’ ‘subsistence production’ etc. A common feature of all these terms are: (i) small-scale production which is geared towards subsistence needs; (ii) the prevalence of joint family rights in land as against individual rights; and (iii) kinship-based division of labour. According to Samir Amin (2012: 16), ‘on family farms, labour supply is reduced to one or two individuals (the farming couple), sometimes helped by one, two or three family members, associates or permanent labourers.’ Insofar as that is true, ‘family farming is not capitalist’ (Amin 2012: 16). Production and social reproduction of labour in African agricultural communities takes place within or is governed by these parameters.

In this context, ‘household’ connotes ‘that unit which has effective control over its allotted means of production (land and/cattle), allocation of labour and redistribution of the product’ (Mafeje 1987a: 18). Unlike Amin, Mafeje maintains that this unit does not necessarily denote a family. The household, according to him, has a common budget regardless of its actual kinship composition (Mafeje 1991b). It may be objected to this that the same holds true for a family. Mafeje’s response is that family members may on the Africa continent ‘live variously’. In other words, a family unit need not have a strict and effective control over its means of production in the manner of the household. This is not a particularly convincing argument. In any case, two external factors have undermined the self-sufficiency of households in Africa: these external factors are the migrant labour and the capitalist market. Mafeje elaborates: ‘They share labour with commercial farmers and urban employers but bear the cost of the social reproduction of all such shared labour. The persistence of labour migration is a clear indication that even under these very unfavourable conditions most households cannot do without wages from outside’ (Mafeje 1987a: 18).

As regards the national economy of sub-Saharan countries, there exists a ‘schizophrenic situation’ as Mafeje puts it. Not only is there a failure for agriculture to get specialised so that

it is able to support itself, but also industry does not expand in such a manner that it ‘absorbs permanently the migrant workers and their families’ (Mafeje 1987a: 19). This is a structural transformation that is required in order that African economies can grow and realise their potential. Yet it is hardly achieved in many African countries. Also, given that the African agricultural sector is unspecialised, to develop a capitalist market in its current state may not prove prudent. As mentioned earlier, this presents a conflict between the needs of the rural households and external demand. It is true that households themselves need cash income to procure consumer goods and other services, but that should not divert attention from the fact that African economies are distorted in how they function. Mafeje argues that ‘there is no running away from the fact that in economies such as the African ones the relationship between use and exchange value is not self-regulatory’ (Mafeje 1987a: 19).

Mafeje impresses the view that this is an important policy issue which supersedes any possible technical solutions. It is not a simple question of subsistence and surplus production because to maximise utility value is not to discard generation of surplus in growing economies. The two are not mutually exclusive. The problem resides in the one-sided development strategies adopted by African governments under the influence of donor agencies and structural adjustment programmes. Mafeje is critical of agencies such as the World Bank and the IMF and says what is needed is for production in Africa to be directed towards catering for local needs as against external markets. For this to happen effectively, local producers must be afforded opportunities to reproduce themselves ‘progressively and consistently’. This could potentially intensify surplus generation and technological development. This, of course, is dependent on the availability of land and livestock – medium-sized plots and reliance on family labour. This, in any case, is the current practice among and within households but there is lack of support from African governments whose primary preoccupation is ‘large-scale’ farming. Similarly, industry needs to have an established work-force with skills so that it earns enough to be able to reproduce itself consistently. In both cases, what would be needed is to dispense with migrant labour so as to bring about stability.

6.4 The Dynamics of African Land Tenure Systems

Having discussed the foregoing African agricultural crisis and its causes, attention is now given to the dynamics of African land tenure systems. Mafeje contends that most African governments have no land policy but an agrarian one – Ethiopia being one of the exceptions following the 1974 ‘revolution’ (Mafeje 2003). Yet Moyo (2008:1) argues that ‘in recent times Africa’s land question has received growing research and policy attention largely because of

concern over persistent food insecurity and rural poverty.’ Mafeje’s conclusion follows from the premise that there is no land question to speak of in sub-Saharan Africa, save the white settlers societies of southern Africa. Mafeje and Moyo have had private debates about whether or not there is a land question in Africa, and the related question of whether or not there are peasants in sub-Saharan Africa.¹²³ Land allocation in most sub-Saharan countries was meant in part to boost agricultural production among a handful of farmers who were beneficiaries of certain development schemes. In southern Africa, except for Zimbabwe, tinkering with allocation of land is done purely to appease landless blacks who are ‘confronted with intransigent white landowners’ (Mafeje 2003: 4).

The 1985 FAO report on land tenure systems in sub-Saharan Africa, *The Dynamics of Land Tenure and Agrarian Systems in Africa*, shows that over 90 per cent of the land rights enjoyed by African agriculturalists and pastoralists came through customary land tenure. Mafeje (2003) argues that allocation of land is still determined by membership in given lineages or clans. This is not to deny the fact that there exists an exchange of land across lineage boundaries. But rather, it is to say that the belief in the inalienability of land persists. In the past, use of land could be granted to the needy in exchange for a portion of the produce. This, according Mafeje, led to the phenomenon of ‘migrant farmers’ in West Africa and in southern Uganda. This was ‘made possible by the separation in African customary law between the *solum* and its manifestations’ (Mafeje 2003: 4, emphasis in original). This also gave rise to the process whereby access to land could be made available to more users as a result of the introduction of cash crops. This was made possible without putting at risk the security of lineages. These issues led to conflicting views from development theorists. According to Mafeje, some scholars critique rural dwellers and small producers for their insistence on corporate rights and inalienability of land as a hindrance to development. The argument is that this hinders investment in land because its users fear that their plots might be taken or given to other claimants. A contrary view is that individualisation of land rights will in all likelihood lead to monopolisation of land by a few to the detriment of the majority of the rural population (Mafeje 2003). While both arguments have merit, they still fall short insofar as they do not grapple with the dynamics of African land tenure systems.

¹²³ Sam Moyo, interview with the author on 25 May 2015, in Pretoria South Africa. According to Moyo, the term ‘peasant’ is used very casually in liberal bourgeois social sciences; he says people are referred to as ‘peasants’ by virtue merely of the fact that they live in the countryside. Yet, for him and Mafeje the concept is not just an abstract category, it has a concrete referent and that the two of them use it in the classical Leninist sense i.e. to mean petty landholders.

As regards the first critique of small producers, Mafeje objects to it by saying there is no evidence to suggest that African agriculturalists are in a worse-off position as a result of lack of access to arable land or because of 'insecurity of tenure under customary tenure regimes' (Mafeje 2003: 5). According to him, evidence suggests that agricultural production in sub-Saharan Africa expanded a great deal in the 1950s and 1960s. Moreover, the first argument does not explain the growth of 'the expanded petty mode of production' in a number of African countries with customary land tenure systems. The second argument is mainly a theoretical construct which has no concrete basis. For example, in the post-independence era, over 90 per cent of rights in land are generated through customary channels. This is the case in spite of the preferred individual land tenure systems by African government and policy advisers. In those countries where individual land tenure was effected, there have been attempts by ordinary citizens to regain corporate rights over land given to individual owners. In Kenya this was taken to unprecedented proportions where residents who were not the original inhabitants were evicted by force. This was the *majimbo* movement mentioned in chapter three. To make matters worse, politicians took advantage of the situation and thus created for themselves conditions to grab land for their own benefit (Kanyinga 1998; Mafeje 2003).

This is an extreme, or even perverted, version of what Mafeje calls 'reversionary rights'. In places such as the Central Province and the Rift Valley in Kenya the situation was different in that landless people elected to occupy land which was previously owned by clans or lineages or simply established organisations, or 'companies', to re-purchase their ancestral land. This goes to show different forms of resistance against 'individualisation' of rights in land. Mafeje (2003: 5) sees these actions not only as forms of vetoing government policies but also as a 'stubborn assertion of African cultural values toward land and its use'. This militates against the view of individual rights in land in Africa and highlights instead the extent of popular resistance to individualisation. Mafeje points out that the mistake made by left-leaning critics has been to assume that commercialisation of agriculture translates to individualisation of production. Yet individualisation is not necessary for commercialisation of agriculture. To see this, one need only take into account the fact that in sub-Saharan Africa commercial agriculture has taken place on family plots. Further, although the educated elites may insist on title deeds, such deeds are for the whole family and not necessarily the educated individuals who seek or insist on them. This is in contrast to the Eurocentric view which assumes that to insist on title deeds entails 'absolute property'. What makes all of this seem possible, and unintelligible to West-centric scholars, is precisely the lineage mode of social organisation in sub-Saharan Africa. This mode of social organisation departs radically from the conventional

western unit known as the 'nuclear family'. What may have changed, Mafeje contends, is manipulation of user-rights not so much the generation of land rights.

In the ex-colonies, land has been allotted in two ways: In the first instances, there is the customary tenure wherein chiefs or heads of lineages distribute land to be used by members within a given local community 'who are invariably bound together by agnatic ties' (Mafeje 2003: 6). It cannot be said that such agnatic ties hold true for every member of the community, but this demonstrates how strong founding lineages are and the way in which land is passed down from generation to generation. While the system is designed along the lines of equity, certain individuals who have been allotted land may still wish to maximise their benefits. In the second instance, land in sub-Sahara, particularly after independence, is allotted through government. With the intention of improving agricultural production, several African governments have sought to modify existing customary systems of tenure. This is done through legislation and administrative measures. Due to the mistaken idea that 'communal ownership' hinders investment in land, several African governments attempted to introduce individual land tenure by granting title deeds to certain plot-holders or leaseholds for up to 99 years in such countries as Kenya, Lesotho, Nigeria and Zambia (Mafeje 2003). Instead, appropriation was left to the 'market forces' following the introduction of individual titles. This strategy was never comprehensive 'because it was limited to government-sponsored consolidation, resettlement, irrigation schemes and a limited number of estate farms that were inherited from departing white settlers' (Mafeje 2003: 6).

In this regard, when sub-Saharan governments speak of 'land reform' they are not referring to redistribution of land. Instead, they refer to 'limited land and technical reforms in selected areas, usually "released" land or public land' (Mafeje 2003: 6). For Mafeje, this vindicates the view that there is no need for land reform in sub-Saharan Africa. Mafeje could not, obviously, have foreseen the extensive 'land grab' – land expropriation and leasing to multinationals (and countries) on the continent in the aftermath of the 2007-2008 global food crisis. This is a phenomenon that occupied Moyo's mind in the period, hence the emerging land question on the continent. Prior to the global food crisis, African governments who attempted to implement land reform were mindful of the fact that they would be met with resistance by 'the custodians and adherents of customary tenure'. As a result, generation of land rights is still up to the people since that is their prerogative. 'This', Mafeje (2003: 6) argues, 'is not found anywhere else in the modern world and might point to alternative modes of social organisation that had been ruled out by Eurocentrics'. Significantly, although the concept of 'communal land tenure' is frequently used, it fails to explain how land rights are 'generated' in sub-Saharan

Africa. Further, it is incapable of making a distinction between different kinds of rights in land. While grazing grounds, firewood trees, etc. are used communally, plots of arable land are not communally shared. They are restricted to certain production units which are represented by 'minimal lineages' – or 'extended families' in popular parlance. Maximum security of tenure depends on cultivation and production, unless the allottees are 'excommunicated by their kin or banished by the territorial authority under whose jurisdiction they fall' (Mafeje 2003: 6–7). But given that this rarely happens, minimal lineages tend to keep their allotted land in perpetuity. What usually happens, instead, is that under conditions of land scarcity allotments may be revised and subdivided among more holders – particularly members of the same family.

Mafeje stresses the view that this is not a 'communal' arrangement since sharing of land takes place 'among those who already have certain common rights in movable or immovable property and are bound together by exclusive ties of mutual obligation' (Mafeje 2003: 7). 'Therefore', Mafeje continues, 'it can be concluded that sub-Saharan African customary tenure rights are vindicated by membership in recognised corporate groups and by continued use of the land by recipient productive units' (Mafeje 2003: 7). It was intimated earlier that there has been a steady introduction of individual land tenure in sub-Saharan countries. What prompted this was a belief on the part of African governments that it would offer a greater security of tenure than customary systems and that it would encourage investment in land. Ironically, this view was supported by left-leaning or Marxist theorists such as Amin (1980) who argue that for agricultural development to take root in Africa, 'private property in land' was a necessary condition. Mafeje objects that this view is premised on European historical experience. Yet, in Asia agricultural revolution occurred without the introduction of private ownership of land. In fact, it was collective production that inaugurated big or large-scale agricultural projects – e.g. irrigation schemes and 'economies of scale' in agriculture in Mesopotamia, Egypt and India. In sub-Saharan Africa it is not yet proven that investment in privately owned land is higher than in equivalent plots held under customary tenure (Mafeje 2003).

In southern Africa the situation is slightly different because there were, in the past, government policies which favoured white farmers and excluded 'subsistent farmers' in the former 'reserves'. Moreover, in southern Africa, collective farming and co-operatives have been given the same support and opportunities among black producers. In Senegal and Zimbabwe, women producers have survived market-based agriculture by working collectively. If black agriculturalists were given institutional or government support to strengthen such initiatives they would be equally successful.

The above discussion indicates that in sub-Saharan Africa rights in land are closely associated with membership of particular descent groups and are governed by customary prescripts even in countries where governments initiated individual land tenure systems. As regards the question of agrarian reform, this leads to some confusion and lack of direction. This may spell conflict between government and small producers. This also points to a negative reflection on the agrarian policies adopted by some African governments. Except for Ethiopia and more recently Zimbabwe, land reform programmes in sub-Saharan Africa were not intended to redistribute land but to improve 'what was thought to be insecurity of tenure under customary tenure' (Mafeje 2003: 8). Thus the said land reform programmes as a result of the impact of colonialism, were strongly linked to individual land tenure. In the post-independence period, African governments attempted to achieve or meet this objective through implementing various schemes (Seidman 1970a). This did not entail eviction or expropriation of cultivators. The said schemes were implemented on vacant land (which was largely considered public land) or even on occupied land with the consent of current occupants who wished to secure title deeds of the plots. This situation obtained in Kenya, for example. In some cases this applied to planters who wanted to secure ownership of their trees by securing rights over the land itself. Moreover, estate farms of colonial settlers who were leaving Africa were sold mainly to privileged individuals through government loans.

While it cannot be argued that promotion of individual land rights in high-density areas, as in southern Malawi, worked against small producers under customary tenure access to productive land, there are very few and far in between individual land tenure systems in African countries. In such countries as Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire and Malawi such tenure systems are less than 20 per cent of the land available in each of these countries (Campbell 1985; Mkandawire 1983). Significantly, 'in spite of the existence of individual titles, surveys carried out as far back as 1986 showed progressive fragmentation of African estates, illegal squatting, labour tenancies, borrowing and lending of private land kinsmen and friends, and sharecropping' (Mafeje 2003: 8). Certain of these transactions are considered illegal in some countries because they thwart or militate against governments' implementation of individual land tenure. In this regard, it can be said that in most cases sub-Saharan governments failed to implement individual land tenure. Generally speaking, it can be said that there are two explanations for this. First, it is quite evident that those who opted for land titles were not necessarily interested in being capitalist farmers in the sense intended by their governments. There were other reasons why this situation obtained. Second, in signing up for individual land tenure they were not

necessarily forsaking their membership of descent groups but were trying to ‘enhance their personal status within the corporate group and in the wider society’ (Mafeje 2003: 8).

The foregoing discussion indicates that in Africa rights in land are closely associated with membership of particular descent groups and are governed by customary prescripts even in countries where governments initiated individual land tenure. As regards the question of agrarian reform, this leads to some confusion and lack of direction. This entails potential conflict between the state and the peasantry. This also points to a negative reflection on the agrarian policies adopted by some African governments. Except for Ethiopia, land reform programmes in sub-Saharan Africa were not intended to redistribute land but to improve ‘what was thought to be insecurity of tenure under customary tenure’ (Mafeje 2003: 8). Thus the said land reform programmes as a result of the impact of colonialism, were strongly linked to individual land tenure. An assessment of government policies, development schemes, technological innovation, marketing and taxation is in order.

6.5 Government Responses to the Agrarian Question

As has been noted, in the post-independence period African governments attempted to achieve or meet their objectives through implementing various schemes (Seidman 1970a). This did not entail eviction or expropriation of cultivators. This was the situation in Kenya (Mafeje 2003). In some cases this applied to planters who wanted to secure ownership of their trees by securing rights over land itself. Moreover, estate farms of colonial settlers were sold mainly to privileged individuals through government loans. ‘Although the individualisation of land rights in high-density areas, such as southern Malawi, deprived small producers under customary tenure access to good land, the extent of individual land tenure itself in African countries is minimal’ (Mafeje 2003: 8). In the 1980s, in countries like Kenya, Cote d’Ivoire and Malawi, such tenure systems were less than 20 per cent of the land available in each of these countries (see Campbell 1985; Mkandawire 1983).

Mafeje argues that most estate farmers in sub-Saharan Africa are ‘absentee farmers’. This is due in part to the fact that they have other career occupations either as civil servants or as politicians who then engage the services of family members or close friends to run their farms. In addition, some estate farmers use their land titles to get loans so that they can finance business ventures which have nothing to do with agriculture. Once they have accumulated some riches, a portion of that would be invested in descent group, community etc. This augments their ‘social capital’ in their communities. In this way, they are guaranteed the services and labour of poor relatives and clients. As discussed in the previous chapter, the elites

become rich not necessarily because they exploit the land 'but rather through its direct control' (Mafeje 2003: 9). In this regard, they are not landlords in any meaningful sense but rather 'big men' who are in turn appreciated and respected by kinsmen and small producers in the villages. This situation does not easily lend itself to class analysis. The same practice is to be found among smaller landowners and 'commercial farmers' albeit on a smaller scale.

The latter two categories, as against estate farmers, generate their revenues through cash-crop production and thus focus on direct exploitation of their land. Once they have accumulated enough revenue from the land they branch off and explore other business initiatives like the estate farmers, the issue of social investment figures prominently in this category. Thus, the question of individual land tenure which was usually propounded by African governments had minimal benefits. In no way did it work better than customary land tenure. One of the most important reasons for this is that 'a significant portion of the value derived from privatisation of land went into circulation and consumption. Thus, by the end of the 1960s, agricultural production in sub-Saharan Africa had reached a plateau, while a few speculators continued to prosper' (Mafeje 2003: 9). Another problem with African land reform programmes is that they encouraged exploitation and parasitism between big and small farmers. What the land reforms failed to do was to 'develop a self-producing class of agricultural capitalists, relying on full-time labour divested of any means of production, as predicated by the classical European model' (Mafeje 2003: 9). The notion of individual land tenure was strongly associated with the introduction of new technologies and technical expertise. As a result, not only did the farmers with title deeds get bank and government loans, but they also got technical advice from government technocrats. In Malawi these farmers were called *achikumbe*, in Zambia and Uganda they were known as 'progressive farmers' while in Tanzania they were known as *kulaks*. In the western region of the latter country they were called, somewhat pejoratively, as 'capitalist farmers'. The same label was stretched to, although without success, Kenya's medium-sized farmers in the late 1970s. The label did not stick since such farmers could not be distinguished from the country's so-called middle-peasants who were nonetheless credited for Kenya's 'success story' (Anyang' Nyong'o 1981a, 1981b; Chege 1981; Cowen 1981; Gutto 1981; Mulaa 1981; Mukaru Ng'ang'a 1981; Njonjo 1981). The volume of production does not necessarily translate to property and production relations hence it proves difficult to label Kenyan 'middle peasants' capitalist farmers.

While these developments advanced agricultural production, it is a question as to whether this translates to technological revolution in agriculture. Mafeje suggests that there does not seem to be any significant difference 'between those African farmers who are on

freehold plots and those who have only usufructuary rights under customary tenure but have enough resources of their own to engage in expanded petty commodity production' (Mafeje 2003: 10). Further, Mafeje goes on to point out that the agricultural crisis in sub-Saharan Africa has been attributed to 'technological stagnation'. Whether valid or not, this supposition calls into question the claim that individual tenure will open much more development opportunities than customary tenure. This view mistakenly led African governments to allocate more resources to private landholders. At the conceptual level, African governments mistook private landholders for 'capitalist farmers' in the classical sense of the term. The socio-economic cost of the measures was the complete neglect of the vast majority of agricultural producers and of food production. This was all in favour of voluminous but ephemeral cash crops. It could also include the production of wage goods for the urban population. While governments are important players in the development process of their respective countries, it is equally critical to note that they do not necessarily have monopoly on innovation and initiative when opportunities are available (at times even in their absence) initiatives and innovation pursued vigorously by small producers and peasants.

According to Mafeje (2003), small producers in sub-Saharan Africa proved to be responsive to capitalist market. This is evidenced by large quantities of maize production in southern Africa and Kenya. Similarly, in Uganda and Tanzania there were cotton growers. Groundnut and rice production in West Africa. Following the long 'agriculture crisis' in sub-Saharan Africa, especially in Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Senegal, small producers abandoned traditional crops and opted for hybrid maize, horticulture, paddy-rice, poultry and dairy farming (Mafeje 2003). The peasants are making all of these adaptations within the context of customary tenure. Individuals involved in these endeavours have basic education and have lived in urban areas as migrant workers. Moreover, they have been able to mobilise kin group resources and labour in order to meet the requirements of changing market conditions. Mafeje argues that under the circumstances, the number of people engaged in these activities is likely to rise in that under customary tenure participation is open to potential participants. In fact, it is in their interest to ensure that participation remains open. This is both possible and desirable because those successful individuals depend on their descent groups or relatives for support and labour. Equally, the principle of customary tenure relies on reciprocity.

What had altered this system was individual tenure which was championed by government in favour of progressive farmers who were meant to rely on hired labour as against family obligations, support and labour. In some cases individual tenure was at any rate rejected by communities who preferred customary tenure. The Luoland region of Kenya is one example

of this (see Anyang' Nyong'o 1981a, 1981b). The government of Ghana encountered the same problem when it tried to protect the rights of migrant workers. This kind of kin or group solidarity among the small producers does not, of course, mean that there is no exploitation from within. Those individuals who have become successful tend to take advantage of the less successful members. Although this is true, the more successful cannot discard the less successful and in order to retain their loyalty the farmers have to 'invest socially' to appease or pacify the latter. Under these circumstances, hunger can be put at bay and the livelihood of the less successful can improve. This is hardly the case in the context of 'modernising' and individual tenure systems which were advocated by governments and policy-makers from the West. Under the system of individualised agricultural production the less fortunate become even worse off and, ironically, this is something that happened in the West as well.

There are several arguments against customary land tenure: (i) the argument is that there generally is 'under-investment' in such a system; (ii) a kin-ship based system such as customary tenure does not yield greater capital and labour returns; and (iii) the argument is that in a system where there is no competition for land, labour and capital there is likely to be an unproductive use of scarce resources. As regards the first argument, there is evidence to suggest that over the past 50 years or more, African cultivators with access to the latest technology have been able to take advantage of, and participate in, the capitalist market (Mafeje 2003). This reached a crescendo in the 1960s. What is germane to the present argument is the fact that much of this success can be attributed to the emergence of what is called the 'middle peasants'. It cannot be attributed to the so-called 'capitalist farmers' who are in any case very few. Further, their technological competence was the same as that of the middle peasants. That notwithstanding, it is argued that African agriculture became technologically stagnant by the end of the 1960s. Yet a study conducted by the FAO and other UN agencies found that:

Land use intensity actually estimated to prevail implies that African agriculture uses land at cropping intensities close to those compatible with the intermediate level of technology of the PSC study... However, the yields actually prevailing are decidedly closer to those of the low technology of PSC study. (Alexandratos in Mafeje 2003: 11)

It can be argued that whatever the problems of agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa may be, they do not reside at the level of existence of individual land tenure or 'technological stagnation'. What is important to note is that the crisis in African agriculture pervades all sizes and descriptions of farmers and their farms. In reality, small farmers fare well compared to capitalist farmers. In

this respect, Mafeje is able to conclude that: ‘Their survival strategies, such as developing parallel markets, bartering agricultural commodities with producers in neighbouring countries, and switching to high-value crops, though on a modest scale, seem to have paid off. Thus, the question of technological innovation or its opposite, technological stagnation, needs to be studied afresh, as does the question of who should “mobilise” whom’ (Mafeje 2003: 11).

It is a known datum that small producers or rural dwellers in sub-Saharan Africa have been oscillating between town and country as migrant labourers and ‘petty cash producers’ who were in one way or another embedded in the capitalist market. The problem, however, has been their structural relationship with their governments. Equally, although the markets grow concurrently with capitalist development the two do not grow or develop evenly everywhere. In sub-Saharan Africa this issue is more acute. As such, in promoting capitalist or commercial farming in the post-independence period, African governments knew very well that they had to provide all the requisite marketing facilities. They opted for marketing boards (Mafeje 2003). This approach promised better coordination and regulation of prices as well as opportunities for generating revenues. The failure on the part of marketing boards was the inability to transcend cash crops such as they were understood or conceived by colonial governments. Capitalist or commercial farmers were also amenable to cash production. The upshot of all this was the failure to grow ‘domestic markets for food crops’ (Mafeje 2003). This led to the neglect of the so-called ‘subsistence farmers’. The long-term effects of this problem were only felt in recent years particularly in the wake of the sub-Saharan agricultural crisis (Amin 2012; Moyo, Jha and Yeros 2013). While the marketing boards were meant to be institutions to facilitate the agricultural markets, they eventually became ‘powerful instruments for extracting surplus’ from small producers under customary tenure and from commercial farmers. This is so to the point that small producers were in some countries taxed ‘as much as 70 per cent of the world market value of their produce’ (Mafeje 2003: 12; Wrigley 1959).

But that would be taking extreme cases to hang a perfectly good idea. Marketing boards were, at inception, intended to protect farmers against the volatility of international commodity prices, and smoothen income for farmers. They reduce the transaction costs that small-producer farmers face. They create economies of scale in providing inputs to farmers. They help ensure product quality for farmers. These are only a few of the things that marketing boards, properly organised, can do and have done. In most countries, the elimination of marketing boards was one of the conditionalities imposed by the Bretton Woods Institutions (World Bank/IMF) under the structural adjustment programme. It is interesting that left arguments of expropriation of farmers by marketing boards was used by the Right wing for enforcing a market-centric regime

for agricultural produces. The result in several countries was a collapse in agricultural output. The issue is about reforming marketing boards – to fulfil their core objectives – not demonising the idea itself.

Due to commercial farmers being ‘well-represented in the government bureaucracy’, they were exempted and could sell their produce ‘on floor shows’. Small and middle producers responded to these policies by ‘withdrawing from the regular market and by engaging in what is officially called “smuggling” or by cutting down production’ (Mafeje 2003: 11). The ‘liberalisation policies’ of the World Bank in the 1980s were of no use (Mkandawire and Soludo 1999). This continues to be an unresolved problem between African governments and the small producers and the former need to be more responsive to the needs of the latter and not the other way round. Further, while the classical peasantry are said to be ‘land-rooted’, the same is not true for the African peasantry. For Mafeje, the African peasantry are usually migrants who deal in petty commodity production, migrant labour and petty trading in agricultural commodities. Yet this is not an idea that travels very well in every part of Africa. In West Africa, for instance, the migrant labour idea is not sustainable. And much of Mafeje’s analysis tend to be biased towards Southern and Eastern Africa. Mafeje argues that the aforementioned issues have largely been written about from a bourgeois neo-liberal perspective. Such views consolidated especially after the collapse of the USSR and Eastern European socialism.

It is for the foregoing reasons that a critique of neo-liberalism becomes even more important. Neoliberal theories and resultant policy proposals have led to disastrous outcomes in sub-Saharan economies generally and the agrarian economies particularly. What exacerbated the problem were structural adjustment programmes whose effects are still being felt to this day. The political and ideological timing of the SAPs is that they came shortly after the adoption of the Lagos Plan of Action which was an acknowledgement on the part of African governments that there was a need for social and political way out of the economic impasse. It was the World Bank which prevailed on African governments by advocating the following:

- (i) intensification and diversification of export production among those farmers who have the necessary resources;
 - (ii) elimination of price controls on agricultural commodities;
 - (iii) removal of government subsidies to farmers of all sizes;
 - (iv) withdrawal of food subsidies by government;
 - (v) cutbacks on social services; and
 - (vi) of all things in an underdeveloped region, withdrawal of the state from production.
- (Mafeje 2003: 13)

One might add the shutting down of marketing boards. These recommendations were not only consistent with the Berg Report (1981) but were also part of the loan conditions of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Noteworthy is the fact that not only were they incompatible with the Lagos Plan of Action but also that they came right after its adoption. Equally important is the fact that the African Council of Ministries in Tripoli in 1981 had rejected the prescriptions of the Berg Report although 34 African governments backtracked and gave in to the demands of the World Bank and the IMF. The SAPs, as is known today, were disastrous and led to high rates of poverty and huge debts on the part of those African countries which adopted the World Bank and the IMF recommendations. The SAPs thus led to what became known as the ‘lost decade’ of the 1980s in Africa (Mkandawire 2016). Well-considered criticisms of the SAPs, which need not be enumerated here, are to be found in the report of the Economic Commission for Africa, titled *African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation* (ECA 1989) and then, a decade later, in the collection of essays titled *Our Continent, Our Future* (Mkandawire and Soludo 1999). While the latter collection marked a radical break with the neo-liberal paradigm of the ‘Washington Consensus’, it did not give a clear direction on the agrarian question which is said to be the cornerstone of African economies.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter forms the first of two chapters on the land and agrarian question in Mafeje’s work. This is an important aspects of Mafeje’s body of work and the chapter addressed it as follows: First, the chapter placed the problem of agriculture in its intellectual setting. Second, it grappled with the evolution of the agrarian question and the land question in Africa through the case study of Buganda. Third, it addressed the agricultural crisis in Africa and its causes. Fourth, it dealt with the dynamics of land tenure systems on the African continent. Finally, it dealt with how African governments have responded to the agrarian question in the post-independence period. It is the object of the following chapter to discuss Mafeje’s attempt at finding answers to the agrarian question. Specifically, the next chapter discusses the role of small producers in dealing with the question of food production and food for security in sub-Saharan Africa.

Chapter Seven

Small Producers, Food Production/Security and Poverty Eradication in sub-Saharan Africa

7.0 Introduction

Mafeje treats the socio-historical category peasant with all the seriousness it deserves and has dedicated to it several studies which ought to be of interest to students of peasant and agrarian studies (Mafeje 1963a, 1968, 1985a, 1991b, 1993b, 2003). According to him, the category of peasants in sub-Saharan Africa is not as self-evident as some analysts believe. Hence most of the time he uses the concept of small producers. For him, before anything at all can be said about peasants in Africa, one needs to examine whether such a category exists in the first place. Also, theoretically, one needs to make a distinction between peasants and peasant organisations (Mafeje 1993b). Linked to the question of small producers or peasants is the question of food production and food security. Food security and poverty eradication issues are as central to Mafeje's study of the land question as the study of land tenure itself. In particular, the question of land and agriculture centres on what people ought to do with the land. It is for this reason that food security issues and agriculture are central to his work. This chapter discusses the role of the peasants/small producers, the question of food production/security, prospects for agrarian reform and the question of poverty eradication.

7.1 Small Producers/Peasants in sub-Saharan Africa

Mafeje (1993b) argues that the social/historical category of peasants is not as self-evident as is often assumed. In other words, given the history of sub-Saharan Africa one cannot use the category without some qualification. Over and above that, the on-going agricultural crisis in Africa, and the acknowledged role of small producers in agricultural development and poverty eradication in rural areas, necessitates that African scholars be clear as to whom they refer when they speak of 'small producers' and 'whether or not they are by definition "peasants"' (Mafeje 1993b: 14). This raises theoretical and empirical questions. Such questions have implications for 'social mobilisation and strategies for future development'. For Mafeje, in order for one to speak meaningfully about the peasants there are methodological conditions which ought to be met. One has to theorise the concept/category in relation to the state and in history. To speak of their role in social development one has to systematise 'the dividing principles between different spheres of activity in which peasants feature as such or as members

of given solidarity groups in different agrarian social settings' (Mafeje 1993b: 14). One ought also to review the few specific studies on the subject in different parts of the continent.

Writing in the early 1990s, Mafeje (1993b: 15) argued that: 'In the last 15-20 years a fair amount of work has been done on the African peasantry, be it in a limited number of countries such as South Africa, Tanzania, Kenya, the Sudan, Ethiopia, more recently, Nigeria and Uganda'. In the South African context this includes the works of historians and anthropologists such as Bundy (1979), Denoon (1972), Marks (1970), Morris (1976), Murray (1983, 1984) and Wilson (1971). In Tanzania these include Coulson (1975), D Feldman (1970a, 1970b), R Feldman (1971), Hydén (1976, 1980a, 1980b). In Kenya: Anyang' Nyong'o (1981a, 1981b), Chege (1981), Cowen (1981), Gutto (1981), Mula (1981), Mukaru Ng'ang'a (1981), and Njonjo (1981). In Nigeria: Beer (1976), Beer and Williams (1975), Wallace (1980, 1981) and Williams (1976, 1981, 1985a, 1985b). Mamdani (1987) has written 'pioneering' work on the peasantry in Uganda.

Notwithstanding his aforementioned proposal to review existing work on peasant studies in Africa, Mafeje immediately adds the proviso that there is 'no great tradition of peasant studies in sub-Saharan Africa' (Mafeje 1993b: 14). Rahmato (1993: 23) concurs: 'I agree with Mafeje that the tradition of peasant studies in Africa is woefully underdeveloped, but that, it seems to me, is mainly because of the failings of African social scientists'. Moyo argues that not only has there been paucity of peasant studies, but also that dominant urban-biased research perspectives tend to minimise the role of the peasantry (Moyo 2002). As a start, Mafeje states that a distinction ought to be made between 'peasant organisation' and 'peasant organisations'. The former refers to a generic mode of existence, production and organisation associated with peasants while the latter connotes organisations or social groups formed by the peasants. In classical theory, the growth of peasant societies is associated with the incorporation of a society that was previously autonomous but transformed into a centralised state which is dominated by classes other than the peasantry. It should be noted, however, that unlike serfs or slaves, peasants are an independent category of producers who are generally subject to an impersonal political authority i.e. the state rather than a master, as would be the case with slaves or serfs. Another important point to note is that peasant organisations (associations formed by and involving peasants) occur in specific agrarian settings and do not necessarily constitute a peasant society.

Mafeje argues that the resurgence of 'peasant studies', particularly in Asia and Latin-America, in the late 1960s coincided with the demise of 'modernisation theories', the failure of bourgeois development strategies in less developed countries and the rise of the

'dependency' school (Mafeje 1985b). Prior to the rise of peasant studies, conventional social science set a great deal of store by the 'modern sector' in African society which was supposedly the only sector with potential for economic growth. By the late 1960s and early 1970s it became clear that this view headed in the wrong direction. What became apparent, Mafeje argues, is that the over-emphasis on the 'modern sector', or the formal sector, acted neither as a catalyst nor promoted development. Instead, the modern sector was so unevenly integrated with the imperialist economies that it created under-development in the 'backward' or 'informal' sectors of the African economies. The urban or formal sector in the African economy is too small to cater or compensate for small producers in the rural or informal sector. In this regard, the question of the role of the small producers/peasantry immediately arises.

Since economists were concerned with development and growth in the modern sector, sociologists with the notion of urbanisation, and political scientists with nation-building, social anthropologists were still grappling with the notion of 'tribes' in the rural areas. In spite of their studies of the rural areas, anthropologists treated 'tribesmen' and 'peasants' as categories apart (Mafeje 1985b). In doing so, they focused on the former and omitted the latter. Mafeje argues that this was not only justified but also 'perfectly logical'. This is so because, in order for one to conduct studies on 'peasants' in sub-Saharan Africa, one ought first to establish whether or not subsistence or small producers in this region were to be known as 'peasants' in the first place. In order for such studies to be conducted, one ought also to study the 'objective nature of the African social formations' (Mafeje 1985b: 28). Epistemologically, Mafeje argues, one needs to study the 'state of the arts in the social sciences'. As regards the study of African social formations, Mafeje argues that one cannot make universal claims or statements about Africa particularly if such claims are based on experiences from elsewhere. He goes on to argue, following Redfield (1953), that by the 19th century there emerged a peasantry in the West African sub-region. According Redfield, the growth of the markets in West Africa during that period meant that there were peasants who supplied the markets with agricultural produce. To be sure, the traditional markets of West Africa depended on local agricultural produce.

According to Mafeje, Redfield's study, published in 1953, was never taken seriously although he was vindicated about a decade later by Bohannan and Dalton's study of the same region – *Markets in Africa* (1962). The latter study was well-received by anthropologists although it did not necessarily inaugurate the sub-field of peasant studies in Africa. What it did, Mafeje (1985b: 29) observes, was that 'it helped to clarify the terms of comparison between self-contained, non-monetary, primitive economies and those economies which were governed by the market principle or exchange'. He argues that for theorists of 'social change'

this meant a significant shift towards ‘modernisation’. An important point to note is that ‘social change’ was understood as transformation of tribal societies as a result of colonialism or western ‘civilisation’. This did not necessarily entail a transformation of peasant societies. South Africa was also another part of sub-Saharan Africa which social scientists studied in their search for peasants. In the South African context, the rise of peasants was closely associated with colonialism. HM Robertson, an economic historian, studied the rise of South African peasantry and produced a paper titled ‘150 Years of Economic Contact between Black and White’ (1935).

Like Redfield’s study of West Africa, Robertson’s study of South African peasants was ignored. It was in 1971 that the liberal anthropologist Monica Wilson revisited the rise of the peasantry in South Africa (Wilson 1971). Wilson linked the emergence of the peasantry in South Africa more to missionaries and less so on colonialism. It is a question, of course, as to whether or not missionaries were not part of the colonial enterprise. In the book *Oxford History of South Africa*, Wilson (1971: 49) states that: ‘Peasant communities, in the sense in which the term is used in the book, began in 1738 with the foundation of the first mission station in South Africa’. She continues: ‘Families were urged to settle; the hunters were pressed to become herders; the herders were taught to cultivate; the cultivators were taught to use a plough and irrigate, and all came into much closer relationship with the outside world’ (Wilson 1971: 50). In other words, the peasantry of South Africa did not develop organically but were, for lack of a better word, ‘created’ by colonialists and missionaries. Mafeje (1985b: 29) argues that, prior to the studies mentioned above, ‘the approach to the peasant question was generally cultural’. The values and cultures of African people were stripped of their content and reduced to caricature as a result of European ‘civilising’ mission.

At all times, this entailed an ‘expansive capitalist mode of production’ which was considered by colonialists not only valid but also justified and desirable. As mentioned above, systematic peasant studies in sub-Saharan Africa emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s. In an essay titled ‘African Peasantries’ (1971), Saul and Woods attempted to give an overview of the peasantries in Africa. In the essay, they argue that ‘despite the existence of some prefigurings of a peasant class in earlier periods, it is more fruitful to view... the creation of an African peasantry... as being primarily the result of the international capitalist economic system and traditional socio-economic systems’ (Saul and Woods 1971: 106). In the second instance the two authors, deploying the criterion of a household economy, argue that there is no point in distinguishing between African agriculturalists and pastoralists. At the political level, the authors argue, both groups are subject to the very same higher authority. The problem,

however, is that Saul and Woods are unable to grapple with the dynamics of land tenure in Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa, as noted in the previous chapter, is characterised by lineage land tenure systems. Or what is called, in popular parlance, 'communal land tenure'. This land tenure system continues in spite of capitalism.

Saul and Woods speak casually about 'certain rights in land'. But they do not explain or define the phrase. Post (1977: 242, emphasis in original) attempted to address the question of 'property versus usufruct rights' in land in Africa by arguing that 'in both the pre-colonial and colonial periods it would seem that, from the point of view of the individual, land *use* rights must be treated as more important than property rights'. Although this is a fairly theoretically sophisticated formulation, in trying to determine 'threshold between the communal cultivator and the peasant', Post 'might have created opposed categories where none existed' (Mafeje 1985b: 30). Mafeje argues that the tie that binds the studies by Post (1977) and Saul and Woods (1971), respectively, is that both of them 'represented a conscious focus on class analysis'. Further than that, they sought to evaluate the impact of western capitalism on African societies. In contrast to the liberal study by Wilson (1971), with its emphasis on culture, these studies emphasised structural analysis. Yet Wilson and the Marxists (Post, Saul and Woods), are in agreement that the markets play a determinate role and that there exists political subjugation of the peasantry.

Mafeje is quick to point out that points of convergence and divergence between these authors is not characteristic of the usual division between scholars of liberal and Marxist persuasion. This is so because when peasant studies gained currency in Africa, most scholars (liberals and Marxists alike) 'espoused "political economy" almost as a fad' (Mafeje 1985b: 31). As indicated earlier, South Africa was one of the first countries to be under the spotlight in peasant studies (see Bundy 1979; Trapido 1972; Wilson 1971; Wolpe 1979). These studies were historical in character with political economy being the object of investigation. The studies focus mainly on the 19th and early 20th century, respectively. Through their studies on the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, both Boer Republics, and the Cape and Natal, two British colonies, it was discovered that the black peasantry emerged around the mid-19th century. In the Boer Republics, the black peasantry emerged from squatters and sharecroppers who were on 'white-owned' land. This arrangement meant that white 'landowners' had supply of labour while black small producers were producing for the market and were under the authority of the white state, they were denied property rights in land.

Although some producers were able to generate enough income or revenue from this arrangement, a good majority of them resorted to working on different farms or simply

migrated to towns during off season for employment so that they can supplement their meagre income from agriculture. In the British colonies of Natal and the Cape, 'participation in a market economy got associated with missionary establishments and colonial imposition of taxes of all sorts' (Mafeje 1985b: 31). Bundy (1979) points out, however, that the rise of peasants was not limited to mission stations. Peasant production was prevalent even among those who were not Christians. What seems to matter is the introduction of a market economy, tax imposition and the demand for industrial goods. This would have been much more pronounced among Christian converts since they were compelled by missionaries to participate in the market economy. Post (1977) impresses the view that this was not dependent on property rights in land because access to 'communal' land, tenancies and sharecropping on white farms was enough. It should be noted that what created the impression that the black producers had property rights in land was the fact that they were paying quitrent to the state (Mafeje 1981).

The quitrent system and the non-freehold system of tenure in the black reserves made the status of black subsistence producers even more 'ambiguous'. Mafeje believes that South African peasant studies have not paid sufficient attention to the question of property rights, or lack thereof, among black producers. For him, the tendency has been to write about the peasant mode of production as cash crop production for the market, the use of new production techniques and the use of family labour. This highlights the fact that the premium was on usufruct rather than property rights in Africa. Mafeje believes that this presents a theoretical conundrum in that while this 'might be empirically justified, it detracts in no mean way from the classical definition of "peasants". A peasant mode of production which is not founded on petty bourgeois rights in land is unknown to classical theory' (Mafeje 1985b: 32). In Tanzania, specifically through *Ujamaa* policies, scholars set out to understand the role of the small producers in the development of the country (Coulson 1975, 1981; D Feldman 1970a, 1970b; R Feldman 1971; Hydén 1978, 1980a, 1980b). The question as to whether there were peasants in Tanzania in the first place was never addressed. It was taken for granted that small producers were 'peasants'. Small producers in Tanzania were linked to an external market and they were taxed and subject to state authority. They never owned land, although their access to it was determined by the customary land tenure system.

The customary land tenure system continued in Tanzania even after land had been nationalised. As in colonial South Africa, individual families treated allotted land as if it were their property i.e. as if they owned it. The system in Tanzania was such that there was no limit to the amount of land that each family could cultivate. Thus financially endowed families could grab more land for themselves. The Tanzania government sought to put an end to this by

banning hired labour. These measures could not, however, prevent the emergence of the so-called capitalist farmers or the *kulaks*. Ownership of land or of the means of production was not the issue, since none owned the land but simply used it. The issue, instead, turned on the instruments of production. Insofar as that is the case, the category of ‘peasants’, ‘capitalist’ farmers or *kulaks* was, Mafeje insists, arbitrary or ideological. Mafeje does not deny the fact that there were significant differences in income levels in Tanzania. The point being made, however, is that neither size of income nor instruments of production constitute a class. The concept of class turns on ownership of property and means of production.

Among Kenyan scholars there arose similar theoretical problems which culminated in a debate in the pages of the *Review of African Political Economy* (Chege 1981; Cowen 1981; Gutto 1981; Anyang’ Nyong’o 1981a, 1981b; Mulaa 1981; Mukaru Ng’ang’a 1981; Njonjo 1981). Although Kenyan scholars agreed that there developed capitalism within agriculture in Kenya, there was no agreement on the question as to whether this entailed existence of classes – *viz.* ‘an indigenous rural, bourgeoisie, a rural proletariat, and an independent peasantry’ (Mafeje 1985b: 32–33). As regards property relations, it was agreed that ‘the introduction of individual land tenure under the 1-million acre scheme and the transfer of the white highlands estate farms to Africans after Independence established private property in land’ (Mafeje 1985b: 33). Yet ownership of land in and of itself does not necessarily mean there exists an African rural bourgeoisie in Kenya. In order for the bourgeoisie to realise itself, the essential condition of ownership of capital was necessary.

This was not available to landowners in Kenya as it was denied to them by multinational corporations which controlled agricultural capital. Thus production relations were seen as between international corporations and local labour, primarily, and not between Kenyan landowners and rural workers. Part of what this meant was that rural workers were proletarianised although there was no development of an agricultural capitalist class. In this regard, Kenya was similar to South Africa wherein displaced black people were turned into cheap labour as part of the settler agricultural economy. This was due to private property in land. Not only did this mean landlessness, but also it meant that those who were economically weak became small holders and therefore even weaker. Mafeje argues that there is in Kenya a class of small private landowners who can be categorised as ‘peasants’ in the classical sense of the term. These landowners have been called, variously, ‘middle’ or ‘small’ peasants, ‘rich’ or ‘poor’ peasants. This depended on the size of the units of operation. The main problem, as in other places, is that of production relations. Apart from family labour, rich peasants depend on hired labour. In this sense, the extraction of surplus value from hired labour means that there

are capitalist relations. Poor peasants who sell their labour power either in towns or plantations in order to supplement their income, are akin to the 'propertyless proletariat'. In this sense they have no independent economic status. But rather, they are directly exploited by capital. Mafeje argues that the Kenyan peasantry was either in the process of proletarianisation or getting transformed into *kulaks* who were employing labour.

While Post (1977) and Hill (1968; 1970), respectively, 'credit individual development and private appropriation under the communal land tenure system', Amin (1972, 1977) and Coquery-Vidrovitch (1977) each independently trace lack of progress in African agriculture to absence of private property in land. Mafeje argues that this view is shared by liberal and Marxist Eurocentric scholars alike. The claim made by Amin and Coquery-Vidrovitch is not entirely accurate because lack of formal or juridical rights in land has never prevented accumulation once individual families use land in a sustained way. Further, under the customary system, security of tenure was not guaranteed legally but socially. There is no evidence to suggest that families were evicted as a result of absence or legal rights to land. Families were usually excommunicated on political grounds e.g. disloyalty to the king or chiefs. Thus, the idea that customary land tenure gives rise to insecurity is not historically founded. African families have always held their allotted plots perpetually as long as there was sustained use of land. For Mafeje (1985b), the materialist point of view dictates that it is use which gives value to property and vice versa.

Contrary to Amin and Coquery-Vidrovitch, the Asia experience shows that communal or customary ownership and production actually led to an agricultural revolution and signalled great civilisations (Mafeje 1985b). Also, should there be an African peasantry, then it exists notwithstanding lack of property rights in land. Under the social conditions discussed, the African societies do not easily lend themselves to neat class categorisations. Mafeje argues that the liberal theorists tend to deploy stratification theories and use income differences, land holdings and farm equipment as indices. Marxists, on the other hand, propound theories about alliances between peasants and workers. Yet these refer to two entirely different things. What the liberals deploy concerns social stratification among agrarian elements. What the Marxists do here concerns political alliance. Mafeje (1985b 36) elaborates: 'True enough, on the ground it has proved too difficult to say who is a peasant and who is a worker in Africa. But there is a noticeable ideological inclination on the part of the majority of Marxists who are concerned with this problem to derive as many proletarians out of the so-called peasants as possible on largely mechanistic grounds. In some cases this verges on crude proletariat Messianism.' Yet

a deeper sociological appreciation of African societies would not lead theorists to contrive class categories where none exist. Mafeje goes on to make the following observation:

Small rural producers in Africa are linked to the urban workers through labour migration, whilst a great number of urban workers still protect their usufruct rights in the countryside through their rural kinsmen. Historically, both have never known property rights in land. Whether in the countryside or in town both are subject to exploitation by international capital. This would imply involvement in identical production relations. This is only partially true for whereas the urban worker depends entirely on wages for the social reproduction of his labour, the migrant worker depends partly on the labour of his family for the social reproduction of his labour. (Mafeje 1985b: 36)

The question that arises is whether the African small producers are proletariat living in the countryside or industrialised peasantry. Mafeje insists that they are both. What is important to note is that both have a rural referent. By the same token, both notions of 'industrialised' and 'proletariat' 'have worker or urban connotations'. This, Mafeje (1985b: 36) argues, connotes 'both continuity and ambiguity – peasant-worker'. This ambiguity occurs at the level of social reproduction of labour rather than at the level of property relations. The migrant worker traverses both ends of the spectrum. As against permanent labour, the mode of existence of the migrant worker is inconsistent. If the market economy in Africa created the peasantry then it equally destroyed them through the demand for cheap labour. Having been stripped of their land, Africans became itinerant wage earners – especially in southern Africa. Mafeje goes on to argue that because African economies are largely agrarian, there will be people whose mode of existence is agricultural production. Thus Mafeje concludes that it will be difficult to tell what form the agrarian revolution will take in different African countries. What is important to note is that the introduction of capitalism in Africa has not led to a capitalist agricultural revolution save for South Africa and Zimbabwe – particularly in sectors controlled by white settler farmers. Moreover, the food crisis in Africa must be viewed as a failure of current agricultural systems. The following section is devoted to the agrarian question, food production and food security issues.

7.2 The Agrarian Question, Food Production and Food Security Issues

One of the major peace and security conditions in any country or region is food security (Dhliwayo 1988; Faber and Tims 1988; Mafeje 1987b, 1988a; Morapedi 1988; Prah 1988;

Rukuni and Eicher 1988; Sikhondze 1988; Sipula 1988; Swallow and Boris 1988; Tola 1988). 'A spectre is haunting the world – the spectre of a new agrarian question. There is no country today that can ensure the food security of its people into the future; no major investor that has not bet on agriculture and natural resources; no international organisation that is not concerned with its consequences; and no serious social or political movement that is not considering the peasant path as a modern solution to the multiple crises of our times, the economic, climate, energy and food' (Moyo, Jha and Yeros 2013: 94). In the southern African region, this has been the case for over three decades. Food security had been deteriorating since the 1970s (Mafeje 1987b). This is due to a combination of natural and social factors. Moreover, since the 1970s and 1980s, Africa has proved to have some of the highest population growth rates in the world (Mafeje and Radwan 1995). The main problem being that this occurred, and continues to occur, at a time when economic crisis was most severe. Politically, it does not help that African countries have been lethargic on the question of regional cooperation or integration. Yet such an undertaking would go a long way in improving not only Africa's negotiating position against western countries but it would improve the lives of the African people. The problem appears to be the inability on the part of individual countries to strike a balance between national interests and regional interests. Mafeje explains:

To match such external policies and attitudes, it is essential that SADCC develop regional strategies and a common negotiating position. Notwithstanding considerable a priori benefits, regional cooperation is not always easy in practice. It requires complex negotiations and the striking of a delicate balance between conflicting regional and national interests. The conflict usually revolves around the problem of the equitable distribution of costs and benefits in joint undertakings. Many past attempts at regional cooperation have foundered on this obstacle. For example, it was a conflict of interest over the distribution of net benefits that led to the breakdown of the East African Community in 1970. (Mafeje 1987b: 205)

Having pointed out the objective conditions facing the sub-Saharan region, Mafeje wants to start from the beginning and address epistemological and methodological issues so as to understand the African continent.

Mafeje argues that in studying Africa, one ought to keep two perspectives in mind: 'the broad' and 'the local'. He states that in the past, there have been two tendencies in studying Africa. There was the liberal empiricist tradition of the British and Americans, and there was

the Marxist tradition pursued mainly by the French historians and sociologists (Mafeje 1988a). According to Mafeje, the liberal empiricists focused primarily on the English-speaking southern, eastern and West African countries. Among the liberal empiricists the social anthropologists were concerned to study 'tribes' in what were particularistic studies. Agricultural economists among them, while not affected by particularism, gravitated towards regional studies and less so on tribes. What held anthropologists and agricultural economists together, however, were generalisations about Africa. They were, Mafeje (1988a: 92) argues, 'guilty of generalisations by extrapolation'.

The above notwithstanding, theoretically and methodologically, they espoused a comparative method which was, paradoxically, meant to guard against individual bias and over generalisation in the manner of nomothetic propositions. What the method does is to lead to what has been called 'taxonomic categorisations' (Mafeje 1988a). The tighter the taxonomic categorisations become, the more they become static. When that happens, they are incapable of accounting for dynamic processes. For example, in anthropological literature 'tribes' were frozen and categorised as pristine notwithstanding the fact that African societies were dealt a blow by colonialism. By the same token, agricultural economists espoused the notion of 'communal' land tenure systems in Africa, which were said to be a drawback on development, in spite of the fact that colonial capitalism had an impact on African societies. The classification of African land tenure systems as 'communal' was premised on a comparison with 'the European model of individual land tenure' (Mafeje 1988a: 93). The Marxists like Amin, Coquery-Vidrovitch and Meillassoux, on the other hand, sought to unearth thematic issues which could in turn generate theory (Amin 1972, 1977; Bundy 1979). In this endeavour, they were inclined towards those western and central African countries which were colonised by the French. Their mistake, argues Mafeje, is that they fell into the same trap of generalising by extrapolation about 'black Africa' (Amin 1972, 1977; Coquery-Vidrovitch 1977; Meillassoux 1973; Rey 1975). The Marxists maintained, for example, that the rise of African kingdoms was traceable to long-distance trade. In the 1970s and 1980s this line of thought still held sway as evidenced by the works of Amin (1972, 1977, 1980) and Coquery-Vidrovitch (1977). Yet the history and ethnography of the interlacustrine kingdoms and southern Africa seem to suggest otherwise (Mafeje 1988a, 1991a). Charitably, however, Amin has come to hold what Mafeje calls a 'more differentiated view' of black Africa which he (Amin) divides into four socio-historical zones: 'colonial economy', 'concessionaries', 'labour reserves' and 'pseudo-feudal systems' (Amin 1972, 1977).

What Mafeje considers to be the ‘greatest contribution’ to African Marxist studies is the importance of lineage organisation even in areas with tributary formations. This is a view shared both by Meillassoux (1973) and Coquery-Vidrovitch (1977). One thing that distinguishes this idea, or what makes it a *sui generis* contribution, is that it is informed by concrete African socio-historical realities and it is not derivative with an over-reliance on European analogies and textbook knowledge. Mafeje argues that in agrarian studies ‘classical concepts such as “feudalism”, “tribalism”, “capitalism”, “Prussian path”, “peasants”, “communal land tenure”, etc., etc. are used uncritically’ (Mafeje 1988a: 94). Yet to subject to critical scrutiny these inherited concepts might throw into relief some of the specificities of the African agrarian question. In doing so, African social scientists stand to make a lasting contribution to the agrarian question. Particular reference has to be paid to small producers since they are the ‘foundation of African agrarian social formations’ (Mafeje 1988a). In this regard, Mafeje counsels that African scholars have to ‘go back to the roots’ and not limit themselves to inherited classical texts. Mafeje is not simply making political and ideological statements. Instead, he seeks to make a contribution to theory via an epistemological break. For this to be realised, one has to be informed by the ‘specificity of African local history’. This need not invoke the binary between universalism and particularism. At the very base, Mafeje is advocating self-knowledge. In this regard, “local” need not be equated with parochialism’.

Mafeje concedes that, although negative, colonialism forms part of African history. Thus in order for Africans fully to transcend its negations, and be fully liberated, they ought to ‘abandon colonial modes of thinking and doing’ (Mafeje 1988a). For him, the fundamental contradiction between decolonisation and neo-colonialism turns primarily on this issue. In agriculture, colonialism found expression in the binary between export crops and subsistence crops. What this meant was that African economies had to cater to the needs of the industrialised countries as suppliers of primary agricultural communities. Secondly, the subsistence needs of the Africans faded to the background. The monetary language adopted, cash versus subsistence crops, to rationalise this practice does not hold in that in a monetised economy all crops are *ipso facto* cash crops. In structural and functional terms, the main difference is at the level of ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ sector. It should be noted that insofar as the modern appropriates and subverts the traditional sector, this is a dialectical process as against a ‘dual economy’. The so-called modern sector ‘appropriated the best soils, the best labour and received the best technical inputs, services and scientific support from the colonial governments at the expense of the traditional sector’ (Mafeje 1988a: 95). This was done for the purpose of benefitting the metropolitan countries. Simply put, while the local modern sector

benefitted by under-developing the traditional sector, the former was itself being under-developed by colonialists and imperialists.

This meant that the local modern sector could not reproduce itself, at least not progressively, to transform the agricultural economy 'into its own image'. This whole process has irreparably damaged national food production and security. This is a historical reality which led to food crisis in Africa. The food crisis, according to Mafeje, is usually treated as a recent and unexpected problem notwithstanding the aforementioned historical antecedents. As noted in the previous chapter, African governments, in spite of these colonial distortions, have added to the crisis by continuing with colonial policies. In this sense, they 'instituted colonialism in their own countries' (Mafeje 1988a: 96). They worsened the problem by seeking to accumulate wealth way before they learnt how to produce it. Waste of resources is accompanied by 'super-exploitation' of primary producers. Logically and historically, this has to be so in that unlike the bourgeoisie in Europe, the African petit-bourgeoisie has no viable economic or political project. Nor do they have an alternate source of wealth in the form of colonies, as is the case with their European counterparts.

The response from small producers has been to withdraw themselves once they are disillusioned. Although it has been noted that the problem of agricultural food crisis in Africa is traceable to colonial structures and neo-colonial policies adopted by African governments, there are varying degrees to the 'impoverishing dialectic'. They vary from region to region. For example, 'West Africa never had the white settler problem, whereas southern Africa is the epitome of precisely that' (Mafeje 1988a: 97). It remains the case, of course, that both areas have the 'modern'/'traditional' sector contradiction, the fundamental difference is that in West Africa the indigenous population always had effective occupation of the land unlike southern Africa. According to Mafeje, the remainder of the problem is not race but class with clan and lineage affiliations being mediating factors.

Mafeje's primary focus, however, is southern Africa with the hope of explaining the main difference between settler economies and the colonial mode of production in Africa more broadly. But, in speaking of southern Africa, Mafeje is not only referring to the region in geographical and political terms, he also uses socio-historical indices which are characteristic of the region. The most enduring legacy of southern Africa is the alienation of land to the white settler population and thus divesting the African people of their means of production. This was the surest way of making black people available to white capital as labour. This made logical sense to the white settler. Mafeje (1988a) argues that in spite of the logic of this colonial strategy, southern Africa 'ended up with a schizophrenic situation'. For white settlers, land

distribution was organised along capitalist lines with laws that accepted only individual land tenure. Conversely, the African migrant worker maintained the customary land tenure with the service of lineages and the guardianship of chiefs.

This social 'schizophrenia', as Mafeje puts it, found expression in the labour process as well. This is so because white 'landowners' with estates measured in 100s up to 1000s of acres, assumed the role of feudal lords as against capitalists and, in turn, treated black workers as bonded labour which was paid in kind. This was in the form of rations and squatting rights. In exchange, black workers supplied labour which was in fact available for 24 hours a day and meant that such labour extended to family members of the black worker. What would strike some readers as rather odd is the fact that Mafeje sees this situation as 'schizophrenic'. The implication of such a concept is that this situation was anomalous and therefore something apart from the logic of conquest and colonialism. All the 'schizophrenic' examples he enumerates seem consistent with the logic of colonial dispossession. The South African Masters and Servants Act of 1845, along with the *Tangatha* system in Malawi, held that 'bonded workers had no right to withdraw from the contract' (Mafeje 1988a: 99).

These were slave-like conditions. What is puzzling, however, is Mafeje's characterisation. The idea that this was a 'schizophrenic' situation, as if it were a by-product rather than the primary motivating factor, gives the impression that the colonialists could/should have been much more benevolent or conciliatory than they were. Mafeje goes on to argue that partly as a result of these issues, the South African agriculture remained backward until the 1930s. This was the time when it had to be modified as a result of government's policies which had been biased to Afrikaner farmers. Further, this was the period when the effects of the Great Depression were still felt so acutely and poor white farmers were flocking the cities for greener pastures. In doing so, they compounded the problem of unemployment – something which became known as the 'problem of poor whites'. In the case of Malawi, white estate farmers were slacking until the 1960s, just after independence, when Banda's government threatened them with eviction if they did not improve. It is a question as to why the government only issued a threat instead of expropriating what were 'backward' farms and give them to black people. In Rhodesia and some parts of Natal and the Western Cape in South Africa were fairly successful through cheap black labour of course. In Swaziland farms remained idle in spite of the fact that black small producers were begging to cultivate the land.

The 'racially-inspired stereotype' (as Mafeje puts it) which gained currency a long time ago, was that black people have always engaged in 'primitive agriculture for subsistence'. Yet evidence points to the contrary. By the mid-19th century black people throughout southern

Africa had demonstrated that they are capable of innovation in agriculture just as the white farmers (Wilson 1971). In fact, by 1840 they had begun to use 'the European plough' and maize had become a staple crop. Those who were successful among them had also adopted 'the iron planter, the mechanical weeder and the harrow' (Mafeje 1988a: 100). They had also without exception started using manure. In this way, the black small producers became attractive to exploitative white landlords who turned them into labour-tenants/sharecroppers, particularly in such places as the Orange Free State, the Transvaal and the northern part of Natal. At all times, the black share-croppers were expected to bring their own tools, oxen and seeds. This was a practice known as 'farming on the half' or 'kaffir farming' by racist white farmers and landlords who wanted black people to be reduced merely to farm labour and, in turn, for whites to be labour-employing capitalists. This practice was halted by the 1913 Land Act. Mafeje (1988a: 100) observes that 'it took the 1913 Land Act to stifle any further development of the share-cropping system and labour-tenancies. Otherwise, both land-hungry blacks and workshy whites found it convenient'. What is important to note is that 'between 1860 and 1900, the Africans, barring the Western Cape sheep and fruit farmers and the sugar plantations in Natal, were the most dynamic agricultural producers in South Africa' (Mafeje 1988a: 100). Bundy (1979), Denoon (1972) and Trapido (1978), each independently, argue that during that period, throughout South Africa, the volume of food production by black small producers was much higher than that of white farmers. In fact, in Natal white farmers depended on black people for their food (Bundy 1979).

Agricultural production of the black small producers fell after 1913 when black people were not allowed, by law, to buy or own land. They were also not allowed to share-crop with white landowners. In general, these measures were extra-economic and the point was to cheapen black labour in order to benefit white employers and to protect uncompetitive white farmers. White farmers, who were protected by law, particularly in the two Boer Republics and Northern Natal, 'complained that they could not compete with the "kaffirs" who relied on their extended families rather than employed labour' (Mafeje 1988a: 101). This experience is not unique to South Africa. The same happened in Rhodesia wherein African Purchase Areas black farmers were quite competitive. The same is true of black farmers in post-independence Malawi. To be sure, 'in the latter they accounted for what is considered to be one of the four success stories in Africa (the other three being Kenya, Ivory Coast and Cameroun)' (Mafeje 1988a: 101). This historical detail goes a long way and can be of great significance in current South African narratives on land expropriation where, in everyday conversation, proponents of the same are typically asked: 'what are you going to do with the land once you get it?' Or,

‘black people will need to be trained on how to farm’. The most important lesson from the foregoing discussion is that the successes or failures of black people in agriculture and in food production must be understood in the historical context of the ‘objective conditions’ which shaped their lives. Other constraints to black agriculture included overcrowding in the Native Reserves, absolute poverty and state neglect, outdated production techniques and unfavourable physical and ecological conditions (Mafeje 1988a).

What is less talked about is the cost of labour and its social reproduction. Labour migration to urban areas among black people is, according Mafeje, an index of poverty. It also marks diminishing returns on agriculture. This was the whole point of the social design of colonialism – to disable the social fabric and economic architecture in the rural areas so that black people are forced to sell their labour to the demands of capital in urban areas. The inescapable problem with such a system is that colonial capital was not prepared ‘to pay the cost for the social reproduction of the African labour’ (Mafeje 1988a: 102). Quite apart from being a place which guaranteed subsistence for black people, the Native Reserves became a dumping site for unserviceable black labour. The reserves had to bear the cost of social reproduction of black labour whose services were needed in urban areas. The reserves were meant to supplement the low wages which black people received from their employers. Thus they could not develop or sustain subsistence agriculture in the reserves. If the opposite were true, then colonial capitalism would not have been a success for colonialists. If the black small producer was content with conditions in the rural areas, then he would not avail himself to colonial capital. In fact, the 1913 dispossession was designed to enforce such dependency because prior to it black small producers were thriving in the countryside.

What is puzzling is the fact that after independence, such countries as Swaziland, Botswana and Zimbabwe did not do away with the colonial model but instead continued with it. The ‘reserves’ became a colonial remnant which continued to undermine the economic self-sufficiency of black people. Even under the most benevolent of African governments, the reserves could not guarantee the subsistence needs of black people. Thus the point was to dismantle them entirely as part of an attempt to transform radically the agrarian structures in southern Africa. There is a lot that must be done in order to fulfil such a radical promise. Mafeje proposes three solutions:

- (a) Redistribution of the land according to the needs of the rural producers; (b) land reform in accordance with the requirements of the national economy, including self-sufficiency in food production; and (c) revision of existing systems of land tenure with

special regard to racial, class and sexual discrimination. In their totality these constitute what might be referred to as the agrarian question in southern Africa. (Mafeje 1988a: 102)

By the 1980s, even the apartheid government had come to accept that the reserves were politically unsustainable. Hence they committed to do away with the pass laws and dissolving the Bantustans. In Zimbabwe, the Zanu-PF Executive Committee as far back as 1976, had taken the decision through a policy document to do away with the reserves. The problem, however, was that such a policy could not be implemented due to the Lancaster House compromise.

This differs markedly with Swaziland and Botswana where post-independence governments felt that it was best to preserve the system of reserves in order to protect their 'tribesmen' from capitalists. The difficulty in Swaziland was that the government sought to buy back the land from white 'landowners' in order to supplement the overcrowded 'National (tribal) Lands'. This became a burden financially and politically. The status quo thus continued unabated. The consequence is that prospects for land reform became slim so that enabling black small producers for self-sufficiency in food production seemed remote. Still, policymakers in Swaziland argued that their country was one of the few self-sufficient countries in Africa. This is true because food production increased because of white capitalist farmers. The problem, however, is that this flies in the face of the notion of 'independence' of black people. In Botswana, all land belonged to the 'national patrimony' (Mafeje 1988a). If it were not for white dominance, Swaziland could compare to Malawi. In Malawi, however, only 17% of arable land belonged to white estate farmers while small producers accounted for about 70% of the food production. This notwithstanding, the problem with Malawi is that estate farms (white or black) were given primacy over small producers. This bias needs to be understood historically and holistically.

During European industrialisation, land became commercialised and such a practice was accompanied by migration from the countryside to the cities. As such, agricultural production became the preserve of a few farmers with certain specialisation. Due to the demand for food in the cities, food production increased exponentially. This remained the case to the point that food production increased more than industrial raw materials which were supplemented by plundering the colonies (Mafeje 1988a). In the Global South, under the impact of colonial capitalism, neither industrialisation nor agricultural revolution took place. Further, since the turn of the 20th century food production has been steadily on the decline. What makes the so-called African capitalist farmers to be of little relevance is the fact that

‘they were specialised in plantation crops for export’ (Mafeje 1988a). The same is not true of southern Africa where black small producers were forcefully and quickly confined to the ‘reserves’. In this sense, any significant agricultural production became the preserve of white settlers.

Not only did food production by white farmers keep up with the demand, but also the latter became responsible for all export crops. Historically, the white farmers were fetching better prices to a comparatively weaker domestic market. The general indifference of the white government to the plight and needs of black people, compounded by the strong political lobby of the white farmers in southern Africa, meant that the question of intervention to address this problem never surfaced. Mafeje is thus constrained to arrive at this conclusion: ‘the racial question overlays a number of basic issues which otherwise centre on class relations. The white farmers in southern Africa exploited and dominated Africans as a capitalist class, supported by a capitalist state’ (Mafeje 1988a: 105). As intimated earlier on, in the South African context, whites prevented by legal means any development of a capitalist class among black agricultural producers. The black peasantry which had emerged in the 19th century was crushed swiftly and mercilessly. When their labour was not needed in the urban areas, they were confined to the reserves on plots which were around 4 acres and for which they had to pay quitrent to the colonial government. The same methods and policies were to be replicated in other British Protectorates in southern Africa. These also served as labour reserves for South African white settler state. In Botswana and Lesotho, however, there was no land alienation as in other countries in southern Africa (Mafeje 1988a). Part of the reason for this are the unfavourable climatic conditions in the two countries.

Unlike Rhodesia and South Africa, where the emergence of a black agricultural class was forestalled by legal means, in Malawi and Zambia this was achieved through racial discrimination and manipulation of credit and marketing facilities. Thus, ‘southern Africa boasted of no African capitalist class prior to independence but rather a dispossessed or depressed peasantry, which could hardly feed itself’ (Mafeje 1988a: 106). Post-independence African governments did not remedy the situation in that there emerged a black petit-bourgeois elite which used state revenues and projected itself as a capitalist class. This class took shortcuts to wealth by buying farms while none of its members actually engaged in farming or live in the countryside. So that, quite apart from being sites for investment and production, their farms become weekend resorts and family holiday homes or simply ‘insurance against old-age’ (Mafeje 1988a). Where capitalist or productive black farmers exist, they are so few and far in between that their existence has no appreciable or recognisable impact. The larger point, at any

rate, is that small production in southern Africa has been seriously disadvantaged. The upshot is that there has been very little increase in food production at a wider scale.

Moreover, in countries like Swaziland and South Africa, where white farmers were always the main producers, they never concerned themselves with food security for the black people. This is true notwithstanding the fact that white farmers monopolise the best land. Thus in this context, the term 'agrarian revolution' entails not only radical change in class structure, production relations and social institutions in the rural areas, but also must entail technological or scientific revolution. Mafeje argues that liberal scholars tend to reduce this question merely to formal or procedural issues such as land tenure i.e. a shift from 'communal' to 'individual' land tenure. Marxists, on the other hand, have tended to accentuate class and production relations while leaving behind technical questions (Mafeje 1988a). Yet methodologically, any process of social transformation must encompass both the formal and the substantive. The African small producers in southern Africa have fallen behind on a number of fronts particularly on technology. There are also environmental factors which militate against productivity particularly in food crops. There are, too, agronomic issues which continue to elude small producers particularly in the context of lack of technological advance and financial constraints. These are important issues to highlight in order that one avoids 'revolutionary romanticism' and the capabilities of the small producers. At the level of science, the soil in southern Africa is said to be low in plant nutrients and too acidic with certain toxicities.

When unattended, these issues combine to thwart crop production and lead to compaction and soil erosion. The southern African region is known for soil erosion and what has worsened the problem is lack of soil preservation methods which are exacerbated by monocropping in maize and overstocking. These factors combine to lower food production. There is also the problem of drought and near-drought. There is, too, the problem of water wastage or poor water retention capacity of the soils. As such, 'water stress is reported to be the most serious constraint on crop production in most of the region' (Mafeje 1988a: 108). Mafeje argued in the 1980s that prospects for agrarian revolution seem unlikely. This is so because of at least two reasons: (i) African governments, with a few exceptions, committed to neo-colonial agricultural policies and programmes mainly at the behest of international agencies and experts; and (ii) African small producers, as a strata, 'are, unlike their counterparts in Asian and Latin America, not organised and conscious enough to be agents of revolutionary agrarian transformation in Africa' (Mafeje 1988a: 117).

The biggest aspiration of the nationalists was to entrench a bourgeois society in 'which individual appropriation of value would be the rule'. Consistent with this logic, and the colonial

bourgeois economics, the agricultural sector was associated with individual land tenure. The so-called ‘success stories’ of Kenya, Ivory Coast, Malawi and Cameroon seemed to vindicate liberal scholars who were partial to this model. The foregoing countries showed some of the highest growth rates in Africa. The outcome of such high rates, however, came at a cost of high landlessness and poverty among the small producers. Ivory Coast and Cameroon show no conclusive evidence in this regard (Mafeje 1988a). But there seemed to be stagnation of peasant agriculture, rising unemployment and widespread poverty in the subsistence sector in the countryside. In Kenya, following the food crisis, peasant squatters sought to dismantle big estate farms in favour of the original usufructuary rights. This shows the deep-seated nature of the lineage principle in Africa. What can be concluded here ‘is that petit-bourgeois agricultural policies and programmes have, even in the best examples, failed to bring about a genuine agrarian transformation in Africa. As a result, everywhere they are faced with reserves and deepening agricultural crisis’ (Mafeje 1988a: 118–119). In southern Africa land still remains a major obstacle because of the white settler community. Yet even in the post-independence period the programmes of the former liberation movement leave much to be desired. Zimbabwe has become an exception with its recent land expropriation programme. For Mafeje, the best way to address the agrarian question in southern Africa is to adopt a regional approach. In this model, ‘it would not make sense to rationalise production at the level of households and not at the level of governments’ (Mafeje 1988a: 122). Collective self-reliance would need to filter down at the level of the people rather than ‘myopic nationalism’. The former, Mafeje argues, depends on the ‘elimination of class deprivation and exploitation’ which in the southern African context is overlaid by racism. For Mafeje (1988a: 122), ‘people in southern Africa might still starve in the midst of plenty. This is a problem, not of petty reformism or charitable ameliorations, but of the southern African agrarian revolution in which South Africa is the kingpin.’

7.3 Prospects for Agrarian Reform in sub-Saharan Africa

As indicated in the previous chapter, Mafeje holds that there is no land question in sub-Saharan Africa except for southern Africa where there is a white settler community. The supposition that there is no land question in sub-Saharan Africa has led African governments, policymakers, and intellectuals alike, to suppose that there is no agrarian question as well. The fallacious nature of this supposition is exposed by the extended agricultural and food crisis in sub-Saharan Africa. This, then, indicates to one and all that the agrarian question needs careful attention. While the region suffers from agricultural crisis, there is still a dearth of literature on

this issue (Mafeje 2003). Mafeje puts forward at least three propositions which need to be attended to:

First and foremost is the question of how best extant land tenure systems and modes of social organization for production in the sub-region can be modified so as to meet the current needs of all agricultural producers, including women. Second is the relationship between the state and the peasantry. It is apparent that governments can no longer treat agriculture as a milch cow for raising revenues for financing development in urban areas, while neglecting the countryside. This calls for a new social contract between governments and agricultural producers, particularly the small and middle ones, who constitute more than 90 per cent of all farmers. Third are the implications of the collapse of the development strategy based on large-scale farming. This is of crucial importance, given the fact that poverty eradication is high on the agenda everywhere. It is no longer a question of maximizing physical output but of development with justice and protection of the environment, or sustainable agriculture. (Mafeje 2003: 14)

In order for these to be met, African governments, policymakers and intellectuals alike, ought to do away with 'Eurocentric models'. While failures of the SAPs are widely known, the World Bank and some African governments are still of the view that the 'free market' is the solution to problems facing sub-Saharan Africa. In this regard, they advance bourgeois western individualism through individual land tenure for example. Yet, 'those who are on the receiving end prefer social solutions, which will fall in the domain of political economy' (Mafeje 2003: 14). Thus, in dealing with the agrarian question in Africa, Mafeje adopts an historical approach and takes the colonial division of labour in agriculture as a point of departure. This division was a determining factor of not only gender roles between men and women in production, but also it shaped the economic structure generally. Agriculture was divided into the 'subsistence' and the 'modern' sector, something which widened the divide between the rural and the urban sector. The latter developed as a result of the former. The reason for this was 'precisely because it was a result of urbanisation without industrialisation (except in South Africa)' (Mafeje 2003: 14). Subsistence needs of the rural population were set aside in order that the modern sector could benefit. To the extent that this is so, the rural population retaliated by defending subsistence needs in the face of 'colonial imposition'. Thus it was not the case that the rural population were, in defending their subsistence needs, conservative. It was instead 'a conflict of interests that has persisted up to the time of writing and underlies the agrarian question in sub-Saharan Africa' (Mafeje 2003: 14). Mafeje concludes that, against this background, the

adoption (or lack thereof) of cash crops is irrelevant to the point. Controversially, he goes on to argue that the division of labour along gender lines in the agricultural sector is 'incidental'. Not only does Mafeje contradict his earlier postulation, as mentioned in the previous chapter, that the division of labour along gender lines was colonially determined, but also he runs the risk of downplaying women's struggles which are often exacerbated by their spouses. Colonialism and capitalism undermined rural households and even more so in southern Africa (Desmond 1971; Murray 1984). Mafeje argues that this is the 'underlying contradiction' which has been the bone of contention between bourgeois liberal and Marxist scholars.

Mafeje critiques bourgeois theorists such as Arthur Lewis for suggesting that the 'subsistence sector' will be absorbed by the 'modern sector' or capitalist agriculture (see Lewis 1954). To be fair, it is labour not the subsistence sector to which Lewis referred. This suggestion is akin to the 'trickle down' economic theory. Yet Lewis was not actually arguing about 'trickle down' in the conventional neoliberal/libertarian economic fashion. He suggested that for a government 'to tax its developed sectors and subsidise its under-developed sectors is one of the most powerful ways that a government can use to ensure that the benefits of development trickle down' (Lewis 1979: 213). This is widely at variance with the conventional understanding of 'trickle down' in neoliberal economics, which will not countenance such redistributive fiscal policy. Mafeje might have used the 'bourgeois' label a bit carelessly here. Lewis was actually a Fabian socialist. Yet unlike Europe where this sort of capitalist development took shape, it has not occurred in sub-Saharan Africa nor are there any indications that it will. Thus while institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF maintain that Africa must follow the western growth path, they have done nothing but keep Africa in debt. In this way the West has denied Africa any socialist or endogenous alternatives. Effectively, the historical dominance of the African continent remains intact. Mafeje posits that left-leaning intellectuals believe that this system is by design and it is in-built in global capitalism. Radical theories such as 'development of underdevelopment', 'unequal exchange' and 'articulation of modes of production' are meant to capture precisely this fact. The theory of articulation of modes of production, Mafeje argues, is meant to counter the 'dual theories' of the neo-classical theorists. Mafeje sums up the articulation of modes of production, such as it relates to Africa and the West, as follows: 'The basic thesis was that, contrary to neoclassical suppositions, capitalism did not expand such that it became universal in Africa, precisely because colonialism tried to undermine African modes of production, while at the same time contriving to preserve them in a modified form in order to guarantee the social reproduction of labour at no cost to the colonial exploiters. Insofar as the subsistence producers got committed to this

structural role or imperative, they were not destined to become capitalists in their own right, as was predicted' (Mafeje 2003: 15). Mafeje goes on to argue that although he (Mafeje 1991a) and Bernstein (1990) have, each independently, 'rejected' the dissolution and perseveration theory as 'functionalist' and 'undialectical', it is still able to account for or otherwise explain instances 'where extra-economic coercion or discrimination against the small producers was the policy, for example, in southern Africa and in countries such as Kenya and Malawi' (Mafeje 2003: 15). He argues that in taking seriously this view, one would be able to appreciate its theoretical implications. This is so because it allows for the 'catalytic effect of voluntarism' which is often undermined in classical Marxism in favour of structural arguments. Mafeje acknowledges that voluntarism does not always suffice because it is limited by objective conditions. Yet, 'even under the most coercive and discriminatory regimes the so-called subsistence producers engaged in a variety of other activities out of necessity so as to meet their consumer needs or to supplement their falling subsistence incomes' (Mafeje 2003: 15).

This was more pronounced in southern Africa where the system of 'reserves' was brought to perfection and subsistence production was no longer guaranteed. Mafeje argues that the people who lived in the rural areas depended on remittances by migrant workers. Remittances accounted for 80% of rural income. Mafeje (2003) argues that the irony of this is that what seemed to be a confirmation of dissolution or preservation theory ultimately disproved it. Dissolution, though unintentionally, became a trend and the rural areas became slums and a dumping ground for unwanted or discharged labour in the urban areas particularly after the implementation of influx control. In other parts of the continent, 'although the subsistence sector did not suffer the same ravages as in southern Africa, virtually all small producers practised more than subsistence production. They engaged in what the British empiricist referred to as "subsistence plus"' (Mafeje 2003: 15).

Theoretically, it is not entirely clear whether this entailed a shift from 'the simple to the expanded petty mode of production'. Since the 1970s, the underdevelopment thesis raised two key issues: (i) That this was a case of 'proletarianisation' of the peasantry as a result of the transition from subsistence to migrant labour and labour employment; and (ii) 'differentiation of the peasantry due to 'accumulation from below'. Mafeje argues that while the two may appear to be in conflict, they are in reality 'dynamically linked'. Yet none of the proponents of each thesis seem to recognise this. Mafeje explains:

For good historical reasons, the proletarianisation thesis received its greatest ovation in the Africa of 'labour reserves', Southern Africa (Wolpe 1980). The majority of the

Southern African black males spent the greater part of their lives between the ages of 15 and 55 working in the urban areas or on white farms as migrant labour remunerated at rates far below than the actual value of their labour. Through discriminatory or racist legislation, the employers were allowed to pay starvation wages that did not take into account the cost of social reproduction of their black labour. This obliged the migrant workers to keep one foot in the so-called subsistence sector, in spite of its diminishing economic value. (Mafeje 2003: 16)

Mafeje uses the term ‘agricultural production’ as against ‘subsistence production’ deliberately because in southern Africa the latter has not been for a very long time. As Bundy (1979) indicates, the supposed ‘staple crops’, maize being one of them, became cash crops by the end of the 19th century already. Further, sheep are reared in order that their wool is sold to white traders, ‘cattle are not only raised for ceremonial/ritual purposes such as bridewealth but also for sale in fairs (*fantesi* from the Afrikaans word *vandusie*) organized by itinerant white traders; while bred mainly for transport, surplus horses are sold to local buyers; and chicken, eggs and vegetables are often produced and sold by women to the local white traders’ (Mafeje 2003: 16). It goes without saying that the prices of the produce of the small producers, when trading with white traders, are comparatively lower than those between farmers and the urban areas. This means two things: (i) it reduces chances of ‘accumulation from below’; and (ii) small producers have to subsist at much lower levels than their actual productivity. In spite of the relative technological advance in southern Africa (e.g. animal traction, iron plough, the iron planter, harrow, mechanical weeder, manure and fertilizers etc.) none of these improved the productivity of the black producers – especially under apartheid. Nor did it improve the levels of subsistence which were on the decline. The questions of incompetence should not here arise since up to 80% of white farms are managed by black migrant workers to begin with (Wilson 1971).

Thus the use of technology (or lack thereof) cannot be used as an explanation for failures of agricultural production, especially in southern Africa. The problem turns on unfavourable socioeconomic conditions rather than mere presence or absence of technologies. To see this, one ought to analyse the agrarian question in the tropics where producers do not use the plough (because of the unfavourable landscape) and one would discover that actually that region is not worse off compared to southern Africa. ‘If anything, they might be better off because they retained effective control over the land and, in the main, determined their own conditions of livelihood’ (Mafeje 2003: 17). This raises questions about the prospects and

conditions for the notion of ‘accumulation from below’. Neocosmos (1993) has argued that the theorists of proletarianisation of the peasantry in Africa do not take seriously the liberating effect and importance of accumulation from below. While it is true that the process of proletarianisation in Africa is non-linear, since migrant workers tend to oscillate between the urban and the rural, the process of accumulation from below also cannot be taken as universally valid under all socioeconomic conditions. Equally, its liberating effect cannot be asserted *a priori*. Mafeje argues that Neocosmos is guilty on both counts. One of the reasons is the fact that he relies heavily on the case of Russia which is documented by Lenin in *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (1964). Mafeje (2003: 17) is thus moved ‘to warn that in social analysis analogies can be very misleading, especially when drawn across continents’. He elaborates:

As far as the Russian analogy is concerned, it is well to remember that Lenin’s interest was the overthrow of the feudal aristocracy in Russia, and he therefore saw the rise of independent capitalists owing to accumulation from below as their negation. As such, it was a liberating force from feudal bondage. Lenin also surmised that the disappearance of the commune (*mir*) was the price paid for the development of capitalism in Russia and for the unleashing of progressive forces as a prelude to a socialist revolution. Among these Lenin included displaced peasants and achieved the distinction of being the first Marxist theoretician to advocate an alliance of peasants and workers in the revolutionary struggle toward socialism... (Mafeje 2003: 17)

Having said this, Mafeje argues that the Russian analogy cannot be applied to sub-Saharan Africa. There are several reasons for this: (i) Sub-Saharan Africa has no feudal aristocracy, as was the case in Russia, from which the capitalists will want to liberate themselves and thus help forge a democracy; and (ii) The emergent capitalist farmers in sub-Sahara (except in southern Africa) have not displaced small producers and have turned them into rural proletariat without the means of production.

Part of what has led to proletarianisation of African small producers is migration from rural to urban areas. Theoretically, this would have made Lenin’s task much easier since he saw a revolutionary potential between workers and peasants. Concretely, however, this purported alliance is yet to be proven. For Mafeje, there continues to be qualitative differences between ‘fully urbanised workers’ and migrant workers. Unlike pre-revolution Russia under the Tsar, capitalist farmers in Africa are subsidised by the state. By contrast, the peasant–state relationship is fraught and antagonistic. Further, both the colonial and post-independence states

used extractive policies in dealing with the peasants and, for that matter, used violent and repressive methods to make sure that they comply.

In this regard, the state was viewed as the enemy of the people. Ironically, while the capitalist farmers or 'the *kulaks*' were favoured by the state, they were not viewed as the enemy, save in the southern African context where capitalist farmers were/are white. In this context, mechanistic class analysis is likely to encounter some difficulties. Mafeje posits that Mamdani fell into the same trap (see Mamdani 1987). While Mamdani also advocates 'accumulation from below', he seems to part with Neocosmos' conception of the same. While Neocosmos (1993) posits that accumulation from below leads to, or has potential for, democracy, Mamdani believes that this will lead to more exploitation and political domination of the poor peasants by local capitalists who are, in the African context, not only supported by the state but are members of the bureaucracy as well – since some tend to purchase farms. Secondly, Mamdani is of the view that the fact of repressive Africa governments and absence of popular democracy combine to hinder accumulation from below. This is in contrast to Neocosmos' view that accumulation from below obtains in spite of repressive regimes. Mamdani (1987) enumerates various examples to show that local capitalists are as bad as government bureaucrats in their dealings with poor peasants. Mafeje doubts the veracity of Mamdani's claim 'if the sociology of these two relations is taken into consideration' (Mafeje 2003: 18). He goes so far as to question Mamdani's conception of village 'capitalists'. The problem, Mafeje worries, is that these capitalist 'are characterised not by production relations but largely by exchange relations, including traditional forms of labour exchange' (Mafeje 2003: 18). This is so because Mamdani argues that transactions between the two entail 'unequal exchange between rich and poor peasants'. Mafeje's postulation is that all peasants in Uganda, for example, are all poor not as a result of unequal exchange, but because there is no development in the region to begin with. In any case, the local 'capitalists' are too few and isolated for their exchange with poor peasants to lead to inequality on a large scale. Mafeje invokes social stratification, as against class differences, and argues differences in income does not necessarily entail class differences. Various social scientists have made similar observations (Amin 1972, 1980; Coquery-Vidrovitch 1977; Magubane 1968, 1971, 1976; Meillasoux 1972).

It is worth repeating that in the sub-Saharan context, the most prevalent mode of social organisation is kinship, 'by which is meant affiliation by descent or consanguinity'. Thus social reproduction and production centres on descent groups or lineage. Such an arrangement is typically regulated by senior men, known traditionally and historically as 'elders', who are considered 'the representatives of the constituent units of the lineage (minimal lineages)'. The

elders not only determine how resources and labour are allocated, but also represent their respective units in political and legal public affairs. In this regard, the relationship between them, their juniors and women is necessarily hierarchical. This means that the elders control 'the means of subsistence and social reproduction'. This has theoretical implications in that, contrary to Marxist universalism, sub-Saharan Africa is said to exhibit 'African mode of production' (different from the Asiatic mode of production) (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1977) and/or 'lineage mode of production' (Rey 1975).

These two postulations were not credited by orthodox Marxists who said this will lead to infinite regression and 'particularism' when each country or region will have to be judged according to its own mode of production and historical specificity (Mafeje 2003). Mafeje wants to re-centre the 'uniqueness' of the African mode of social organisation which is kinship-based and 'characterised by relations of domination and not of production'. Thus for him, it is not, theoretically, a mode of production precisely on those bases. This is in contrast to what he calls, following Amin, the tributary mode of production of interlacustrine kingdoms – as discussed in the previous two chapters. As a result of 'corporation existence' in the lineage mode of organisation, when entering into transactions with others, community members do so as representatives of their groups not as individuals. While this system of kinship may entail relations of domination, it also has an important welfare function such as assisting others materially etc. Even educated Africans are a product of this system and continue to be part of it.

In saying that relations of domination are not relations of exploitation, Mafeje does not necessarily discount the notion of accumulation from below. His argument is that 'if by accumulation from below is meant class differentiation, then not all forms of social exchange lead to class formation' (Mafeje 2003: 20). To see this, one need only look at African lineages and their redistributive system which is wrongly said to be responsible for lack of accumulation. Mafeje argues that the latter claim can only be valid when approached from the perspective of 'bourgeois individualism'. African producers accumulated income through cash crops and by trading animals in the capitalist market. If the reverse were true, then one would not be able to explain the success of the African peasants in 1950s and 1960s when prices of commodity had risen. Also, the exponential rate of the 'middle peasants' which entailed the rise of 'the expanded petty mode of production'. This took place throughout sub-Saharan African save southern Africa.

Although African peasants accepted commercialisation of production with the customary tenure system they nevertheless resisted individualism of production i.e. individual

tenure system. The customary tenure system prevents individual sale of land in that when the situation dictates, the original owners of the land could 'invoke reversionary rights' and buy the land back with compensation if the current owner had made arrangements for permanent investment. Mafeje cites Kenya as a place where this had happened frequently. He goes on to mention that the most successful mode of accumulation from below is one in which peasants took advantage of customary tenure in that it allows for its owners to use it perpetually. Contrary to Mamdani's (1987) supposition, Mafeje argues that this tenure system need not be exploitative and predatory. For example, Mafeje submits in East and southern Africa agriculture and therefore accumulation is aided by remittances from urban areas. In financing production from remittances, the urban based 'petty-bourgeoisie' are able to rely on household labour for production purposes. On the question 'household labour', Mafeje cautions: 'The term "household labour" is used here advisedly because in Africa, contrary to the common European usage, households are the production units, not families, whose composition is determined by descent (filiation) and are the repositories of lineage assets and accumulated value. In contrast, in households the primary relation is marriage (affinity) and the primary purpose is reproduction and production' (Mafeje 2003: 20). In this sense, unmarried individuals do not benefit from allocation of land due to their marital status, they are not entitled to land. This is in spite of their sex, gender and age. The structural rationale for this is that, traditionally, women had the responsibility to cultivate for their husbands and children. As such, it would not make sense to allocate land to an unmarried man. In matrilineal societies the reverse is true. However this is not simply for the benefit of the wife but that of her family, 'since [the husband] was subject to the authority of her sister's son or his brother-in-law as long as he lived in their compound' (Mafeje 2003: 20).

It is important to note, however, that even in matrilineal societies men remain legal representatives and assets are passed down through them and not necessarily through women. The son of the sister to the wife is the heir and not children of the labouring husbands. Women from either side of the marriage do not have inheritance rights or political and jural authority 'in the matrilineages to which they belong by descent' (Mafeje 2003: 21). The source of conflict in patrilineal societies between wives and husbands has been the introduction of cash crops. What it has done was to allow husbands to appropriate what was produced by women. This is both domination and exploitation. This possibly counts as one of the disadvantages of descent or customary tenure. Mafeje posits that a possible solution to this problem would be to give usufructuary rights to both men and women be they married or otherwise. This would leave the question reversionary rights untouched or unthreatened since the (usufructuary) allottees are

not entitled to the land as such but its produce. The only discernible problem is that this would restructure the process of social reproduction of the lineages.

Notwithstanding the contradictions and domination in lineages in sub-Saharan Africa, Mafeje argues that a full-scale revolution is not feasible. This is because kinship ties are valuable to individuals who struggle with their livelihoods, and in areas where the state has no meaningful welfare system or where its role simply cannot be guaranteed. This is not a problem of the poor alone, because even the professional class are usually affected or involved. This does not mean that the situation is static. Mafeje argues that in agriculture, a sizeable number of households have moved from the petty to the expanded mode of production (Mafeje 1991b). While not on equal terms, it should be noted that both men and women have been involved in the process. This was achieved through cash crops sold at the capitalist market and aided by the use of household labour and something from kin and hired labour. Technological intensification of production is also a contributing factor. Thus, Mafeje concludes, the land question or land tenure systems – save southern Africa and few other places – cannot be counted as a problem in African agriculture. Countries such as the Seychelles and Mauritius, though small in size, managed to solve their respective land question by dividing the colonial estates into medium-sized farms and expanded the non-agricultural sectors of their economies. This enabled them to absorb the surplus population from agriculture into other sectors. An important part of their strategy was rural development through non-agricultural activities.

For Mafeje, the critical issue for the rest of the continent is not necessarily the land question but rather the agrarian question. Yet with the growth of the phenomenon of 'land grabs' this may not be valid any longer. The agrarian question entails social, economic and reform of technological factors. All of them vary depending on historical specificities. One of the things which need to be acknowledged is that women need to be liberated socially and economically from male domination. This could spell major changes in the agricultural sector more broadly. Women agricultural producers account for 70% in the sub-Saharan agriculture but their full potential is yet to be realised because the mode of organisation restricts them in that it is male-dominated. This is an historical reality which has endured every disruption from the bourgeois individualism of the missionaries and colonialism to the World Bank and institutions similar to it. Bourgeois individualism, such as it is advocated by western or Eurocentric scholars, could in fact work to the advantage of men and not women. History testifies, as in the case of South East Asia, that kinship ties played an important role in the development of capitalism in that region. The general point being that individualism is neither necessary nor sufficient for development. And given that men already have the upper hand,

individualisation can worsen the situation. What would be important therefore is not simply the objective of transformation but the method of transformation itself. Mafeje advocates an all-encompassing approach:

Equal land rights for men and women, equal participation in the labour process and equal say in the distribution of the product are fair demands and are capable of transforming the lineage mode of organization, if consciously implemented by African governments. This presupposes that future African governments will be democratic and gender sensitive. The obvious implication here is that women can attain their legitimate rights only as part of a political struggle for social democracy. Otherwise, they could easily fall prey to liberal petty reformism, as is happening in the West. (Mafeje 2003: 23)

Currently, although large in numbers, women in the agricultural sector can be considered 'poor peasants'. In the final analysis, this is one of the issues which need to be transformed in the agricultural sector. One of the challenges faced by women agricultural producers include extractive state policies, poor infrastructure, exploitative middlemen etc. All of these issues combine to undermine accumulation from below. Large-scale farming, such as it is advocated by African governments at the behest of the West, has failed. In southern Africa it created poverty and 'chronic rates of unemployment' and starved the landless rural dwellers. On the other hand, African small producers have shown great resilience even under crisis conditions. The middle peasants have done much better than the rest. It needs to be said, however, that under certain conditions, accumulation from below has its own limitations. 'For instance, it could be unrealizable under conditions of super-exploitation of the peasantry, political repression or extra-economic coercion, as in southern and, increasingly, in the rest of Africa' (Mafeje 2003: 24). What seems to be important is the fact that the revenues derived are pre-capitalist to the extent that they have to be turned into capital. When such forms of accumulation have passed the primitive stage they enter into what Mafeje calls 'primary accumulation'. For him, the middle peasants are capable both of primary and expanded accumulation. Insofar as this is the case, their mode of production is the 'expanded mode of production'. Poor peasants, on the other hand, can attain neither of the two and are mainly operating at the level of meeting subsistence needs. That is not to suggest that they do not attempt to rise above subsistence. They try but with very little success. Thus their mode of social existence is called 'petty'. They thus sell their labour to those who are economically better than them. For Mafeje, 'the immediate task for African planners and policymakers is to

make sure that agriculture can in the foreseeable future feed the rapidly growing African population' (Mafeje 2003: 30). The following section sets out to explain Mafeje's conception of poverty eradication in the African context.

7.4 From Poverty Alleviation to Poverty Eradication

Mafeje (2001b) is generally concerned to understand the concept of 'poverty alleviation' in the context of economic and political conditions such as they obtain in Africa. In doing so, he sets out first to contextualise the concept and place it in its historical setting. He traces the evolution of development policies within the context of global economy and seeks to identify the target groups of such policies. For him, this provides a background from which one can measure the successes and failures of the notion of 'poverty alleviation'. What is important to observe is the fact that the concept came about as a result of disillusionment with theories of 'trickle down' economics in the 1960s (Mafeje 2001b). Failures of trickle down theories of the 1960s meant that in the 1970s the notion of poverty alleviation became 'a development objective in itself' (Mafeje 2001b: 15).

The notion of poverty alleviation as a development objective was first put forward by UN agencies. The World Employment Programme of the ILO, which was established in 1976, gave a concrete meaning to poverty alleviation by stressing the productive capacity of the poor and worse off. In like manner, in 1977 IFAD was tasked to 'increase food production, reduce under-nutrition and alleviate rural poverty' (quoted in Mafeje 2001b: 16). Following these developments, the FAO produced the 'Peasants Charter' in 1981. The report sought to promote equity and advance popular participation in the process of development. In general, those policy proposals fell under the UN mandate. It needs to be mentioned, too, that they in fact coincided with the World Bank's policy proposals which advocated equal rights for small producers in the 1970s. It is important to note that by the end of the 1970s there was some consensus between the agencies of the UN and the World Bank. However, there emerged divisions between the UN agencies and the World Bank as economic and agricultural crisis worsened on the African continent in the 1980s (Mafeje 2001b). This was due in large measure to the SAPs. As is widely known, the SAPs decentred any emphasis on people but put a premium on the 'market forces'. This was a reversal of previous points of view which had put the concerns of the poor at the centre of its programmes and policies. These changes were rationalised in the widely known 'Berg Report', *Accelerated development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action* (World Bank 1981).

In this way, Mafeje observes, the World Bank was not only 'betting on the economically strong', but also was punishing small producers and the poor in favour of the old 'trickle down' theories. This report also came hot on the heels of the Lagos Plan of Action which advanced policy objectives put forward by African governments themselves. Although aware of the implications of the Berg report, some African governments went ahead and adopted SAPs. The SAPs were critiqued in a thoroughgoing manner by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) through a document titled *African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP)* (1989). The report was an intellectual response and political confrontation of the World Bank. Not only did it serve as a reminder to African governments that they should not have abandoned the Lagos Plan of Action, but also it beseeched them to pursue development with equity on the African continent. Although the 1980s are generally referred to as a 'lost decade' in Africa, the ECA discovered that in actuality the failures of African governments were not due to flawed policy choices on their part. But rather, the failures were due to the SAPs and that had African governments stuck to the objectives of the Lagos Plan of Action, things could have turned out differently. The World Bank could not discredit or refute the findings.

The ECA re-centred two things: (i) what African governments sought to implement prior to the SAPs; and (ii) it put back on the table the question of growth with equity. The World Bank sought to relieve the pain of the African continent without so much dealing with the root cause of the condition. This was done through a report titled *Poverty, Adjustment, and Growth* (1989). It never so much dealt with the central question as to whether the SAPs could be done away with in the 1990s. It has long been accepted that the SAPs failed in Africa insofar as they did not yield any tangible economic growth and they did not eradicate poverty. While there is consensus on the failures of the SAPs, there is no agreement on the underlying causes of the same (Mafeje 2001b). Among other things, the SAPs sought to apply Euro-American economic and developmental models in Africa. This case is more acute both in regard to the role of the state in development and in the case of agricultural or agrarian policies more specifically. The latter case issued in the recognition among Africa scholars that scholars ought to guard against 'individualisation of land rights and of agricultural production under African social conditions' (Mafeje 2001b: 18; see also Dhliwayo 1988; Faber and Tims 1988; Mafeje 1988a; Morapedi 1988; Prah 1988; Rukuni and Eicher 1988; Sikhondze 1988; Sipula 1988; Tola 1988; Swallow and Borris 1988).

Against this background, Mafeje is able to conclude that the concept of 'poverty alleviation' is a product of 'social imperatives in *developed* countries and a culmination of the

rise of the welfare state, especially in western Europe' (Mafeje 2001b: 19, emphasis in original). While this may be so, the concept and its social and philosophical foundations has its genesis in the 'reaction against the great depression of the 1930s and the large-scale deprivation caused by the Second World War' (Mafeje 2001b: 19). Mafeje is of the view that its foundations are linked to the notion of a welfare state. If that is the case, then 'poverty alleviation' is a product of 'affluent societies' designed to guarantee 'a decent livelihood for the lowest 20 per cent of the population' (Mafeje 2001b: 19). Understood this way, "poverty alleviation" is at best a product of welfare economics and at worst charitable neo-liberalism' (Mafeje 2001b: 19). In the case of the latter, Mafeje's submission is logically justified insofar as the term 'alleviate' means to lessen or otherwise to make suffering less severe. Over and above that, actually, the term assumes that there exists resources to 'alleviate' pain and suffering. This then calls into question the notion of balanced economic development universally. The adoption of ameliorative policies or the notion of poverty alleviation is designed precisely to mask the continued plundering of countries of the Global South by the West.

Mafeje argues that the decision to speak of 'poverty alleviation' is informed by predispositions of those groups or classes which enjoy hegemonic power, both nationally and internationally, towards petty-reformism or continuity as against radical change. The latter entails instability and insecurity. While intellectuals in the West typically eschew any talk of radical changes, history suggests that it has been due to radical changes that western countries are now in a better or higher position. Thus while societies may be predisposed towards normality and continuity, radical change is the better option. Typically, Marxists put forward the view that the agent of change is a combination of an impersonal dialectic between a range of social, political and economic factors. Yet in reality the agents of change are typically those who are 'frustrated by present social existence or are its objects' (Mafeje 2001b: 20). This means that policies are a mirror image of, or are rooted in, underlying social struggles. In other words, 'shifts in intellectual paradigms are neither accidental nor due to factors which are internal to them' (Mafeje 2001b: 21). By 1997, the UNDP had after twenty years shifted from the paradigm of 'poverty alleviation' to 'poverty eradication'. The IFAD report, *The State of World Rural Poverty* (1992), states that throughout 'the Third World', there was never any success in 'poverty alleviation' through the programmes conceived by western developmental agencies. What happened, instead, is that poverty in the rural areas increased – except in industrialising countries of South-East Asia. In fact, in the document *Poverty: World*

Development Report (1990), the World Bank acknowledged that poverty had increased in the Global South.

Thus the paradigm shift from poverty alleviation to poverty eradication was a result of a robust discussion within the international agencies. The notion of poverty eradication became a catchphrase within the said institutions in the late 1990s and the 2000s. Yet, like the earlier concept of poverty alleviation, poverty eradication did not yield any observable changes in Africa. The question is thus who will bring about poverty eradication and how will it be brought about in Africa. This question leads to what Mafeje calls the ‘difficult and treacherous terrain’ of class interests. He calls it as such because the interests of those in power and those of other social classes do not necessarily coincide. Here Mafeje wants to grapple with the question of the state in dealing with poverty in Africa. For the purposes of his analysis, he wants to shy away from the question (much loved by political scientists) about whether or not there is a state or governance in Africa. For his purposes, he assumes that state already exists. Generally, states are said to be responsible for the well-being and welfare of their citizens. In the main, this usually refers to social services. In the context of the welfare state such services were broadened to include employment creation etc. By contrast, under ‘classical capitalism’ providing for the poor was the job of entrepreneurs, through job creation, and charity organisations such as the churches.

Mafeje argues that charitable measures such as ‘poverty allowances’, as in the case of Botswana, may be successful in the immediate term, but in the long run they present no lasting solution. This is an important point to note in the African context because the continent has a problem of rural underdevelopment and increasing rural poverty. In Botswana’s case, this was inevitable since there was no real investment in agriculture but an overdependence on minerals (Mafeje 2001b). The added problem is the unfavourable climate and ecological conditions. There is very little evidence to suggest that other sub-Saharan states have any thoroughgoing ‘poverty alleviate’ or ‘poverty eradication’ programmes. What some governments have done, Mafeje contends, was to adopt what he calls ‘egalitarian’ policies wherein they had combined growth with equality. These include Tanzania, Uganda and Burkina Faso – under Sankara’s short-lived leadership. The irony of it all is that the policies which were condemned by international agencies in order to justify SAPs are now implicit in the concept of ‘poverty eradication’.

In spite of external factors such as imperialism from the West, or internal factors such as corruption and plundering of resources by African leaders, Mafeje still believes that Africa is best placed to eradicate poverty. What is at issue for him is an attempt to conceive different

developmental alternatives. The continent is well-resourced to see itself through some of its challenges. Except for southern Africa, socially, sub-Saharan Africa has in the agrarian sector equitable access to land. Moreover, direct/small producers have control of their means of production or livelihood. They are only affected by extractive national governments who are relatively remote compared to feudal landlordism which obtained in other contexts. Controversially, Mafeje argues that African people have greater chances of overthrowing their dictatorial governments than the peoples of other countries of the Global South. He goes on to argue that ‘African agricultural producers, who constitute the vast majority in any single African country (except in South Africa and Zimbabwe), are not as backward technologically as is often supposed’ (Mafeje 2001b: 27).

Moreover, ‘there is no evidence that big farmers in black Africa are more efficient than smaller ones. Second, if large-scale farmers were bigger foreign exchange earners until recently, the small female cultivators in Africa were and still are the biggest food producers’ (Mafeje 2001b: 28). As regards the second point, one cannot object to it by arguing that food deficits are on the rise in Africa. Such an argument would not hold simply because it provides more of a reason to give preferential treatment to small producers as opposed to marginalising them. Equally, there is no evidence to suggest that, on the whole, big farmers in Africa are more responsive to technology than small producers. If anything, responsiveness to technology has a lot to do ‘with the cost of innovation’ rather than the size of farmers. Having discussed these issues, Mafeje argues that the way forward is not poverty alleviation but ‘trickle up’ strategies for development which would eliminate poverty. Mafeje (2001b: 29) wants to deal with ‘poverty elimination as basically development from below’. In the context of sub-Saharan Africa this is justified in that the vast majority of the people are poor even though they have access to land. Thus, Mafeje concludes, ‘in situations where the poor predominate it is more efficient to invest in them than in the non-poor who are prone to absorb more resources than can be economically justified. In other words, not only is it cheaper in terms of capital outlay (including foreign exchange) to invest in the undercapitalised majority but also it helps to mobilise their only form of wealth: labour’ (Mafeje 2001b: 29–30). What this means is that self-development becomes a precondition for national development.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter is the second and final offering in the thesis’s exploration of Mafeje’s contribution to the land and agrarian question in Africa. The chapter discussed the following issues: (i) it

discussed Mafeje's understanding of the African small producers or peasants and their role and responses in sub-Saharan Africa; (ii) it dealt with the agrarian question, food production and food security issues in Africa; (iii) prospects for agrarian reform; and (iv) Mafeje's critique of the liberal notion of poverty alleviation and his emphasis on poverty eradication instead. The issues raised in this chapter, indeed this section of the thesis, can be said to be diagnostic. It is the object of the next section of the thesis to discuss Mafeje's prognosis via his work on revolutionary theory, development theory and democracy.

Part IV: On Revolutionary Theory and Politics

Chapter Eight

Groundings: Intellectual Imperatives for the ‘Second Independence’

8.0 Introduction

In his foreword to Mafeje’s book, *In Search of an Alternative: A Collection of Essays on Revolutionary Theory and Politics*, Ibbo Mandaza writes that the search for an alternative is a search for a ‘lost identity’ – ‘the inner self’. Insofar as this is true, Mafeje’s revolutionary theory and political writings are grounded not only on the search for political and economic freedom, but also on the search for intellectual and cultural liberation. Mafeje understood very well that in the post-independence period, Africans had to deal with a society that not only suffered from economic poverty, but also suffered from intellectual and cultural poverty. Thus the struggle for intellectual and cultural liberation is a struggle worth fighting and as legitimate as any other. The opening chapter of his book *In Search of an Alternative*, titled ‘African Philosophical Projections and Prospects for the Indigenisation of Political and Intellectual Discourse’, is instructive in this regard. Quite like the said opening chapter in Mafeje’s book, the present chapter foregrounds this fourth section of the thesis. This chapter examines Mafeje’s struggle for ‘authenticity’ in social scientific writings, the role and responsibility of the African intellectual, the question of Africanity, and prospects and projections for the indigenisation of political and intellectual discourse.

8.1 Beyond Academic Freedom: Mafeje’s Struggle for ‘Authenticity’

Mafeje argues that there is a perceived general lack of academic freedom in Africa. This, he says, is linked by African scholars to lack of social democracy on the African continent. Although the two are inextricably linked, it is not clear whether both academic freedom and social democracy are a *sine qua non* for ‘sustained intellectual activity or creativity’ (Mafeje 1994a: 59). As discussed in chapter four, a search for new modes of thinking and organisation is not a matter purely of academic pursuits. Instead, it is shaped by social struggles. Thus a search for academic freedom and social democracy is a twin-project of intellectual and socio-political struggles ‘aimed at transcending present existence’ (Mafeje 1994a: 59). Following Thomas Kuhn, Mafeje states that intellectual activity which is unable to transcend present existence is ‘normal science’. The problem with such modes of thinking is that they lead to complacency and/or conservatism.

Significantly, Mafeje observes that academic freedom and social democracy are not necessary conditions for helping African intellectuals produce new knowledge systems.

Viewed from a historical perspective, the dynamics of knowledge production are much more complex than is supposed by the idea of meeting the two conditions above. If the two conditions are indeed necessary, then the most natural question to grapple with relates to their sufficiency. Mafeje argues that for liberals the emphasis is usually on freedoms rather than the struggles which produce those freedoms. This is an 'ideological reflex' which mistakes agitation for struggle. In Mafeje's view, if the freedoms were viewed as an outcome of struggles as against a necessary condition for a resolution of current problems, then the emphasis 'would be on the struggles themselves rather than on complaints about lack of freedom' (Mafeje 1994a: 59). According to him, this has two profound implications. First, individuals would engage in the actual struggles as opposed to waiting for 'ideal conditions' such as democracy and freedom. Freedoms would be fought for and not be viewed as a combustion to take place in the future. 'Not only would this determine the terms of reference for the future, it would also distinguish between those who are committed to the struggle and those who pay lip-service to the idea from the point of view of worn-out liberal clichés' (Mafeje 1994a: 59-60). Second, Mafeje argues that in their struggles African intellectuals cannot be guided by 'liberal sentimentalism'. For him, merely to speak about certain freedoms is to demand liberal ideals. In waging a struggle for radical change, African intellectuals are obliged not only to state how this would be achieved but also to articulate what they would do when their freedoms are attained. The point being made by Mafeje is that 'it is easier to find excuses than to find real solutions' (Mafeje 1994a: 60). Quite eloquently, he says: 'It would be the height of naiveté for African scholars to suppose that academic freedom, however defined, would act as a kind of *deus ex machina*' (Mafeje 1994a: 60).

If there were any signs of 'African renaissance', then African scholars would be able to think beyond the mere question of 'academic freedom'. Beyond agitation, Mafeje argues, African scholars ought to state what their intellectual enterprise is. He poses the following question: 'Is it going to be a reproduction of liberal ideology and social values or something more authentic and transcendent?' (Mafeje 1994a: 60). The rise of calls for academic freedom and social democracy coincided with the rise of 'cultural revivalism' in African intellectual discourse. Mafeje surmises that this could have been prompted by a sense of 'revulsion' against imperialist domination even though Africa is said to be independent. Furthermore, it could be a sense of disillusionment with the African 'comprador class' 'which has sold out to Western imperialism'. As a result, 'there is an underlying but strong belief among some African intellectuals that development in Africa is impossible without a return to "African culture"' (Mafeje 1994a: 60). Mafeje argues that the notion of cultural revivalism came at a time when

‘proto-nationalists’, who were involved in the independence movement but were quite idealistic about African culture, were being superseded and discredited by ‘meta-nationalists’. The latter were ‘willing to relativize culture so as to find a broader and more sustainable base for development’ (Mafeje 1994a: 61). According to him, this seems quite ‘feasible’ because there are no signs of cultural revivalism in Africa, unlike in the Middle East. What exists, instead, is pressure for democratic pluralism.

He argues that the problem of cultural revivalism ‘is a problem of an alienated petty bourgeois elite in Africa’ (Mafeje 1994a: 61). What this means, therefore, is that any intellectual enterprise premised on cultural revivalism is likely to encounter sociological and theoretical problems. As a response to a deepening crisis in Africa, African intellectuals have invoked culture as a missing link in development discourse (Mafeje 1988b). Thus, African intellectuals have come full circle because in the 1970s they rejected theories of culture as part of ‘modernisation theories’.

The problem to note is that Mafeje talks of African intellectuals (as he does generally with African elites) as if they are a homogenous group, and it is often difficult to know which strand of these groups he is actually using as an exemplar of a very diverse category. Some African intellectuals ‘rejected theories of culture as part of “modernisation theories”’ others embraced it, and still others were completely oblivious of it – after all the category ‘African intellectuals’ will cover those in the humanities, social and the natural sciences. Throwing around of the category of ‘comprador class’ is equally careless. Rather than simply fronting for transnational monopoly capital, there are legitimate cases of the ‘national bourgeoisies’ having emerged in several countries ranging from Senegal to Nigeria and Kenya. Simply flattening over the contours of the African capitalist class formations to the convenient category of ‘comprador class’ (or the notion that all the African bureaucracies were facilitators of neo-colonialism, again flattens a complex, diverse landscape; indeed, it would not be able to explain the *Lagos Plan of Action* (1980)). That people failed in achieving an objective (and here failure would be relative) does not suggest that they failed to act or were complicit.

Mafeje goes on to argue, without specifying as to which African scholars, that by the 1980s they were returning to the notion of culture as a missing link in developmental discourse. The difference is that they, unlike the ‘imperialist’ modernisation theorists, were nationalistic in their sentiments. Yet, ‘anthropologists and sociologists have always found it difficult to use culture as an analytical tool. The reason is that it is nebulous and its boundaries are very difficult to determine with precision. If narrowly defined, it becomes too particularistic to take into account all sorts of influences from outside. Needless to say, there is no pure culture in the

modern world. On the contrary, it is those cultures which borrowed most from others which flourished and became a factor to reckon with, universally' (Mafeje 1994a: 61-2). Mafeje mentions European culture as the best example of this in modern history.

It is not unfair to suggest, however, that the so-called European civilisation came at the expense and erosion of other cultures – particularly those in the Global South. African societies have been in no small measure victims or casualties of this European civilisation. Thus, Mafeje argues that colonialism or the 'colonial heritage' was an imposition on Africans as against voluntary or organic exchange. This is an historical fact which needs to be evaluated critically for the purposes and benefit of present day Africa. At the level of cultural institutions it might be possible to find commonalities among Africans in sub-Saharan more so in relation to kinships e.g. clans, lineages etc. Yet it may still be more difficult 'to derive from these a pan-Africanist culture'. This is so because these cultural institutions reveal very little about belief systems, cosmologies, and histories of origin which are varied among the people of Africa.

Mafeje goes on to argue that: 'There is no question that, historically and anthropologically, sub-Saharan Africa is marked more by diversity than uniformity. The "nation-building" philosophy of the 1960s was a response to this. It floundered precisely because it refused to acknowledge diversity, something which is of great relevance to African social and political thinkers of today' (Mafeje 1994a: 62). Yet politically, Kenya, Nigeria, and Ethiopia are countries racked by political crises precisely because of the entrenchment of diversity as political identity. Senegal and Tanzania are far more successful precisely because they do not entrench ethnic diversity as identities around which to organise politics. What Mafeje is saying is largely true but it does not explain the success of Julius Nyerere's nation-building and social cohesion philosophy in Tanzania. No doubt Tanzania and Senegal may be isolated cases but there are lessons to be learned from both. There is related to the notion of institutions the question of norms which are subject to manipulation by leaders of society and politicians. It is not uncommon in South Africa, for example, to hear through sheer expediency politicians lambasting their critics and journalists for engaging in 'unAfrican' behaviour. Such instances could 'lead to a conflict between those who seek to defend African norms and those who benefit by violating them, for example African peasants versus African comprador exploiters' (Mafeje 1994a: 62). In such instances, this 'ceases to be a cultural issue but a structural one, with the antagonists appealing to different sets of norms'. Thus although some African norms persist, they are manipulated by different forces from within and from without the African continent. As such, 'we encounter an irreversible process of transformation which produces different kinds of Africans. It is this emerging reality, the historical African, not the

ontological Negro of Senghor or Nkrumah that we have to understand and deal with in a revolutionary manner' (Mafeje 1994a: 63).

Culturalists 'are not able to say where "values" come from, other than that they are "socially determined"' (Mafeje 1994a: 63). Unlike culturalists, materialists are able to articulate their position by saying values 'are a result of human endeavour'. In acquiring formal knowledge and skills, the 'African elite' develop values which are not necessarily shared by the rest of society. (Mafeje uses the term African elite in an undifferentiated, singular.) In this sense, when the educated elite speak of African culture they do not refer to themselves nor can they claim to be custodians of African culture 'in a generic sense' – nobody can in any case. This is not to say they cease to be African. But rather, it is to say education tends to alter their value system. Yet they pose as custodians of African culture. Having seen the failures of proto-nationalists of the independence movement, the anti-imperialist meta-nationalists were not only critical of imperialism, but also of neo-colonialism. In this regard, they sought a common pan-African identity. 'A number of African intellectuals have begun to find rationalisations for it by imputing pan-African cultural continuities where none exist, historically and anthropologically. This must be regarded as a very unfortunate intellectual relapse on the part of African scholars' (Mafeje 1994a: 63). This is quite a sweeping generalisation from Mafeje.

For Mafeje, this cultural revivalism is unfortunate because it came at a time when African intellectuals were required to provide theoretical perspectives that would help in making sense of ethno-linguistic diversity in the context of political and economic decline on the continent. The problem with the said intellectuals is that they do not like the African culture about which they are preoccupied – they merely talk about it. This is a controversial remark no doubt. Ordinary African people, on the other hand, seem to take it for granted and traverse the whole continent in order to improve their lives. The presumption here is that 'ordinary African people' are immune from the cultural deformations that Mafeje finds in African intellectuals and that is a highly problematic idea. It also assumes that African intellectuals in their multiplicity do not 'traverse the whole continent in order to improve their lives.' It would be difficult for Mafeje to explain CODESRIA (a veritable home for exile intellectuals) or the cross-border movements of African intellectuals. Elsewhere, Mafeje (2001d) argues analogously in his critique of economists that all they do is to rationalise events *ex post facto* while 'real economics is made by producers' themselves. At any rate, this is a structural as against a cultural issue. In invoking African culture, African intellectuals could possibly be avoiding auto-critique or critical self-reflexivity. It goes without saying that the African intellectuals are as African as everybody else on this continent. The difference resides at the

level of sub-culture and social values of the African intellectuals. Possibly, what is at stake, Mafeje argues, are their social values rather than their sub-culture. It needs to be said, however, that the assumption that African intellectuals share the same values is a sweeping generalisation.

Related to the question of cultural revivalism is the question of language. Languages such as English, French and Portuguese, all of which have come to dominate on the African continent, are a symbol of colonialism. Mafeje argues that the 'alienating influence' of these foreign languages is well-known. Yet during the period of independence, African governments, unable to deal with the multiplicity of African languages and ethnic conflicts, decided to retain the languages of the colonisers as official languages. Some commentators saw this step as a uniting force. Mafeje argues that this issue imposed itself again in the 1970s, and although it did not yield anything of significance, possibly for some reasons as in the 1960s. What it did, however, was to put on the table theoretical questions on the nature of the relationship between language and 'authenticity' or representation. Mafeje argues that this issue raises emotions for some people. He thus looks at the question of language and development historically:

First, it is posited that no nation can develop while relying on a foreign language. Second, it is claimed that African universities by virtues of relying on foreign languages have become conveyor belts for Western ideas. Concerning the first supposition, much depends on when a people becomes a nation and an imposed language gets indigenized. Second, we have the problem of an emerging discrepancy between universal and vernacular language among the same people, as knowledge advances unevenly in historical society. The extreme examples are the universalization of Latin and French in Europe during the Middle Ages and the bourgeois revolution, respectively. During these two epochs great advances in the arts and sciences were made in European societies, despite the reliance on esoteric languages. Indeed, the history of the Indo-European languages is nothing else but a continuous imposition by universalized languages on vernacular languages. Consequently, the establishment of the nation-state in Europe was premised on the same principle. Nor is this peculiar to Europe. In North Africa, Arabic did the same and in Ethiopia Amharic came closest to it. It is also arguable that Spanish in Latin America had the same effect. Therefore, the supposition that development cannot occur through an imposed foreign language is not founded in history. (Mafeje 1994a: 65)

The difference here is that on the African continent the question of language and development arises in the context of a people who were historically colonised and seek to develop in the wake of colonial ruins. Thus unlike the other cases, they do not have the luxury to superimpose on others in the way that their former colonisers did. At least they cannot do so without being accused of mimicking their previous colonisers. For Mafeje, the added advantage of African scholars is that even if European languages dominate, African scholars are still able to rely on their facility of local languages. This, however, 'is contingent on the direction the African revolution takes them' (Mafeje 1994a: 65).

As regards the African universities, the issue is not only that they use European languages but that they themselves as institutions of higher learning are European in origin. Of course this is not to deny the fact 'that before Oxford and Cambridge, there was Timbuktu – on the banks of what is now called River Niger, in West Africa' (Adesina 2005: 26). The general point is simply that the current universities in Africa are based on a Euro-American model. Even those universities on the continent whose achievements continue to be celebrated, are complicit in perpetuating and upholding European ideas and values. The South African universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand (which once delighted at the idea of being known as 'the Harvard of South Africa') are prime examples of this. This is not to paint African universities and academics with one brush. Like universities in other parts of the world, African universities have shown the same contradictions as are found in the societies of which they are a part. Debates about transformation and decolonisation in African universities is carried out in foreign languages. In this regard, a question about the nature of the relationship between ideas and language imposes itself. Mafeje (1994a: 66) asks: 'Does authenticity reside in the language itself or in its use?'

According to him, any language can be appropriated by any user for 'authentic representations'. 'The best illustration of the fact is African literature writers who work in English and French. Nobody doubts the authenticity of Sembene's African representations in French or Achebe's in English. While writing in these languages, they manage to retain the African rhetoric in its most dynamic form' (Mafeje 1994a: 66). In any case, the insistence on a return to African culture and language without reference to objective structural constraints 'is an irrational response which detracts from a serious theorization of development problems in Africa' (Mafeje 1994a: 67). For example, Mafeje argues that militant anti-imperialism does not necessarily land itself to socialism, and the rejection of the unitary state in Africa presupposes democratic pluralism. Yet for radicals there does not seem to be a point of reference outside of Africa since the collapse of 'socialism' in Eastern Europe. Also, the liberal

democracy of the imperialist countries is not necessarily the best example for African radicals who advocate African nationalism in the form of culture and language. In any case, it would be theoretically incomprehensible for them to advocate culture and language while advancing arguments couched in terms of liberal democracy of the West. Mafeje (1994a: 67) goes further than that to say: 'Even social democracy has become an issue in the advanced capitalist countries'. This then calls for alternative theoretical suppositions.

It calls for new concepts and theoretical frameworks. Charitably, the call for a return to African culture and language could also be taken to mean a demand for 'the indigenisation of forms of knowledge in Africa'. While such a demand implies abandoning Eurocentric theories and paradigms, it does not necessarily mean a rejection of western epistemology completely. This is so because, epistemologies 'are so broad and abstract that they are not immediately affected by theoretical disputation' (Mafeje 1994a: 68). This harks back to Karl Popper's (1968) 'conjectures and refutations' and Thomas Kuhn's (1970) 'structure of scientific revolutions' i.e. whether or not science grows by accretion or an epistemological break. Mafeje proceeds to address the question of paradigms and argues that they are 'established normative standards' in the sense of philosophy of science. Kuhn puts it as follows: 'a set of recurrent and quasi-standard illustrations of various theories in the conceptual, observational, and instrumental applications. These are the community's paradigms, revealed in its textbooks, lectures, and laboratory exercises' (Kuhn in Mafeje 1994a: 68). In this sense, paradigms are not theories but agreed upon and accepted means by which scientific propositions are validated. In short, paradigms are what one might call, for lack of a better word, academic conventions. By the same token, Mafeje argues that scientific propositions are not theories but could rather be 'part of routine work'. This means that 'one could write for 25 years, without producing a single theoretical idea'. This is the point at which African scholars should be concerned since they are trying to liberate themselves from the western theoretical canon. The question which confronts the reader is how does one arrive at theoretical ideas and how are such ideas related to paradigms?

Important to note is the fact that scholars who share the same paradigm need not share the same theoretical outlook. Mafeje argues that scientific activity carries with it an intuitive sense of discretion. This may have something to do with the background of the researcher. Such an intuitive discretion means that one is able to abstract certain elements from current paradigms. Those abstracted elements are in turn used to investigate problems which preoccupy the researcher and his cohorts. A new paradigm emerges when the selected elements are 'able to guide research completely'. The new paradigm will only have theoretical significance once

its results prove incompatible with prevailing theories. When that happens, the conditions are ripe for a new or competing theory which could after some time replace the existing theory. At the level of methodology, Mafeje observes that in the process of knowledge-making the researcher is guided by a single methodology since more than one methodology implies eclecticism. According to him, 'eclecticism is the mark of the theoretically weak' (Mafeje 1994a: 69). This is so because 'each epistemology predicates its own methodology'. For example, 'dialectical materialism relies on historical materialism producing syntactical posits regarding concrete manifestations of its objects of study. Likewise, positivism relies on empiricism' (Mafeje 1994a: 69). He concludes that in this regard, 'methodology is theory of theory (not of knowledge)'. Perhaps contrary to Mafeje, a more precise definition would be a theory of methods than a theory of theory. Methodology provides guiding principles for formulating theories 'within its terms of reference'. Methodology provides guiding principles for formulating theories, alright, but it does this only through the research techniques. In this regard, African scholars ought to go beyond 'mere paradigms' without minimising the importance of the same. 'To gain adequate knowledge, the African researcher who is trained in a universal or formal language must synchronize his meaning with those of the people who of necessity conduct their discourse in the vernacular' (Mafeje 1994a: 70). It is not clear whether that includes pidgin/creole languages or linguistic codes. It cannot be assumed that the 'people' only speak undiluted indigenous languages. In any case it is doubtful that Mafeje would deny this.

8.2 The Responsibility of the African Intellectual

Having discussed the struggle for 'authenticity' in African social science discourse, attention is now given to the role and responsibility of the African intellectual. It is a known datum that in every society there are certain individuals who are credited for having a better understanding of issues which affect society. Intellectuals have come to be associated with above average levels of formal education. Some intellectuals, it should be acknowledged, attain their status through self-education. That notwithstanding, educational credentials still count as more decisive than anything else. Compared to places like Europe and North America, the post-independence Africa has a very young intellectual community. As a result, the African intellectual community is very conscious of itself – if nothing else – and has for quite some time written searching auto-critical writings (de Braganca and Depelchin 1986; Campbell 1986; Falola 2001; Mafeje 1986b, 1990b, 1994a, 1994b, 2000a, 2001c; Mandaza 1987; Mazrui 2005; Mkandawire 1995a, 1999, 2005; Nabudere 1988; Shivji 1993, 2002; Tandon 1982; wa

Thiong'o 2005). In the early 1960s, Mafeje observes, educated Africans were referred to by sociologists as the 'educated elite'. The emphasis was largely on their emergence and less so on their social eminence. Prior to independence there were, of course, educated Africans some of whom became leaders of the independence movement. Yet in spite of their existence in African societies, 'they were not seen as constituting a special category which could be labelled "educated African elite" or "African intellectuals"' (Mafeje 1994b: 193).

The objective socio-political conditions of the colonial situation precluded social eminence of the educated Africans. Their eminence was always in doubt. According to Mafeje (1994b: 193), 'their existence had not gelled into something *sui generis*. Moreover, they were cast in a different social role, as compared with the post-independence generation of African intellectuals'. For Mafeje, the point of raising these issues at all is to ascertain how social responsibility is given to future leaders of society and how much of this is determined by the process of their social reproduction. While intellectuals are produced for certain purposes, they are also capable of transcending such purposes by reproducing themselves 'in ways which are inconsistent with the original social goals' (Mafeje 1994b: 194). Their self-reproduction may either be progressive or retrogressive.

Thus for Mafeje, the meaning of the word 'intellectual' is to be understood in both sociological and ontological terms in that 'while the emergence of intellectuals is historically determined, it at the same time transcends history by taking excursions into the unknown but promising future' (Mafeje 1994b: 194). In this regard, intellectual life has a utopia dimension to it insofar as it questions the given state of existence. As regards the social production and reproduction of African intellectuals, Mafeje argues that the latter are a product of the post-independence period. As mentioned earlier, there existed educated individuals before or during colonialism. The issue, however, is that educational institutions during colonialism were dominated by the colonisers. In this sense, educated Africans could only serve in colonial institutions rather than 'develop a sense of themselves as an independent force' (Mafeje 1994b: 194). This sounds excessively deterministic. If they were unable to 'develop a sense of themselves as an independent force' because of colonialism, it would be difficult to explain their rebellion against colonialism or their intellectual constitution of anti-colonial narratives and discourses. From Cheikh Anta Diop, Onwuka Dike, to Chinua Achebe, some of their most eminent works were produced while still under colonial suzerainty. This is even more evident in South Africa's case.

Mafeje goes on to say they were unable to develop 'an intellectual trajectory' which can be said to have been distinctly their own. Again this is incorrect. One might argue that

logically and politically, what Mafeje is saying had to be so because African intellectuals were denied opportunities and responsibility for that to happen. It needs to be said, however, that denial of something does not translate to it being unattainable. Ideologically and culturally, there was a great sense of alienation from their society as well. In the independence period things changed both at the formal and the psychological level. The implications of this change were not only technical but also intellectual. Given that African intellectuals had only been exposed to western formal education, it was only natural that they use that intellectual resource as their starting point. The upshot, Mafeje (1994b: 195) maintains, is that ‘the 1960s saw the most uncritical reproduction of Western forms of thought in universities and in government technical departments’. This is an unwarranted generalisation. The Ibadan School of History emerged in 1959/1960 and the Dakar School with Cheikh Anta Diop in the 1960s. The idea of ‘modernisation’ gained a lot of currency during that period. To the credit of African intellectuals, modernisation theories came under harsh criticism by the 1970s (Mafeje 1971; Magubane 1971, 1973, 1976). This issued in two things. First, there developed a sense of self-awareness among African intellectuals. Second, there developed ideological differences among them. There were those who were critical of the status quo and required a radical break with the western canon and those who saw western theories as relevant and important in order to overcome underdevelopment in Africa (Mafeje 1994b). The latter group did so without renouncing its nationalist outlook and in so doing they were attractive to African governments because of a shared philosophical and ideological outlook. In this sense, Mafeje cautions:

Although it is quite tempting, and some have fallen for the trap, any attempt to make a radical distinction between those intellectuals who by virtue of their ideological appeal are in government service and those who are not so engaged is futile. This is particularly so given that governments, whether reactionary or progressive, will always have their own legitimisers. The dividing line should rather be between those intellectuals who are aware of the limits of existing meanings, values and paradigms and consciously seek ways of transcending them, and those who are complacent. (Mafeje 1994b: 195)

But this would not mean that those who work with their governments are complacent or unaware of the ‘limits of existing meanings, values and paradigms’. Indeed, public office (or as technocrats) may be seen as a way of overcoming these limits. A case in point would be Adebayo Adedeji – Professor of Public Administration at University of Ife, Minister in the early 1970s in the Gowon Administration, and Executive Secretary of UNECA from 1975 to

1991. A common strand in his career was striving to end the inherited colonial political economy that constrains Africa. Even Kenya's Philip Ndegwa, more bourgeois oriented than Adedeji, was no less driven by the same passion. These are only two of thousands across the continent whose service in government would not suggest complacency. Indeed, Samir Amin's career started as government adviser and working in the public sectors of Egypt and Mali (among others); even his directorship of IDEP needs to be seen as public service engagement. Yet Mafeje argues that is against the background of the mentioned quote that one can be able to appreciate the 'adaptability of imperialism' since the 1960s. He goes on to say:

It is important to recognise that intellectuals who are opposed, say, to neo-colonial governments and the existing system are not necessarily superior to those who are supportive of the status quo. Intellectual opponents of the existing order can be sterile and inconsequential. Think of the conventional left. What superior ideas has it been able to produce since the Russian Revolution and what social achievements has it made since? This is not meant to be an indictment of the left but a warning that the superiority of any intellectual idea is not to be claimed but demonstrated, scientifically and socially. (Mafeje 1994b: 196)

Mafeje acknowledges that there emerged by the 1960s a cohort of African left intellectuals, and a majority of them were operating on the fringes of governments either as members of 'official youth organisations' or as journalists. Also, there were those who were in the universities but they were so small in numbers that they were no more than 6% of the faculty. The intellectual enterprise of the aforementioned period centred on a rejection of neo-colonialism in Africa and western imperialism. Mafeje argues that this group, from the 1970s to the 1990s, went through two theoretical stages: the dependency school and the conventional Marxist socialist school. It is a question as to whether these intellectuals were as neatly polarised between the schools mentioned by Mafeje. For example Zeleza (1997) talks about the different theoretical fads within which Africa has always been understood, not only by western scholars but also by African scholars themselves. These range from modernisation theories, dependency theory, Marxism, neo-Marxism, post-coloniality, postmodernism and so on. Today, the disillusioned strand of African intellectuals talks about 'decoloniality' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013).

Over the years, there have been calls for African scholars to account for themselves in the sense of writing from within and to cease to be dominated by others intellectually (Ki-

Zerbo 1994, 2005; Mafeje 1986b, 1990b, 1994a, 1994b, 2000a, 2001c; Mandaza 1987; Mkandawire 1995a, 1999, 2005; Nabudere 2011; Shivji 1993; wa Thiong'o 2005). Over and above the question of knowledge production, this is about social responsibility of the intellectual. This then raises the question as to why intellectuals have to be socially responsible and who exactly apportions that responsibility. The question is both sociological and historical. It is under these sociological and historical conditions that intellectuals can be driven to produce ideas. Mafeje concedes that intellectuals are individuals who are usually credited for having a better understanding of social issues. He acknowledges that his discussion of the social responsibility of the African intellectual is quite compatible with the notion of the 'transcendent' intellectual except in two respects. Firstly, on Mafeje's schema, there are no intellectual elites which address society 'from a socially neutral standpoint'. Such an assumption would fall into the trap of positivism in any case. Secondly, he is not saying that 'transcendence' 'can mean only negation of the existing order and the reaching out for utopia. Rather, it recognises the existence of adaptive transcendence within the given order' (Mafeje 1994b: 197).

For Mafeje, there are no scientific grounds for supposing that the notion of a 'permanent revolution' will lead to the 'chosen utopia' of the revolutionary intellectual. Here Mafeje seems to suggest that such an assumption is teleological. Moreover, he suggests that it is a mistake to assume that societies can only be changed through radical or violent upheavals. 'Revolutionary African intellectuals might wish to shift the emphasis from denouncing discredited African governments to a realistic evaluation of the weakness and the strengths of those social forces which are dissatisfied with the status quo' (Mafeje 1994b: 197). Furthermore: 'It is not enough to protest on behalf of the people and to demand a better deal for them. Even reactionary intellectuals wish the people well, but this does not detract from their immediate commitment. If so, might not revolutionary intellectuals do best by producing the necessary transcendent ideas (in both senses in which we have used the term) so as to force their opponents to adapt or die' (Mafeje 1994b: 197). This would require extensive research on why previous strategies failed and the objective circumstances which made those strategies fail.

These factors combine to form the social reality that has to be transcended in order to come up with alternative intellectual discourses. For this to happen, transcendent intellectuals ought to be afforded 'social space'. This, of course, presents a challenge of its own insofar as it harks back to the old problems of European intellectuals of the Renaissance who considered themselves leaders of society and 'reserved the right to be treated as such' (Mafeje 1994b: 197). They thought they had the right to pursue ideas and were entitled to free enquiry wherever

it may lead. This was not viewed as subversive but rather as a habit worth pursuing since it would lead to social progress. What made this possible was the fact that European intellectuals were part of the ruling class with their own means of livelihood. By the time knowledge became 'institutionalised' and 'professionalised', particularly after the bourgeois revolution, the ethic of free enquiry had been fully established and was no longer the preserve of the aristocracy but had become 'a bourgeois right'.

As such, the idea of 'academic freedom' must be understood as a product of 'bourgeois democracy in general'. In the African context there has been a lack of free exchange of ideas because of the absence of bourgeois ideals. To add insult to injury, Africa had the painful experience of colonialism. Under colonialism, the development of a national bourgeoisie was crushed. Colonialism sought to produce a petty bourgeois class which would serve the interests of the coloniser. Towards the end of colonialism, universities were established. Although these universities were modelled on European universities, they had no autonomy and enjoyed no academic freedom. In this regard, Mafeje argues that when African academics speak of academic freedom, they ought to relate it to 'its social substratum' or the wider societal context. This is an important point to bear in mind because contemporary African problems are not due to lack of intellectual or academic freedom. Instead, they are historically determined by the African colonial heritage. One has to bear in mind that 'at independence Africans inherited a society characterised by intellectual, cultural, and economic poverty' (Mafeje 1994b: 198).

Logically and politically this had to be so. Sociologically and historically, Africans could only have inherited from their colonisers nothing more than 'undemocratic political control'. So the legacy of colonialism is not very puzzling. It is widely understood. The issue, for Mafeje, is why it is that African intellectuals and academics would expect academic and intellectual freedom in a society which had no recognisable democratic foundations. So there is no valid reason for African intellectuals to assume, as did aristocratic transcendent European intellectuals, that their knowledge would give them grounds to lead their societies. For Mafeje, such an assumption mistakes democratic rights for natural privilege. Moreover, unlike their European counterparts, African intellectuals have no 'vintage social capital to draw from'. Their best hope was the labour market in the form of the post-independence state. Mafeje argues that because there is 'no recognisable democratic foundation', African intellectuals are not part of the ruling class like their pre-bourgeois European counterparts. Thus they should not struggle for academic freedom. This position, Mafeje broadly shared with Claude Ake, ultimately lost out at the Kampala Conference of 1990. The result is the Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility. Yet he argues that those intellectuals in

government may have valued intellectual or academic freedom but they did not live by it. It was immaterial to them. He argues that those who were in the universities faced a dilemma in that they sought to please the post-independence governments while at the same time they valued intellectual and academic freedom. Here Mafeje makes sweeping generalisation – i.e. all African intellectuals teaching in the universities ‘sought to please the post-independence governments.’ This is incorrect. It is possible to teach in the university and still be opposed to the government even in authoritarian contexts. Yet the question as to whether academic freedom is realisable in undemocratic societies remains unanswered.

Invoking Gramsci’s demarcation between ‘synthetic’ and ‘organic’ intellectuals, Mafeje observes:

‘Synthetic’ intellectuals would be those who take their existence in a given social order for granted. By virtue of their services to the system they would expect to be rewarded, not only materially but also socially. Sociologically, the latter would refer to social recognition and prestige, accompanied by specific privileges such as intellectual autonomy and academic freedom not so much as political rights but more as moral claim. This coincides with that referred to earlier as complacent intellectuals. As pointed out, this has nothing to do with their potency or creativity but rather with their self-perception which determines their social praxis. These mainstream intellectuals always constitute the majority. Otherwise, the system would not be able to reproduce itself, ideologically and technically. ‘Organic’ intellectuals are a contrasting category. They are not only critical of but are also opposed to present existence. They are thus transcendent intellectuals not in the adaptive sense but in the revolutionary sense. This denotes that they cannot take their existence for granted. Nor could they treat themselves as an isolate, separated from broader struggles in the society they wish to transform. By the very nature of their political aspirations, they cannot make a distinction between the freedoms they seek for themselves and those which are denied to the majority of the people. Therefore, the struggle for democracy becomes one and indivisible, and willy-nilly transcendent intellectuals become an organic part of it. (Mafeje 1994b: 199-200)

It is a measure of the self-indulgence of the left intellectuals that they either see themselves in their peers or declare them collaborators. At least Claude Ake asked the question why intellectuals should expect to be treated differently from ordinary people in society. The

problem with Ake's line of thought is the supposition that you cannot struggle for specific rights until all rights are granted. By implication, gender equality struggle should be withheld until equality is granted to all. That would be a flawed argument. For organic intellectuals, or 'transcendent intellectuals in the revolutionary sense', academic freedom no longer becomes a search for privilege but a democratic right which is part of 'a larger social democracy'. It is not clear whether this would also apply to intellectuals who do not see themselves as revolutionary like Mafeje. It should be noted that in relating the question of academic freedom to its social substratum, Mafeje is not saying that academic freedom is not worth fighting for. Instead, his argument is that it 'should be developed into a movement' and be fought for concurrently with other struggles. In their failure to do so, African intellectuals have come in for harsh criticism from Issa Shivji who argues that: 'The present situation in Africa has brought in (sic) sharp relief the complete passivity and marginality of African intellectuals in the political and social life of our nations. ...We as intellectuals have distinguished ourselves more by our silence, submission and subservience rather than by courage and consistency' (Shivji in Mafeje 1994b: 200). Although Mafeje concedes that Shivji was justified in this harsh critique, he nevertheless feels that the latter caricatured African intellectuals. Mafeje's contention is that one cannot paint African intellectuals with one brush as if there were no qualitative differences among them. Here Mafeje committed the *tu quoque* fallacy because he does this very frequently. At any rate, it is not necessarily correct to say African intellectuals have been silent, subservient and submissive. Mafeje (1994b: 200), concedes that 'the likelihood is that they talked too much' as opposed to being silent and submissive.

This is attributable to the fact that African intellectuals themselves were part of the African elite. As such, at the beginning they may have felt no need to be submissive to anybody. Yet when things changed the political elite began to clampdown on them in the 1960s. In this regard, not all African intellectuals are/were part of the ruling elite. They may have been petty-bourgeois as a result of 'their social birth', but their expulsion and imprisonment by the ruling class means that they (the intellectuals) are/were something else. 'Therefore, we should guard against class analysis that ends up in class determinism, especially in societies in transition or in crisis such as those of Africa or the Third World in general' (Mafeje 1994b: 201). The failure of African intellectuals 'has to be measured according to the determinate conditions under which they operate' (Mafeje 1994b: 201). Others have caricatured African intellectuals in simplistic terms by suggesting that the older generation is supportive of the status quo, while the younger generation is critical of it (Melber 2009; Robins 2004). Yet this is an oversimplification which does not take seriously critiques of African governments by African

scholars and the adverse effects of such critiques on those scholars. The reality, however, is that the older generation of African intellectuals had been critical of African governments and ‘this was done with such militancy and courage that by the mid-1970s, the authorities were getting alarmed and paternalistic Western liberals were losing their feigned impartiality. Crude and irresponsible upstarts, as this new variety of African intellectuals might have struck the establishment and its foreign advisors, they succeeded in making themselves a talking point for the rest of the 1970s’ (Mafeje 1994b: 201-202).

It was in the interest of the revolutionary scholars to prove themselves, unlike their complacent counterparts who were either pro status quo or simply indifferent. The implication for knowledge production and the search for an epistemological break is that complacent intellectuals are predisposed to do ‘normal science’ which does little to overthrow the existing order. The transcendent intellectuals, on the other hand, have a difficult task insofar as they ‘confront a double problem of negation of negations’ (Mafeje 1994b: 204).

The first negation is not being part of the centre and, therefore, being part of the periphery. The second negation is being objects of global capitalist exploitation in which the local ruling comprador class plays an essential role. Once again, we here encounter one of the most complex issues of our time, namely, a convergence between struggles for national liberation and a revolt against local and global economic exploitation. The latter presupposes class struggles and the former nationalist struggles. It is the articulation between these which transcendent African intellectuals have not been able to deal with effectively in theory and in practice. (Mafeje 1994b: 204)

This is an important point which underlies Mafeje’s critique of ‘value-free’ scholarship. Yet for Ki-Zerbo (1994: 33), ‘there are three strategic paths to social responsibility. The first is the creation of intellectual communities; the second, the struggle for democracy; and the third, the design and implementation of integrative strategies’. The section that follows grapples with Mafeje’s attempt at confronting negation of negations via his assessment of the notion of Africinity.

8.3 On the Question of Africinity

It is important to emphasize at the very outset that although Mafeje’s controversial article, ‘Africinity: A Combative Ontology’, is widely spoken about, notions of Africinity,

Afrocentricity and Afrocentrism are not necessarily part of his vocabulary. He dealt with the question of Africanity in the context of a CODESRIA debate of the late 1990s and early 2000s. As will be seen, he got a lot wrong in his handling of the concept of Afrocentricity, which he wrongly called ‘Afrocentrism’.

Souleymane Bachir Diagne (2001) argues that Mafeje thinks of Africanity as *substance* insofar as he uses the philosophical category of ‘ontology’ to define it. For his part, Mafeje (2000a) argues that Africanity entails both rebellion and affirmation. Because Africanity is both a rebellion and affirmation of African personhood, it is necessarily combative. Be that as it may, what Mafeje accepts as analysis of the concepts of Afrocentricity and Africanity does not seem to be analysis of these two concepts. He mentions, for example, the ‘Temple University School’, which is pioneering in the field of Afrocentricity, as some of the people whose ideas he wants to engage with. Yet, in spite of his otherwise provocative discussion, he seems to have a somewhat uncertain grasp of the concepts he sets out to analyse. For example, he speaks of ‘Afrocentrism’ instead of the more accurate concept, ‘Afrocentricity’. Yet in his discussion, one of the leaders of Afrocentric thought at Temple University, Molefi Asante, is conspicuous only by his absence. Asante, whose usage of these concepts represents the current standard, does not speak of Afrocentrism but Afrocentricity (see Asante 2008; Gordon 2008). He rejects the former as a flipside of the other pernicious ‘centrism’ – Eurocentrism. The same can be said of his associates or ‘earliest Afrocentrists’ such as Nah Dove, C. Tsehloane Keto, Ama Mazama, Kariamuwelsh, Terry Kershaw and others (see Asante 2008). Although Mafeje speaks (incorrectly) of Afrocentrism, this chapter will follow those scholars who form part of the Temple Circle and speak of Afrocentricity. ‘Afrocentrism’ will feature only in those instances where Mafeje is quoted directly.¹²⁴

One of the most salient features of Mafeje’s work generally, and the two write-ups on Africanity (see Mafeje 2000a; 2001c) particularly, is the insistence on history and the wider sociological context. As a prelude to his analysis of Africanity and Afrocentricity, Mafeje has this to say:

¹²⁴ It may be objected here that perhaps Mafeje is not mistaken in talking about Afrocentrism and that he does not mistake it for Afrocentricity and therefore he is justified in using it. That may very well be the case. But what convinces this author that Mafeje is in fact mistaken is the fact that in his write-ups on Africanity he claims not only to be engaging the Temple School but also that he is objecting to their purported handling of the notion of ‘Afrocentrism’. Yet that is a misplaced imputation since none of the Temple School adherents use the term.

First, nobody can think and act outside historically determined circumstances and still hope to be a social signifier of any kind. In other words, while we are free to choose the role in which we cast ourselves as active agents of history, we do not put on the agenda the social issues to which we respond. These are imposed on us by history. For example, we would not talk of freedom, if there was no prior condition in which this was denied; we would not be anti-racism if we had not been its victims; we would not proclaim Africanity, if it had not been denied or degraded; and we would not insist on Afrocentrism, if it had not been for Eurocentric negations... (Mafeje 2000a: 66)

As such, 'it is the historical juncture which defines us socially and intellectually' (Mafeje 2000a:66). It remains the case, then, that history weighs heavily on the present. Perforce, in order to chart a way forward, Africans must, Mafeje (2000a: 66) argues, adopt 'a conscious rejection of past transgressions, a determined negation of negations'. Against this brief background, Mafeje goes on to argue that although Afrocentricity (or what he illegitimately calls 'Afrocentrism') and Africanity are typically used interchangeably, a significant distinction between the two ought to be made. Firstly, the former, properly understood, is a methodological prerequisite for 'decolonising knowledge in Africa' or an antidote to Eurocentrism. Secondly, it is a demand by African scholars to study their societies from within. Thirdly, and this dovetails with the second point, Afrocentricity cannot be grown on foreign soil or be seen as a universal project.

Invoking Kwesi Prah, Mafeje (2000a: 67) declares: 'We must be national before we become international'. This may be viewed as a controversial political statement, but it is consistent with Mafeje's general epistemological and methodological preoccupation with whether or not 'idiographic enquiry yields deeper insights into societal processes than nomothetic enquiry' (Mafeje 1981: 123). This notwithstanding, Mafeje's attempt to localise Afrocentricity comes across as incredibly invidious. Fourthly, on his schema, Afrocentricity cannot be trans-Atlantic. Finally, Afrocentricity is 'basically referential' (Mafeje 2000a). These constituent elements of Afrocentricity will be discussed later on. In the meantime, an outline of Mafeje's Africanity is in order.

Mafeje (2000a) starts off by saying Africanity has profound political, ideological, cosmological and intellectual implications. It also has an emotive force with ontological connotations and, on those bases, it is therefore exclusivist. For Mafeje (2000a: 67), this is to be expected because the ontology of Africanity owes its character to 'white racist categorisations and supremacist European self-identities in particular'. In other words,

Africanity is, perforce, exclusivist and exclusionary precisely because it is a counter-reaction to white racism and Eurocentrism. This does not, however, make it a racist discourse. As Kwesi Prah (1998:158) says, 'those who fight bullies are not bullies'. Furthermore, Africanity has become 'a pervasive ontology that straddles space and time' (Mafeje 2000a: 67). It is not only limited to Africans on the continent but extends to those in the Diaspora as well – particularly African-Americans. As a consequence, 'it has acquired racial overtones precisely because it is a counter to white racism and domination, especially in America' (Mafeje 2000a: 67).

Over and above this, however, Africanity 'aims to gain respectability and recognition for the Africans by establishing the true identity of the historical and cultural African' (Mafeje 2000a: 67). More will be said later on about the foregoing points concerning the racial overtones of Africanity, and its extension to Africans in the Diaspora, with a view to show inconsistencies in Mafeje's analysis. There will be occasion, too, to compare and contrast Mafeje's understanding of these two concepts with Asante's understanding of the same. Mafeje goes on to say that the point of reference for Africanity is history and cultural underpinnings of contemporary African societies. This is necessarily so because it will enable African scholars to develop epistemologies of their own. This, he argues, will enable them to combat foreign domination and thus forge an independent Pan-African identity. Essentially, this is a struggle for a 'second independence' in Africa. This, Mafeje argues, has 'more to do with African meta-nationalism than race or colour' (Mafeje 2000a: 67). It is not immediately clear how this squares with his earlier submission that Africanity is exclusivist because of prior white racism and supremacist European self-identities.

In any case, even if he had not said this initially, it is a question whether race and colour can be dissociated from Africanity. Mafeje goes on to argue that Africanity is not only an assertion of an identity that has been denied, but also a Pan-Africanist revolt against external influences. As such, it is a 'political and ideological reflex' in an attempt to initiate 'African renaissance'. It should not, he cautions, 'be confused with black solidarity in the original Pan-Africanist sense, which included blacks of African descent in the Diaspora' (Mafeje 2000a: 67). It is legitimate to ask in what sense Africanity can be denied to Africans in the Diaspora. It is also not entirely clear how this line of thought squares with the earlier submission that 'instead of being limited to continental African; it extends to all blacks of African descent in the Diaspora' (Mafeje 2000a: 67).

Mafeje continues to say that the inclusion of Africans in the Diaspora is still valid and desirable. However socially, culturally and historically Africans in the Diaspora have ceased to be African. This argument rests on problematic premises. More will be said later on. Finally,

‘Africanity... is an insistence that the Africans think, speak, and do things for themselves in the first place. This does not imply unwillingness to learn from others but a refusal to be hegemonised by others, irrespective of colour or race’ (Mafeje 2000a: 68). As such:

By insisting on Africanity the Africans are staking their claim. For this reason, it would be incongruous, if the instruments for establishing Africanity were forged elsewhere. In the same way that Afrocentrism cannot be imported from America, Africanity cannot be nurtured outside Africa. As an ontology, it is inseparable from the projected African renaissance. It is a necessary condition for the mooted African renaissance, the second independence of African meta-nationalists. (Mafeje 2000a: 68-9)

It could be argued by Mafeje’s critics that he is in this regard overstating his case. None of the pioneers of Afrocentricity, certainly not Asante, believe that Afrocentricity should be imported to Africa. If anything, Afrocentricity draws inspiration from Africa. Indeed African ideas and values are taken as the point of departure. Asante (2008: 3) observes: ‘Afrocentricity traces its theoretical heritage to African ideas and African authors’. So it is not imported to Africa but rather draws inspiration from her and her people. Having attempted to give an outline of Mafeje’s understanding of the two concepts, a more critical juxtapose of his ideas with those of Asante is in order.

As intimated earlier on, none of the Temple Circle scholars speak, contrary to what Mafeje says, of Afrocentrism. They speak, instead, of Afrocentricity. When Mafeje (2000a:66) says, ‘we would not insist on Afrocentrism if it had not been for Eurocentric negations’, he runs the risk of reinforcing the idea that Afrocentric thought is the reverse side of Eurocentrism. It may be objected to this, of course, that since he speaks of Afrocentrism and not Afrocentricity, he is wholly justified in treating the former as a flipside of Eurocentrism. That would be a fair and justified objection. However it would overlook the fact that Mafeje takes as his point of departure the edited collection, *Out of One, Many Africas*, by Martin and West. Not only that, he mentions the Temple University School, represented in the collection by C. Tsehloane Keto (1999), as his interlocutors. Yet neither Keto nor any of the Temple School members speak of ‘Afrocentrism’. In fact, Keto (1999) advocates ‘the Africa-centred paradigm’ as opposed to Afrocentrism, which he calls ‘a political ideology’.

It should be said that there are similarities between what Mafeje calls Africanity and what Asante calls Afrocentricity. However the problem arises primarily because Mafeje claims to be engaging the Temple Circle and he ends up misconstruing their usage of these concepts.

In the process, not only does he confuse these concepts, he ends up tying himself up in conceptual knots. For the members of the Temple Circle, what is at issue is Afrocentricity not Afrocentrism. The former, on their view cannot be said to be the reverse side of Eurocentrism. As Asante (2008:6) argues, ‘Afrocentricity is not the reverse of Eurocentrism; neither is it a counter to Eurocentrism. Even if Eurocentrism never existed, there would be a need for African people to operate from their own sense of agency’. Even Lewis R. Gordon, who is not himself an Afrocentrist, has lamented the casual reading and misrepresentation of Afrocentrists. Gordon (2008: 106) observes: ‘The confusion emerges from the fact that proponents of Afrocentricity refer to themselves as Afrocentric, which unfortunately means that their work is mistaken for, as many of them have protested, Afrocentrism, which, they further argue, presents itself as a centrism along with Eurocentrism but with a black face’.

Where Mafeje (2000a: 66) might agree with Asante is on the idea that Afrocentricity is a ‘methodological requirement for decolonising knowledge in Africa’. This is so because Asante (2008: 2) argues similarly when he says: ‘Afrocentricity is a paradigmatic intellectual perspective that privileges African agency within the context of African history and culture transcontinentally and trans-generationally’. They may differ on the question of it being ‘transcontinental’ since Mafeje sees it as the preserve of those on the continent. Yet, further points of convergence between the two scholars emerge when Mafeje (2000a: 66) says: ‘Africa is the only region which has suffered such total paradigmatic domination. ...[So Afrocentric thought] is nothing more than a legitimate demand that African scholars study their society from inside and cease to be purveyors of alienated intellectual discourse’. Asante argues similarly:

the dislocation of Africans is a fact that should be corrected at any rate. While it is true that the cultural and intellectual dislocation of Africans has a lot to do with the fact that Europe colonised and enslaved Africans, it must be understood that for the African to assert his or her own agency is not a racist act, but a profoundly anti-racist act because it liberates the African from the dislocation that may have been created by Europeans and undermines any sense of European hegemony. (Asante 2008: 6)

Elsewhere, Asante (2008: 17) observes: ‘Afrocentricity... is a theory of agency, that is, the idea that African people must be viewed and view themselves as agents rather than spectators to historical revolution and change’. Mafeje and Asante may share the foregoing views, but they seem to conceive of Africanity in different ways. For Asante, Africanity ‘broadcasts

identity and being. Actually [it] refers to all of the customs, traditions, and traits of people of Africa and the diaspora'. This, of course, is to be distinguished from Afrocentricity which relies on 'self-conscious action'. Asante (2008: 17) says, for example: 'The idea of conscientization is at the centre of Afrocentricity because this is what makes it different from Africanity. One can practice African customs and mores and not be Afrocentric because Afrocentricity is conscientization related to the agency of African people. One cannot be Afrocentric without being a conscious human being'. He adds:

In pursuing Afrocentric historiography, we must not confuse Africanity with Afrocentricity. Afrocentricity, which is a theoretical perspective, is fundamentally based on a type of consciousness whereas Africanity is simply African people living as African people. I mean the fact that one is born in Africa does not mean that he is Afrocentric; since Afrocentricity is a theoretical idea, it must be gained by knowledge and consciousness, not by wearing African clothes or speaking an African language. Of course, it is likely that the Afrocentric person will speak a language and wear the clothes, but these factors are not predictors of Afrocentricity. (Asante 2008: 60-1)

Asante seems to attach a particular importance to Afrocentricity in a way that he does not to Africanity. This is in contrast to Mafeje who privileges the latter and not the former. Asante (2008: 109) concedes, however, that it is possible to link the two 'in order to generate a more productive architectonic African culture of balance and harmony'. The differences between Asante and Mafeje should be fairly clear. Since the former is foremost in this area, it might be said that Mafeje has a somewhat uncertain grasp of these issues. Charitably, however, one might say Mafeje is simply offering a different interpretation. Or, for that matter, that he is talking about something different – though similar in some ways.

While Asante sees Afrocentricity, which finds inspiration in 'African ideas', as a basis for countering paradigmatic hegemony, Mafeje sees such a project being fulfilled through Africanity. Both Asante and Mafeje are quick to avoid what one might call 'racial essentialism' or 'reductionism'. For example, Mafeje (2000a: 67) says Africanity 'has more to do with African meta-nationalism than race or colour'. Similarly, Asante disputes the 'pre-eminence' of 'black culture' in Afrocentricity. It seems extraordinary, however, that race can be said to have a minimal role in both discourses. Of course to be anti-racist is not to be racist. It is, however, to acknowledge the existence of racism and finding ways to combat it.

Unlike Mafeje, Asante does not explicitly say Afrocentricity has nothing to do with race. He says, instead, it is *not a racist discourse*. Mafeje also says Africanity is not a racist discourse. Although he says, quite explicitly, Africanity has nothing to do with race. Elsewhere, he acknowledges that ‘white racism is an experienced fact in Africa and looms very large. It is associated with trans-Atlantic slavery, colonialism, and apartheid...’ (Mafeje 2000b: 36). He sees race not only as an epiphenomenon unique to southern Africa, but also a ‘sterile issue’ and a ‘social construct’. It should be said, however, that the claim that race is a social construct is no more than a liberal platitude which does little to assist black people who are at the receiving end of racism. Perhaps to appreciate his aversion to race-talk one ought to recall his objection to, and critique of, taxonomic classifications (Mafeje 1991a).

Elsewhere, Mafeje (1990b: 160) observes: ‘In areas such as southern Africa where racial issues are intertwined with capitalist exploitation it is very difficult to rationalise the “Africanist” heritage and, at the same time, it is impossible to ignore it. Elsewhere in Africa where black is exploited by black, it is hard to give currency, except by invoking imperialism and thus obfuscate the relationship between internal and external exploitation’. Qualitative distinctions between southern African settler societies and the rest of the continent ought to be made. However, as Mamdani (1996) cautions, one should be careful of exceptionalism i.e. treating South Africa as if it were an exception and therefore different from other African countries.

Mafeje seems to contradict his earlier postulation, which is that talking about race obfuscates issues. He says:

The bearers of the ‘Africanist’ tradition are by no means the best representatives of African culture. If anything, they belong to the most alienated section of the African population, the educated and urbanised elite. Indeed, part of their grievance is being accorded a subordinate position in a world which is white-dominated. It is the hurt pride and continual racial humiliation which accounts for their combative spirit. This might be necessary but it is hardly sufficient, as it does not necessarily distinguish between primary and secondary contradictions within the African revolutionary struggle. Like every other social phenomenon, racism is structurally-determined. As such, its historical instances predicate different structural solutions. It would be strange if modern ‘Africanist’ projections have as their object the same structural concerns as those of the 1950s. (Mafeje 1990b: 160)

He acknowledges the structural dimension of racism and the fact that the world is white-dominated. Yet earlier on he had argued that to speak of the same is to obfuscate issues. The so-called internal exploitation is surely not likely to be understood outside of the context of external exploitation. The two are best understood as a mutually reinforcing rather than two polar opposites. Suggestions to the contrary assume a false dichotomy. It remains the case, of course, that there are differences between the 1950s and now. But there are continuities which cannot be wished away. Racism and imperialism are two examples of such. Mafeje seems to oscillate between positions something which makes it very difficult to know where he stands. Take, for example, the submission he makes later on in the same paper:

To emancipate themselves from white-instilled racial inferiority, blacks had to believe in themselves as subjects of their own history as good as any other. To do this, they did not have to be authors of racism for they did not need it. On the contrary, it was white colonialists and imperialists who needed it for structural and ideological domination. Therefore, while Sartre was justified in recognising 'negritude' as a necessary phase in the development of self-awareness of the black person, he was mistaken in thinking that it would in itself erase the scourge of white racism, without transforming its material base. Properly understood, racism is not the problem of the South but of the North which has an objective interest in it... The racial issue is still very much part of the current struggles in Africa and the rest of the Third World. (Mafeje 1990b: 167)

It is difficult to reconcile this axiomatic argument with the earlier statement he makes about racism being an aberration unique to southern Africa. Mafeje's view on Africanity are as interesting as they are controversial. Problematically, for example, he says:

Africanity is an assertion of an identity that has been denied; it is a Pan-Africanist revulsion against external imposition or refusal to be dictated to by others. In this sense it is a political and ideological reflex which is meant to inaugurate an African renaissance. In our view, this should not be confused with black solidarity in the original Pan-Africanist sense, which included blacks of African descent in the Diaspora. This is still valid and desirable. But, socially and conceptually, it is at odds with reality. Culturally, socially, and historically the African-Americans and the West Indians have long ceased to be Africans unless we are talking biology... (Mafeje 2000a: 67-8)

If one is reluctant to endorse what Mafeje is saying, it is not because one doubts that it is true. It is simply because one cannot help recalling that what he is advocating is what may be called Continentalism rather than Pan-Africanism (see Prah 2015). Whatever ties that remain between Africans on the continent and those in the Diaspora need to be nurtured and developed. Living on the African continent is neither necessary nor sufficient for a black person to be self-referentially African. It is difficult to understand why Mafeje's Pan-Africanism or Africanity excludes Africans in the Diaspora. What makes this even more difficult to comprehend is the fact that he had earlier acknowledged that Africanity 'extends to all blacks of African descent in the Diaspora' (Mafeje 2000a: 67).

There are a few points in Mafeje's thesis which need to be probed. Firstly, the banal assertion that, due to loss of cultural connections, Africans in the Diaspora can longer be called Africans is premised on the idea that there is one uniform or homogenous culture on the Africa continent to begin with. Yet a case can be made that there is no cultural homogeneity on the continent. As such, the idea that Africans in the Diaspora have no cultural connections to the continent is fairly mistaken. Secondly, the argument treats shared political history (between Africans on the continent and the Diaspora) and culture as somewhat mutually exclusive. What is important to note is the fact that colonialism and slavery hinged on three issues: political, economic and cultural. Thus the idea that one can deny Africans in the Diaspora their claim to Africanity, based on loss of culture, not only negates the fact that such cultural loss is a result of colonialism to begin with, but also comes close to blaming the victims. Africans in the Diaspora were enslaved and forcefully uprooted from the continent. For colonialism to succeed, cultural erosion had to take place. That Africans in the Diaspora bear European names is a case in point. Incidentally, Mafeje attempts to capture something of this when he says:

It can be surmised that the combination of assimilation and rejection is what became intolerable and led to an identity crisis. However, the feeling of alienation among the blacks in the diaspora and among those who were born in Africa could not have been the same. In the case of the latter, as Franz Fanon once remarked, past happening of by-gone days of their childhood could be brought out of the depths of their memories. *Nonetheless, the primeval view of 'being black in the world' remained the same; so did the concepts which were used to invoke it.* (Mafeje 1990b: 161, emphasis added)

The fact still remains, therefore, that: 'What [Africans in the Diaspora] have in common with other blacks in colonial Africa was racial oppression and exploitation' (Mafeje 1990b: 161). A

related point which one finds deeply troubling is Mafeje's claim that, because Africans in the Diaspora tend to be condescending towards Africans on the continent, 'marks the limits of transcendental Africanism'. Yet, some Africans on the continent can be condescending towards other Africans. One only needs to note Freetown African community's general attitude to Sierra Leoneans of the interior or pigmentational variations among Africans as the basis for the reconstitution of hierarchies with its roots in colonial racism. Ethnic stereotyping or condescension is not uncommon between different ethnic groups. Mafeje's work on the interlacustrine kingdoms should have alerted him to this as well – between the Batutsi and the Bahutu or the Bahima and the Bairu.

Mafeje argues that not only do African-Americans who visit Africa condescend to Africans but also find the latter 'a bit strange'. According to him, 'this is not simply a problem of false consciousness, as some idealist Pan-Africanists would like us to believe. Over time the two cousins have grown apart and in reality their common identity cannot be assumed' (Mafeje 2000a: 68). Mafeje's frustrations are understandable. Yet they would appear to some readers as invidious as they are ahistorical. The problem of condescension on the part of African-Americans can only be intelligible when understood from the point of view of historical sociology. For Magubane, the view that African-Americans are better than Africans is traceable to the 'moralistic rationale' which 'has become an ideology of absolutism and a classical psychological bulwark against the pangs of conscience which might have resulted from the betrayal and ill-treatment of blacks over the years' (Magubane 1987a: 20). Moreover, Mafeje's argument feeds into the view that: '[African-Americans] are unassailably American in culture and psychology and [that] their problem is one of assimilation... This sort of argument represents the sublime nonsense current among certain intellectuals who eschew race consciousness, and would *really* like to see the black as an integral part of the great American society' (Magubane 1987a: 82, emphasis in original). For Magubane, in discussing African-American consciousness of Africa or lack of it, one ought to 'trace its roots in the white social structure'. A people who have been subject to domination by another group of people for many years may suffer from collective amnesia or may become an imitation of the dominant group. The rejection of Africa by African-Americans ought to be understood in this context. Moreover, the oppression of black people in America coincided with the domination of Africa by Europe. This, for Magubane, is something which contributed to the 'moral and psychological despondency' on the part of Africa-Americans.

Magubane understood more clearly, where Mafeje did not, the depth of this problematic. A final point which one would like to make is that while Mafeje says Africanity

does not extend to the Diaspora, he still believes that it is not opposed to learning from others. He observes: 'Africanity... is an insistence that the Africans think, speak, and do things for themselves in the first place. This does not imply unwillingness to learn from others but a refusal to be hegemonised by others, irrespective of colour or race' (Mafeje 2000a: 68). This is similar to Asante's (2008: 2-3) submission: 'I do not present Afrocentricity as a settled corpus of ideas, as a worldview or as a closed system of beliefs. It remains important that we hold back any reductive misunderstanding of the nature of human interaction and the creation of reality'. Both of these are important insight which mark the best place to leave this discussion. The section that follows discusses the prospects and projects for what Mafeje calls 'indigenisation of political and intellectual discourse'.

8.4 Prospects and Projections for the Indigenisation of Political and Intellectual Discourse

Linked to the preceding discussion is Mafeje's observation that: 'Colonised and educated Africans were, existentially, just one step removed from the black diaspora in the New World. Both experienced white domination, racial antipathy and alienation from their roots, if not from the self' (Mafeje 1992: 3). The search for an epistemological break, on the part of African scholars, must be understood against this background. This leads to several concerns about 'the liberation of Blacks in general and that of Africans in particular' (Mafeje 1992: 3). Mafeje concedes that such concerns are 'intertwined' but for analytical purposes he divides them into four 'types of discourse': (a) political discourse; (b) intellectuals discourse; (c) cultural revivalism; and (d) philosophical discourse.

At the level of political discourse, Mafeje invokes Kant and surmises that the latter was probably right when he said 'one cannot learn philosophy but one can simply learn to philosophise' (Mafeje 1992: 9). He goes on to say this is akin to what happened in African political discourse. In the past, African thought leaders and anti-colonialists used to speak of the 'African personality' (particularly those pan-Africanists such as Kwame Nkrumah of the English-speaking colonies) and 'Negritude' (for those French-speaking Africans such as Senghor). This led others to speak of 'African socialism' (in the hands of Nyerere and Tom Mboya). For Mafeje, the advocates of these discourses 'are the self-appointed African philosopher-kings'. Yet there is reason to believe that they are/were described as such rather than being self-appointed. The concerns of these African philosopher-kings is markedly different from those professional or university-based philosophers such as Hountondji who

speak of ‘philosophy of action’. Hountondji’s ‘philosophy of action’ is akin to what is conventionally known as ‘ideology’.

Invoking the African philosopher Kwesi Wiredu, Mafeje states that ideology and philosophy are closely related. This, Wiredu observes, is evidenced by the question of the nature of the relationship between ‘is’ and ‘ought’. The former, in philosophy, represents matters of fact while the latter denotes normative claims. While philosophers quibble about whether or not the former implies the latter, or vice versa, Mafeje argues that in political discourse the opposite is the case. So that, for example, ‘the historical experience of racial humiliation, economic exploitation, political oppression and cultural domination under European and American slavery, colonialism and imperialism, gave rise to theories of “African personality” and “Negritude”’ (Mafeje 1992: 9). These theories foreground the question of liberation of Africans, their identity and the ontological meaning of ‘being-black-in-the-world’. This was a moral-cum-philosophical justification for liberation and independence. The ‘collective fulfilment’ of independence was a realisation of the ‘ought’ which was ‘negated by the Western powers’. These theories represented ‘African nationalism in its pre- and post-independence phase’ (Mafeje 1992: 12). This was a phase of anti-colonialism and a lot has changed since – for better or for worse.

To the extent that this phase was anti-colonial it was liberating, and to the extent that it mobilised popular participation it was democratic. Yet it down played class divisions and social inequalities both in ‘traditional African societies’ and ‘in the emerging neo-colonial social formation’ (Mafeje 1992: 13). To that extent, Mafeje observes, it was ‘fraudulent’. That would suggest that the anti-colonial struggle is not fraudulent only if it starts (and prioritises) internal inequalities among those struggling against colonialism. This would be strange for someone whose scholarship speaks about Africans in opposition to European colonisers – without immediately flagging inequality among Africans themselves. The issue of praxis and the acknowledgment of types of contradictions and which one is fundamental at a given time is interesting for being incongruous. This may seem too strong an accusation. However, some though not all post-independence leaders became an exploitative and repressive elite who not only marginalised rural communities, but also favoured the urban setting at the expense of countryside which they turned into ‘centres for conspicuous consumption’. Thus to the extent that their actions became similar to those of former colonisers – ‘they had become reactionary’. All of these issues exercised the minds of African intellectuals from the early 1970s up to this day. The African intellectuals called for ‘re-evaluation of earlier political theories as well as post-independence programmes for social and economic development’ (Mafeje 1992: 13). It is

a question as to whether this led to new ideological, epistemological and philosophical discourses. Whatever the case may be, what is important to bear in mind is that thinking and making sense of ideas takes place ‘in particular cultural and socio-historical contexts’. Although this is true, the nature of the relationship between ideas and the environment which produces them is likely to be varied according to fields of enquiry. There are intellectuals who still believe that socio-political issues are peripheral to epistemological issues. Mafeje maintains that moral values are addressed quite expressly in both literature as well as philosophy. Yet although the latter addresses issues of morality, it lacks the capacity to address ‘cultural values in the broader sense’. Mafeje observes that although African leaders often spoke of African culture, they contributed nothing to its development – except, he surmises, for Senghor.

Mafeje states that what is true of African leaders (vis-à-vis cultural revivalism) is not true of African artists – visual or literary. And what happens when the works of the artists are enthusiastically promoted by the state (or the African leaders)? Again, we run into the tendency to speak of African leaders in the singular and in the negative. Mafeje reasons that art, at the core, manipulates cultural symbols and as a result it is free of technical language and codes such as are found in philosophy. In this regard, art elaborates and broadens cultural horizons of society. Furthermore, unlike technical or professionalised fields of enquiry, it tends to have a much more organic feel and connects easier to ordinary members of society e.g. performed arts, cinema, theatre etc. This notwithstanding, Mafeje thinks it important to make a distinction between pre- and post-colonial African artists. According to him, pre-colonial African art, excepting those parts influenced by Islamic and Christian Ethiopian, was largely ‘steeped in idiom, imagery, style and content in its immediate cultural environment’ (Mafeje 1992: 14). Mafeje goes on to argue that some post-colonial art, on the other hand, is expressed in foreign languages. This demonstrates the rupture of the ‘organic link’ that previously existed between artists and society. ‘The educated literati in black Africa probably represent the nearest thing to the Blacks in the diaspora who started the back-to-the-African-roots movement. Naturally, the extent of alienation will vary according to the historical juncture and individual self-awareness’ (Mafeje 1992: 14).

For Mafeje, in order for the artist to re-establish the aforementioned organic link, he must command local languages as well as be knowledgeable of local culture. Mafeje cites Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s *Petals of Blood* and *I Shall Marry When I Want* and Sembene’s *Emitai*, *Mandabi* and *Xala* as being representative of what he has in mind. According to him, implicit in re-establishing the organic link, ‘is a process of cultural revivalism of the self and a

community which has been undermined from both ends, with the intention of bringing about a revolutionary transformation' (Mafeje 1992: 16). Embedded in this cultural revivalism is 'a rejection of foreign domination and the alienating and degrading dynamic of the neo-colonial state in Africa for which certain classes among the Blacks are responsible' (Mafeje 1992: 17). In insisting on reconstituting the nation through rejecting the neo-colonial mode of political and social organisation, the aforementioned African writers 'are still operating within the realm of the *national question* in Africa' (Mafeje 1992: 17, emphasis in original). To the extent that they are critical of limitations of 'petit-bourgeois nationalism' of the post-colonial period, they are 'progressive nationalists' (Mafeje 1992; 1997b).

In this category Mafeje would like to include such South African writers as Alex La Guma and Lewis Nkosi. But he resists the temptation because 'South African writers are still dominated by the racial question and have not clearly projected their society beyond the confines of petit-bourgeois nationalism' (Mafeje 1992: 17). This was the period before 1994. It would be interesting to see if there have been any qualitative changes. But a cursory look at Mbao's study, *Imagined Pasts, Suspended Presents: South African Literature in the Contemporary Moment* (2009), one is inclined to believe that there have been changes. The works of the South African writers mentioned is, according to Mafeje, 'combative without being revolutionary' just insofar as it does not foresee the 'negation' and 'pervasions' of black bourgeois nationalism. From the above, Mafeje is able to conclude that from a historical point of view, 'cultural revivalism' in African literature has been used at least in two ways. First, it was used to critique neo-colonialism. In doing so, the first strand of cultural revivalists relied on traditional cultural values. This strand was largely retrospective insofar as it invoked African traditional democratic principles which were combined with liberal bourgeois democracy. Yet there was hardly any critique of the undemocratic values in both traditions. Thus Mafeje concludes that this strand advanced moralistic arguments without alternatives to structural problems embedded in both traditional and 'modern' African societies. Second, the second strand used traditional values and indigenous languages precisely to critique traditional and neo-colonial structures and attendant forms of oppression.

Thus to the extent that cultural revivalism is forward-looking, it is progressive and can act as a way of forging national integration. Insofar as this is true, Mafeje has in mind a structural rather than a cultural question. He acknowledges, as has already been noted, that cultural revivalism can also be used for reactionary purposes. The issue therefore is to avoid the latter problem in cultural revivalism. At the level of intellectual discourse, there have been various shifts and changes in Africa. What is clear, as has been pointed out earlier, is that the

lifespan of these intellectual trends is ephemeral with each lasting no more than a decade. Importantly, however, is that the rejection of the neo-colonial state by African social scientists led to what Mafeje calls ‘a great deal of soul-searching’ within the continent’s intellectual community. The rejection of the neo-colonial state was accompanied by self-criticism which sought to find endogenous theoretical perspectives in the context of intellectual domination of African scholars by foreign donors and intellectual counterparts. This prompted questions about whether African scholars were themselves authentic interlocutors. This was a case of disillusionment not only intellectually but also politically and economically. Necessarily, this disillusionment issued in radical and leftist critiques. As a result, the difficulty faced by African intellectuals has been the intolerance of criticism on the part of the African governments. Intellectuals were either banished or imprisoned and foreign donors became hostile to those African scholars who criticised them and accused them of ‘ideological bias’. In some instances, these issues led to self-censorship on the part of some African intellectuals. Mafeje argues that some western scholars went so far as to accuse African scholars of producing work that is ‘unscientific’ and ‘below-standard’. This was a case of ‘northern intellectual dominance’. In sum: ‘Despite protestations to the contrary and lingering chauvinistic sentiments, however justified, it must be stated most emphatically that the struggle of the contemporary, radical, nationalist African intellectuals is *not cultural* but structural’ (Mafeje 1992: 22, emphasis in original). Furthermore, ‘to achieve the so-called indigenisation of the arts and sciences in Africa, African researchers and intellectuals must find a base within their societies and the region in general – something which some African organisations are seriously attempting’ (Mafeje 1992: 27).

8.5 Conclusion

Mafeje understood very clearly that the question of knowledge production was a legitimate struggle as good as any other. In this regard, Africans had to make their mark and cease to be subjects of study by their Euro-American counterparts. Mafeje understood that knowledge production was not only deeply ideological but also political. At first glance, this chapter may be viewed as best suited for the section on his critique of the social sciences. That may well be the case, but that would overlook the fact that that part of Mafeje’s work foregrounds the importance of an epistemological break. In the works explored in this chapter, he seems to foreground not only politics but also the political implications of knowledge production in Africa’s ‘second independence’, in a way that he does not in his epistemological and

methodological works. Whereas in his epistemological and methodological contribution he seems to allow his scholarship to lead his politics, in his work on knowledge production for the second independence he seems to allow his politics to lead his scholarship. Clumsily and inelegantly expressed as this may be, there is truth to it if one considers such essays as: ‘The Africanist Heritage and its Antinomies’, ‘African Philosophical Projections and Prospects for the Indigenisation of Political and Intellectual Discourse’, ‘African Intellectuals: An Inquiry into their Genesis and Social Options’, ‘The Struggle for Authenticity in African Social Science Discourse’, ‘Africanity: A Combative Ontology’ etc. In these works, Mafeje is not simply concerned with theoretical abstractions but goes out of his way to endow knowledge production with revolutionary imperatives. It is not by accident that he opens his book, *In Search of an Alternative*, with the essay ‘African Philosophical Projections and Prospects for the Indigenisation of Political and Intellectual Discourse’. This chapter examined his (i) struggle for ‘authenticity’ in social scientific writings, (ii) the role and responsibility of the African intellectual, (iii) the question of Africanity, and (iv) prospects and projections for the indigenisation of political and intellectual discourse. This chapter prefaces the following chapters on Mafeje’s revolutionary theory and politics.

Chapter Nine

On Revolutionary Theory and Politics: Part I

9.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on Mafeje's *earlier* contribution to revolutionary theory and politics (Mafeje 1972, 1977b, 1977c, 1978a). This is done deliberately because, save for the paper on 'Soweto and its Aftermath' (1978b), his earlier contribution to revolutionary theory and politics is much broader in scope and focus just insofar as it focuses not only on the African continent specifically, but also on what was then known as the Third World generally. Insofar as this is true, Mafeje was engaged in a sustained conversation not only with African revolutionary scholars, but also with radical scholars from other parts of the world. This is shown by his engagement with the works of Samir Amin (1972), Mahmood Mamdani (1976), Jarius Banaji (1972), Charles Bettelheim (1972a, 1972b, 1972c), Endero Laclau (1971, 1977), Jay R. Mandle (1972), Andre Gunder Frank (1967, 1969), Fernando H. Cardoso (1976), Arghiri Emmanuel (1972), Anibal Quijano (1972), and Paul Sweezy (1972a, 1972b, 1972c, 1972d, 1972e) just to name but a few. The demarcation between Mafeje's 'earlier' and 'later' contribution to revolutionary theory and politics may give the false impression that there is no connection between the two. Quite apart from that, there is in fact a strong connection and consistency in his work. The only difference between his earlier and later contribution is that the latter focused strictly on South Africa specifically and southern Africa generally (see Mafeje 1986c, 1992, 1997c, 1998d). This chapter comprises three main parts: the first part of the chapter is devoted to issues in the post-independence state such as neo-colonialism and underdevelopment. The second part of the chapter is concerned to understand the notion of state capitalism in the post-independence period. The remainder of the chapter gives a careful exposition of Mafeje's critique of the notion of dual theories of economic growth.

9.1 Neo-colonialism and Underdevelopment

It is important to note that Mafeje wrote his work on revolutionary theory and politics as a politically engaged exiled South African intellectual (see Mafeje 1972, 1977b, 1977c, 1978a, 1978b). In the 1960s and 1970s South Africans were engaged in the liberation struggle while the rest of the African continent was also decolonising rapidly. In spite of that, Mafeje was not content with repeating buzzwords and slogans in Marxist theory which were current at the time. His intellectual integrity inclined him to interrogate theory and concepts before they could be

used to make sense of what was going on. At all times, Mafeje's attempt was not only to contribute to theory, but also to search for an epistemological break.

According to him, to the extent that international capitalism appropriates surplus in underdeveloped countries, and the desire by the latter to put in place 'an independent base for internal appropriation and reproduction', nationalist struggles are justified (Mafeje 1977c: 412). Cryptically, Mafeje observes that the distinction between such terms as 'neo-colonialism' and 'revolution' remains elusive in social scientific studies. He says the terms have assumed the status of antonyms in the social sciences. Yet the former admits both continuity and change. One suspects that what Mafeje means here is that in underdeveloped countries, remnants of colonialism linger on in the post-independence period even after the liberation struggle. Although there is a difference between the two terms, the difference is often missed because of the overemphasis on continuity. Mafeje concedes that neo-colonialism is based on different forms and methods of control to continue the old relations. Yet, Mafeje continues, it is well within the competence of African governments to change such adverse relations. In this regard, he makes an important distinction between colonialism proper and neo-colonialism. The former was an external imposition, while the latter is 'a *contractual relationship* even if accompanied by very severe constraints' (Mafeje 1977c: 412, emphasis in original). Neo-colonialism is a continuation of the old colonial relations. As a result, even if a country had gained its independence, if it is found to be economically fragile, it could be manipulated by international capital and turned into a 'neo-colony'.

As regards international capital turning independent countries into neo-colonies, one need only look at the US foreign policy towards some underdeveloped countries. The US had and still has territories that are colonial possessions: From Puerto Rico (1989-present), Cuba (1899-1902) to Marshall Islands, American Samoa, Guam, Panama Canal Zone (1903-79), and the Philippines (1898-1946), among others. It also made neo-colonies of such countries as Liberia and Zaire just to name but a few. In this regard, what seems to matter to Mafeje is not so much a colonial past, but rather what he calls 'a dependency social formation' which is formed of basic structures that go beyond colonialism as such. As a consequence, independence does not necessarily mean an end to 'surplus appropriation at the centre and its negative dialectic at the periphery' (Mafeje 1977c: 413). As has been mentioned, Mafeje was writing at the height of the liberation struggles in Africa and during the period of the Cold War. This was the period of capitalism versus socialism as two dominant modes of production globally. Marxists such as Laclau (1971, 1977) and Gunder Frank (1967, 1969) speak of an admixture

of modes of production in underdeveloped countries. Yet they never quite spell out satisfactorily what that amounted to.

Mafeje argues that the existence of two opposing camps (the capitalist West and the socialist East) made it possible for social democrats to advocate for underdeveloped countries to find their own development paths. Concepts such as ‘non-alignment’ or ‘positive neutrality’ gained currency in the 1970s precisely because of a search for a ‘third way’ to development. Imperialism, as an international system of capitalist domination, has led to uneven development. This uneven development meant that there were relations of dependency wherein underdeveloped countries, even when they try to emulate their developed counterparts, go deeper and deeper into economic crises. Logically and politically, this has to be so because relations of dependency mean that underdeveloped countries must remain poor while their developed counterparts not only flourish but also maintain the status quo (Cardoso 1976; Frank 1967, 1979). Mafeje (1977c: 414) observes that: ‘in the first instance, dependency implies inability to compete with patron countries and, in the second instance, patron status means a basic unwillingness to be equal’. Essentially, imperialism would not be imperialism if it eliminated inequality. Likewise, if it were defeated, internal contradictions in underdeveloped countries would improve – assuming that these countries were free of neo-colonialism.

Internal contradictions are informed by external structural contradictions. Thus, Mafeje argues, ‘advanced capitalism cannot be defeated on its own terms’ (1977c: 414). Countries which have tried to deviate from the internal logic of capitalism have been severely punished by leading capitalist countries something which led to further underdevelopment and heightened internal contradictions. When this happens, the comprador class becomes even more brutal as a form of ‘self-defence’. Latin America witnessed this in the 1970s (Cardoso and Faletto 1979). The same is true of such African countries as Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Gabon. Asian countries like Japan, Thailand, the Philippines and South Korea may be used as counterexamples of countries which tried to tailor capitalism to their own needs. Yet Japan, specifically, seems to be ‘neither an exception nor a contrary case’ (Mafeje 1977c: 414). For a start, Japan never suffered severe colonial incorporation or underdevelopment of its economy and society.

On the contrary, Japan acted as an imperialist force in Asia and ‘it had full opportunities for internal accumulation and uniform social division of labour’ (Mafeje 1977c: 415). Therefore, ‘Japan was favoured by internal as well as external conditions which are not repeated anywhere else in present-day underdeveloped countries’ (Mafeje 1977c: 415). Still, Asian countries such as Thailand, the Philippines and South Korea are not quite like Japan.

Their relative success was a direct outcome of US foreign policy in South East Asia. But that alone does not explain the development success of these countries. Mobutu's Zaire had similar cover from the US. Plus, there are significant differences between Thailand, Philippines, and South Korea in terms of development outcomes. These countries were meant to be 'a counter-weight to communist countries in the area'. In this way, the former depended on the US something which weakened their ability to pursue independent domestic policies. It became increasingly impossible to resolve the contradiction 'between the capitalist mode of production at the centre and its distorting social formations at the periphery' (Mafeje 1977c: 415). What this means is that imperialist countries such as the US succeeded in creating what Mafeje calls 'better off underdeveloped states' in carefully chosen geographical areas. These countries acted as 'bulwarks' against communism in the age of the Cold War. But forty years later this kind of argument cannot be made particularly in the case of South Korea, to give but one example.

On the African continent, Kenya was positioned to play a similar role in East Africa. It was meant to be a buffer between developed and underdeveloped countries or to give credibility to capitalism within the context of underdevelopment. As if anticipating something akin to what are called the BRICS countries, Mafeje (1977c: 415) contends: 'It is our contention, therefore, that the rise of many more possible Japans such as India, Mexico, or Brazil (to quote a few sleeping giants) would have negative implications for the capitalist countries and imperialism in general'. Existing data at the time made it possible to make this projection. On the strength of historical data, Vijay Prashad raises similar issues in his book, *The Darker Nations* (2007).

The general point which Mafeje sought to drive home with the foregoing arguments is that capitalism is not a feasible alternative for underdeveloped countries. This is so because it issues in neo-colonialism and therefore deepens dependent relations. Insofar as it deepens dependency relations, it becomes impossible to close the gap between developed and developing countries. Internally, it further perverts relations between the rich and the poor in underdeveloped countries. To address this problem, underdeveloped countries need to revise their production relations. Still, that is impossible without addressing and combating the interests of foreign capital. Doing so would provide fertile grounds for revolutionary changes. For Mafeje, this is the only 'alternative to neo-colonialism or dependency'. A fairly conventional argument within the left in the 1970s. Yet merely to say this reveals nothing about the central question of a 'revolutionary transformation' to be carried out. Mafeje concedes that the idea of a revolution 'can mean any number of things'.

For the purposes of the present analysis, he proposes to limit himself to ‘value and labour’ or ‘production relations and social formations’. Poorer regions are deprived ‘the right to determine the allocation and utilisation of capital on their own behalf’ (Mafeje 1977c: 417). Although governments of underdeveloped countries are usually unable, or even reluctant, to do anything about this, they are fully aware of the underlying contradictions. Hence there is talk of ‘state intervention’ or ‘a planned economy’. To varying degrees, state intervention is recognised in both capitalist and socialist-orientated economies. This is usually an attempt to secure what Mafeje calls ‘discretionary power’. In left-leaning economies this would entail land redistribution or other forms of redistribution of resources. In this way, the state becomes a provider of capital and, through loans and national revenue, it becomes the biggest investor in the national economy. Mafeje argues that this is imperative in underdeveloped economies. This is what has been called ‘state capitalism’.

State capitalism is a historical necessity in underdeveloped economies as are found in Africa. According to Mafeje, only national governments have the capacity to protect and boost the economy. Although they may not address some of the underlying internal contradictions, governments ‘can eliminate the contradiction between distorted local social formations and distorting central capital by introducing a new social division of labour, whereby adequate employment opportunities and security are created for the now abused migrant workers in the rural economy itself which, contrary to prevailing dogmas, need not be dissociated from *industrialisation*’ (Mafeje 1977c: 417, emphasis in original). This necessitates that national governments make resources available – land and capital. It is important to note that although Mafeje denies classical capitalism as a feasible option for development in Africa, he nonetheless gives primacy to state capitalism. The latter is a transient phase to socialism. The state in underdeveloped countries cannot maintain its legitimacy if it does not provide for all citizens. If the bureaucratic elite does not see to it that this is carried through, then state capitalism leads to the same contradictions that it seeks to do away with.

For Mafeje, state capitalism ought to intervene on behalf of the producing underprivileged classes. Of necessity, this means that the state will be in conflict with the middle-classes and foreign patrons who would no longer have access to surplus. Importantly, however, it cannot be assumed that the underprivileged are inherently progressive. Thus for state capitalism to succeed, the state would need the support of the small producers and the workers. Political mobilisation is key in this regard. In saying all of this, it is equally important to note that some segments of the middle-class are quite capable of transcending their class interests and are equally capable of ‘engaging in radical or revolutionary political action’

(Mafeje 1977c: 418). It needs to be said, however, that underdeveloped countries typically have very low levels of real capital among ordinary citizenry. Moreover, in such countries the proletariat (unlike their peasant counterparts) tends to constitute a small segment of the population. The proletariat, perhaps counterintuitively, tends to be sympathetic to urban middle-classes and their ideologies. But: 'As evidenced by strikes, it does not mean that they are immune to exploitation nor are they ignorant of their class enemies in specific contexts. However, in Africa where competition is fairly low both in agriculture and in commerce, petty-bourgeois aspirations among blue and white-collar workers still hold sway' (Mafeje 1977c: 422).

Small producers/peasants, on the other hand, constitute the vast majority of the population and are usually excluded from education and technological skills made available to other classes. As noted above, workers do engage in strikes and industrial action, but less acknowledged are revolts of the peasants (Mbeki 1964; Tabata 1974). What peasants' revolts indicate is a sense of awareness on their part and the fact that they are exploited. Also, the fact that small producers/peasants tend to be migratory labourers means that they are not as 'land-fixed' as proponents of classical literature suggest. Mafeje (1972, 1977c) points out that the small producers have shown their 'revolutionary capacity' variously in China, Vietnam, Cuba, Algeria, Mexico and others. In Africa, Guinea Bissau, Angola, Mozambique are working examples. The peasants' revolt in Mpondoland in South Africa may also be cited as an example (see Mbeki 1964; Tabata 1974). What is important to note, is that in order to discuss the revolutionary capacity of the 'peasants' one ought first to study 'their objective circumstances and social quality' (Mafeje 1977c: 419).

As such, 'the so-called peasants in underdeveloped countries are, historically, not only contemporaries of the workers in the developed countries but are also their identical objects i.e. they are objects of exploitation by the same international finance-capital' (Mafeje 1977c: 419). This is an important theoretical insight in revolutionary theory and politics. This is so because in underdeveloped countries small producers are usually exploited in the market as 'petty producers' as well as exploited by capital as migrant workers. In this way, the small producers have the quality of becoming 'semi-proletarians'. A challenge resulting from this postulate is that small producers become available for labour without being completely industrialised or urbanised precisely because they are itinerant. The old theoretical question arising from this is as follows: 'Are they an industrial proletariat domiciled in the countryside or are they proletarianised peasants?' (Mafeje 1977c: 420). Regardless of how one may wish

to answer the question, what seems to matter to Mafeje is that the 'proletarian part-quality' remains.

Aside from the above, there are in underdeveloped countries other categories of workers apart from unskilled migrants. They are called, variously, 'white- and blue-collar workers'. Although they may have different occupations, the tie that binds them is that they earn comparatively high salaries. Marxists refer to them variously as 'labour aristocrats', 'salaried', 'sub-elites', or 'petit bourgeoisie'. Although these categories sound sophisticated, they are often confusing. 'The simplest fact is that all workers who receive high salaries do not represent the same phenomenon any more than all people who enjoy the same standard of living constitute a class. What is diagnostic is the way income is derived' (Mafeje 1977c: 420). For example, insofar as all industrial workers exchange their labour power with capital or produce surplus value they are exploited. Further, to the extent that they produce 'added value' for the benefit of capital 'in no way can they be said to be benefitting by the exploitation of the peasants' (Mafeje 1977c: 420). This is so because both strata are exploited, albeit in different ways.

Another category of workers which Mafeje finds difficult to categorise are those who earn their income by exchanging their labour power not with capital but with revenue i.e. government employees. As is known, the state is one of the biggest employers in underdeveloped countries. Yet government workers do not produce added value. By the same token, such services as education, health (medical facilities), public transport etc. may produce value albeit indirectly, but what is important is that they are characterised by consumption rather than production. This holds true only if production is understood purely in terms of goods/commodities. Insofar as up to 85% of the national revenue in underdeveloped countries comes from agriculture, then the 'bureaucratic and menial workers benefit by exploitation of peasants and the industrial workers' (Mafeje 1977c: 421). Exploitation would suggest that they are in production relationship with peasants and industrial workers. What exactly is that relation of production? They do not even function in the same circuit of capital. What more a page earlier, Mafeje stated the opposite. According to him, the level of wages of bureaucratic and menial workers can impact negatively on other workers. Strictly speaking, Mafeje argues, the bureaucratic worker should be characterised as 'petit-bourgeois'. Because the petit bourgeois is an 'intermediate' and 'dependent class', salary differentials among them not only matter very much but also are 'arbitrarily determined'. Most importantly, however, their incomes determine their political allegiance. One might object to this and argue that that is to confuse the economic sphere with the political. The issue of exploitation – expropriation of

surplus value – is a matter that takes place within the economic spheres; struggles around it happen at the level of the political (even within the factory). Status is being confused for class. It would be a bit strange, however, to separate the economic sphere from the political in revolutionary theory. In the context of Africa, promotion in the bureaucratic sector is not only fast but also comes with ‘disproportionate amount of political power’. Further, the bureaucracy tends to be antagonistic towards peasants and industrial workers.

The theoretical point which Mafeje seeks to drive home here is that in order to appreciate the behaviour of the bureaucracy, one has to relate it to the behaviour of both the producing and the owning classes. According to him, this not only puts class theory into perspective but also calls into question some of the conceptual blind-spots of stratification theory. Also, for Mafeje, for the greater part of the continent, there is not much of a difference between industrial workers and their migratory counterparts. This is so because quite often these are one and the same people. Thus ‘even in those cases where workers can be described unambiguously as rural or urban, it is well to remember that, ontologically, contrasts are not necessarily contradictions’ (Mafeje 1977c: 421). Moreover, ‘in reply to the usual Trotskyite heresy about peasants and the revolution in underdeveloped countries, I would suggest that the rural and the industrial producers be treated as a continuum which is constantly re-enforced by the intermittence of a high proportion of their number’ (Mafeje 1977c: 421). So when Mafeje refers to these two allies, he does so based on this objective reality and not out ‘ideological expediency’. Importantly: ‘As in any movement, members of a class are at different stages of becoming: there are advanced workers and there are less advanced workers. The fully industrialised workers represent the former but, without the less advanced rural workers, they are like a head without a body’ (Mafeje 1977c: 421). In the section that follows, this chapter discusses the question of state capitalism.

9.2 Issues in State Capitalism

The notion of state capitalism is not free of controversy. There has been attributed to it both positive and negative roles. Mafeje points to Eastern Europe and the Global South as having set a precedent for controversies associated with this socio-economic system. Yet in spite of this, analyses of it remain ‘necessarily incomplete’. Although the one Marxist position is that state capitalism is a transitional phase towards socialism, such a view is not yet borne out by history. The other view is that state capitalism not only leads to ‘bureaucratic entrenchment’ but also to ‘economic stagnation’. Mafeje sees these two positions as a good opportunity for him to advance ‘further enquiry, refinement and, possibly, formulation of entirely new

hypotheses' (Mafeje 1978a: 13). Characteristically, in undertaking this task, Mafeje starts from the 'concrete' in order to avoid extrapolation or superimposing theory on data. He points out, for example, that the historical development of Eastern European countries is not analogous to that of the underdeveloped countries. This view is entirely consistent with Mafeje's warning that transcontinental analogies in social analysis can be misleading (Mafeje 2003).

In the 1960s and 1970s, Mafeje (1978a) observes, state capitalism was in underdeveloped countries an 'objective fact' which could not be reduced to 'subjective exigencies'. It is not entirely clear what Mafeje means by this. But he goes on to argue that before anything at all can be said about whether or not state capitalism is/was desirable in underdeveloped countries, one needs to study the 'objective determinate conditions' which made this socio-economic system necessary in these countries. Given the fact that state capitalism was widespread in underdeveloped countries, it could not have been a historical accident. In considering the historical circumstances leading up to the emergence of the so-called Third World countries, a few discernible facts may be enumerated: (i) these countries were politically subordinate; (ii) economically exploited; and (iii) depended on a capitalist world market which was/is largely dominated by a few rich countries. Anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist struggles were waged precisely to fight the abovementioned problems. As Prashad puts:

The Third World was not a place. It was a project. During the seemingly interminable battles against colonialism, the peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America dreamed of a new world. They longed for dignity above all else, but also the basic necessities of life (land, peace, and freedom). ...Thrown between these two major formations, the darker nations amassed as the Third World. Determined people struck out against colonialism to win their freedom. They demanded political equality on the world level. (Prashad 2009: xv-xvi)

Yet the excitement of independence meant that the leaders of the day failed to study the 'substantive power of monopoly capital' (Mafeje 1978a: 14). The decision to adopt the strategy to 'nationalise' the means of production at independence in several countries was part of a response to foreign economic domination and exploitation. Mafeje (1978a) says it was 'a strategy for self-defence'. Mafeje observes that with the exception of China, North Korea, Vietnam, Burma, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Bulgaria, Cuba, Guinea, Mali, Tanzania, Somalia, Peru, Guinea-Bissau, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Angola, the decision to embark on nationalisation

policies in underdeveloped countries was not necessarily informed by a socialist ideology. But rather, nationalisation was ‘seized upon by nationalist governments out of sheer expediency’ (Mafeje 1978a: 14). In Eastern Europe, by contrast, nationalisation was part of the communist ideology and revolutionary strategy which had gained currency at the time. He concludes that attempts at nationalisation in underdeveloped countries were not necessarily anti-capitalist.

As has been noted, Mafeje not only wrote at the time of the liberation struggle and in the wake of independence in Africa, but also at the height of the Cold War between US/western countries and USSR/Eastern European socialist countries. Underdeveloped countries were then known as the ‘Third World’. Unlike the western capitalist countries and the Eastern socialist countries, the ‘Third World’ was not characterised by any consistent political and economic forms which could have given them ‘a definite coherence’. The ‘political identity’ of the Third World ‘derives from a negative condition – underdevelopment and ex-colonial status’ (Mafeje 1978a: 14). At independence, these countries earned the historical characteristics of being in the ‘national democratic stage’. For Mafeje, this was an apt categorisation in that it designated the content and form of the anti-imperialist struggles in which they were engaged. All classes of society formed a united front. According to him, ‘this is what constituted the kernel of the notion of the “New Democracy” among communist theoreticians in the aftermath of the First World War and the first socialist revolution in Russia in 1917. It referred to the content of the struggle and not to traditional bourgeois freedoms such as freedom of the press, freedom of speech etc. etc. Whether “anti-imperialism” always got identified with socialism, internally and externally, seems to be the issue and no other’ (Mafeje 1978a: 14 fn 1).

Yet the ensuing class struggle in the post-independence dispensation ‘emptied the term of its original meaning’. This is marked by subsequent proliferation of ‘military oligarchs’ in Latin America and the petty bourgeois elites who consolidated bureaucratic power in Africa and Asia, respectively (Cardoso 1976; Cardoso and Faletto 1979; Frank 1967, 1969; Mafeje 1978a; Quijano 1972). All of this was done to the exclusion of the masses. Apart from these factors, there is in underdeveloped countries the question of technological backwardness and financial poverty which translates to dependency on the leading countries of the West for supply of capital and technology. Due to the fact that the share of capital and technology is smaller for underdeveloped countries, the possibility of internal accumulation and take off is necessarily low. ‘It is also true that investment by its very selective nature influences not only imports but also exports insofar as it determines the domestic resource use’ (Mafeje 1978a: 16). The use of resources, in turn, determines the structure of production and thus shapes the course of economic development. On this dialectic depends a number of contradictions ‘which

are the objective ground for a variety of subjective choices by national governments in underdevelopment countries' (Mafeje 1978a: 16).

There are three main issues: (i) all underdeveloped countries, whatever their ideological orientations, wish to retain their revenue and avoid capital flight; (ii) they desire to develop technologically (since technological backwardness is part of the reason why they are underdeveloped). Although they supply developed countries with raw materials, underdeveloped countries 'rely for their production on low-level technology and largely unskilled labour' (Mafeje 1978a: 16); and (iii) underdeveloped countries desire to be in full control of their national resources – after all, that was the point of anti-colonialist struggles. In order to protect themselves, underdeveloped countries sought to nationalise partially or wholly the means of production and land which accounts for quite a huge size of the national revenue. Mafeje notes that as important as nationalisation or seizure of resources may be, this says little about how national governments will utilise the said resources. Yet, he suggests, one should be careful not to 'reduce the history of underdeveloped countries to imperial history' (Mafeje 1978a: 16). According to him, underdeveloped countries are not mere victims of imperialism 'which can only be judged by the most minimal standards – an attitude which is shared by both western European liberals and eastern European communists' (Mafeje 1978a: 16). But what is important to note is that the underdeveloped state does not neatly fit into classical categories. As such, the question of the role of state capitalism is not posed merely on the grounds of expediency. Rather, it is informed by historical, political and economic conditions.

In underdeveloped countries, Mafeje (1978a) suggests, state capitalism has taken two forms: (i) it protects the economy and compensates the economic vulnerability of the 'nascent national bourgeoisie' although it does not necessarily liquidate it as a class; and (ii) in some cases it takes the same form but with the intention of liquidating the national bourgeoisie. To understand the nature of the process involved in the two cases, Mafeje adopts a 'step-by-step' analysis as against taxonomic categorisations. He reminds the reader that most underdeveloped countries went through the 'national democratic stage'. This remains the case regardless of their ideological orientation. This stage is characterised by four diagnostic features: '(i) anti-colonialism; (ii) anti-imperialism; (iii) a united front of classes led by petty bourgeois elements; and (iv) a commitment to the re-building of the economy' (Mafeje 1978a: 17). These features, Mafeje observes, are quite consistent with the principles of the 'New Democracy'. Of the four features, it is the fourth one which has given grounds for positive action. It is the same feature which has proven to be the primary point of divergence among different regimes in underdeveloped countries. The centrality or the dominance of the state in underdeveloped

countries 'has become a source of severe contradictions and acrimonious theoretical exchange' (Mafeje 1978a: 17).

Practically, this had to be so because there are social and economic priorities involved. Theoretically, the issue is so complex and unique that it does not necessarily conform to Chinese or Russian analogous cases of development. Although it may be argued that the reflexes of the state in Africa or the Global South are 'attributable to subjective manipulations by the ruling elite, the state itself is a historical product of objective conditions and so is its dominance' (Mafeje 1978a: 17). The emergence of the post-independence state meant that it had to fill a 'political vacuum' left behind by colonial powers. Social classes were, during that period, 'still inchoate'. In the absence of all alternatives, the state became the only viable vehicle to carry the huge burden of national and economic unity. The African state is better understood not merely as a 'colonial overgrowth' but as a product of the historical sequence which, in turn, meant that it had to put a premium on politics over economics. Instead of viewing it purely in negative terms, as a mere remnant of colonialism, this is a 'more positive way' in which Mafeje wants to understand the post-independence state. It may be that in its 'organic form', it is a continuation of colonialism. Yet in its 'historic form', it became the negation of colonialism 'insofar as it represents a new division of political power' (Mafeje 1978a: 18). It is the use of this power which became the problem of development in post-independence African states. In advancing this argument, Mafeje (1978a: 18) 'allows for a dynamic marriage between voluntarism and determinism and avoids the idealistic one-sidedness which has become so rampant in revolutionary rhetoric'.

Although post-independence underdeveloped countries had similar material conditions, the 'discretionary power' conferred on their rulers meant that these countries took 'divergent subjective choices'. In his attempt at marrying voluntarism and determinism, Mafeje wishes to understand the political and economic choices made by underdeveloped countries. This, according to him, will make it possible 'to distinguish between progressive and retrograde strategies, or between what is generally known as "neo-colonialist" and "socialist-orientated" regimes' (Mafeje 1978a: 18). It is important to note, as Mafeje does, that these issues are shaped by global dynamics. Yet, Mafeje believes that it is still valuable to study some of the choices made at the national level. According to him, 'a single theory of revolution is an absurdity in a world so grossly uneven in its development'. In the post-independence period, some countries pandered to foreign capitalist interests. In doing so, they chose to 'negotiate for better terms of economic interaction and distribution of surplus-value' (Mafeje 1978a). This came to be known as a 'neo-colonialist strategy for development'. It gained currency in Latin America – Cuba,

and short-lived regimes in Chile and Peru being notable exceptions (Cardoso 1976; Cardoso and Faletto 1979; Frank 1967, 1969; Quijano 1971).

The African continent was somewhat uncertain and there existed a great deal of differentiation. The same can be said of the Middle East. Asia, on the other hand, became completely polarised between neo-colonialist and socialist states. The neo-colonial state is such that it is willing to collaborate with foreign capitalist countries. In doing so, it relies on them for capital, credit, supplies and technology. This leads to the state acting as a broker between foreign capital and the emerging national bourgeoisie. This then leads to at least five 'insoluble contradictions' which are both external and internal: '(i) increased domination of the economy by foreign monopolies and continued loss of domestic income; (ii) increased discrepancy between resource use and domestic demand, as foreign capital concentrates on extractive industries which produce commodities that are not consumed locally, e.g. mining and export agriculture; (iii) increased technological dependence on foreign suppliers and retardation of domestic capability; (iv) monopolisation of the local market through import substitution industries and further losses of added value due to inducements offered in order to secure licences and capital; and (v) increased imbalances in incomes between those engaged in the modern – usually capital intensive – and those in the neglected sectors always technologically backward and inhabited by the great majority of the population' (Mafeje 1978a: 19).

It is important to note that these 'contradictions' issued in antagonistic relations within the dominating classes. What tended to happen was that the former national liberation movement got politically divided between those who sided with foreign capital (the comprador) and those who opposed them on the grounds of national interests (the 'progressive patriots'). It is not clear whether Mafeje includes here the national bourgeoisie or not. Those who are outside of this class, the masses of the people, begin to agitate. In this scenario, those who are on the right, with the backing of foreign allies, invariably win the battle. 'Thus', Mafeje (1978a: 19) concludes, 'the national democratic movement, which started off as a united front of all classes comes to its ultimate contradiction, suffers a complete collapse, and is superseded by bitter class struggles'. The post-independence state played the role of a mediator between contending classes. This is so because at the time of its birth, no particular class enjoyed general hegemony. Yet when reactionary forces consolidate with the help of foreign allies, the state becomes a tool for class oppression and ceases to mediate for the masses.

Without the participation of the masses, the state ceases to be an instrument of development. There develops among the masses 'anti-capitalist feelings'. Anti-capitalist feelings need not be confused with socialism. Politically and ideologically, the two can get

easily confused. Although subjective feelings/responses are typically an outcome of objective conditions, the former may not always be useful in indicating what may be a viable dialectical alternative. Conditions in underdeveloped countries have shown that these countries cannot be easily described with classical categories. What tends to happen is that state capitalism in underdeveloped countries means that the state does not assume the historical position of capital. But rather, it ‘intervenes against capital’. This is what Mao Tse-Tung (1967b: 353) means when he talks about, ‘the regulation of capital by the state so that private capital cannot dominate the livelihood of the people’. Moreover: ‘In the new democratic republic under the leadership of the proletariat, the state enterprises will be of a socialist character and will constitute the leading force in the whole national economy, but the republic neither confiscate capitalist private property nor forbid the development of such capitalist production as does not “dominate the livelihood of the people”’ (Mao Tse-Tung 1967b: 353). This ‘uncompromising’ and ‘nationalistic’ stance has been much more appealing to revolutionaries of the Global South. The choice of strategy, however, is determined by changing world perspectives and objective factors. For example, the great era of American and European capitalist expansionism was met with anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist struggles in the ‘Third World’.

In spite of the view that state capitalism is a transitory phase towards socialism, Mafeje still maintains, following Lenin and Chairman Mao, that regulation of capital by the state is not exempt from ‘the alienating logic of capital accumulation and, therefore, to social and economic counter-revolution’ (Mafeje 1978a: 22). For Lenin (1967), state capitalism is a ‘form of class struggle’, while Mao says there is a ‘contradiction between the state and the people’ (Mao Tse-Tung 1967b). For Mafeje (1978a: 22), what this highlights is the fact that ‘there is no “state capitalism” or “regulation of capital by the state” (whatever we wish to call it) that is immune to the alienating logic of capital accumulation and, therefore, to social and economic counter-revolution’. The fact that this is much more prevalent in ‘cases where the social character is still largely petty-bourgeois’ does not render this argument invalid. What it does, is to buttress the idea that socialism is ‘fluid’ and ‘transient’ in nature. The question of transition to socialism was the subject of lively debates between Bettelheim (1972a, 1972b, 1972c) and Sweezy (1972a, 1972b, 1973c, 1972d, 1972e) in the early 1970s. Although he had argued earlier that state capitalism is a transition to socialism, Mafeje submits that such a view is an oxymoron because in classical Marxism socialism ‘*is not a mode of production*’ (Mafeje 1978a: 23, emphasis in original). But rather, it is itself a transitional stage between capitalism and communism. The important issue, it appears, is that he wants state capitalism, as ‘one of the phases in the socialist transition’, to be reviewed constantly in order to see whether it is still

progressive or not. This is to prevent it from succumbing to the 'corrupting logic of capital accumulation' to which it is susceptible. Ultimately, this would allow for unity of theory and do away with geographical divisions. In saying this, Mafeje is not claiming that differences in historical experience are irrelevant or otherwise unimportant. Indeed, he could not make such a claim when he had already argued against transcontinental analogies.

The issue seems to be that if theory is to make sense at all, or if it is to have some semblance of universality, it must be able to account or explain different social formations. This, of course, is to be done after having studied social formations on their own terms. Mafeje attempts to capture something of that when he says it is quite easy to make conceptual categorisations such as 'neo-colonialist' and 'socialist-orientated'. Yet in practice such '*a priori* judgements' could mislead because there obtains anti-capitalist struggles even in neo-colonialist regimes and pro-capitalist struggles take place in socialist-orientated states. Mafeje is always keen on a careful examination of cases on their own terms. In doing so, he is able to avoid over-generalisations. To start with, unlike other developing regions, Africa was incorporated into the capitalist system only in the last quarter of the 19th century. By the time colonialism was defeated, African countries had 'distorted economic structures'. The response to these distorted economic structures varied far and wide. An important question imposes itself about whether or not the differences which obtain in Africa are due to endogenous or exogenous factors.

Although a lot has been said about the 'African mode of production' and 'traditional and feudal elements' (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1977; Freund 1985), it is in fact difficult to speak of the 'African mode of production' because of the varied forms of production which obtained at the time of colonial contact. For example, in the colonial period, West African markets were characterised by what Mafeje calls 'primitive communalism' and 'pastoral aristocracies'. In the Sudan and Ethiopia, on the other hand, there was feudalism with an admixture of 'mercantilism', 'primitive communalism' and 'pastoralism'. Egalitarian pastoralism characterised Somalia. The same mode of production was to be found in Kenya, Tanganyika and northern parts Uganda. Much like West Africa, south western Uganda, Burundi, and Rwanda were more aristocratic. Similar pastoralism was to be found in Angola and in some parts of the Congo. In southern Africa, there prevailed 'primitive communalism' and 'pastoralism' and there were no 'commercial institutions' such as were found in West Africa. On the basis of these examples, Mafeje is able to conclude that 'feudalism' or 'landlordism' was not so prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa. Nor was it a general problem. That notwithstanding, when 'indigenous capitalism' developed, those who assumed state power at

independence did not focus on production and trade in order to develop their economies. It is not true that post-independence states failed to focus on production and trade. For Mafeje (1978a: 26), this is absolutely important if one is to understand what he calls 'a basic anomaly in the African development'. According to him, the 'petty bourgeoisie' who assumed state power were not necessarily familiar with economic production. Instead, they were recruited because of their formal education and 'bureaucratic skills'. This presupposes that they are incapable of transiting into production activities. It is like saying because apartheid denied black South Africans access to production, they therefore cannot get into production activities or manage the economy after 1994. Mafeje maintains that the economy was relegated to a lower or secondary status. For Mafeje, this petty bourgeois was usurped by colonial capital and supplemented its role 'by mobilising the peasantry for primary production'.

The so-called progressive farmers, as discussed in the chapters on land and agrarian issues, came about in the 1950s as a result of colonial governments whose hope was to create a 'buffer class' against the petty bourgeois nationalists. There were no Africans in industrial production. To the extent that they were found, they were there as exploited labour. It seems here that Mafeje reduced Africa to his field experience of Uganda and Tanzania. Following his line of thought, it becomes clear to discern that 'at independence African countries lacked a national bourgeoisie of any sort, unless concepts are used in a loose and meaningless way' (Mafeje 1978a: 28). In order to ensure that there was rapid accumulation, state capitalism became necessary at independence. Although there was some production among Africans during colonialism, it was largely small-scale and family-based. For Mafeje, taking this seriously and putting it in its proper perspective, it becomes clear that lineages and clans remain a 'mediating dialectic' in Africa. Epistemologically, such an insight should caution against any search for pure class categories in Africa. As regards the question of state capitalism, it was an outcome of and a response to colonial underdevelopment. State intervention against capital in Africa was justified 'because foreign capital was causing intolerable contradictions for their leaders' (Mafeje 1978a: 29). This was an anti-imperialist ideology. Yet although some African states espoused Marxist rhetoric, as well as undertaking nationalisation and expropriation programmes, they did not necessarily have communist political parties. Nor were the states dominated by the workers. Although it has been stated that state capitalism is a historical necessity in response to international capital, this view says very little about whether or not the state will intervene in a progressive way. Mafeje points out that state intervention is 'a double-edged sword' just insofar as it can be used by reactionary ruling classes against the general populace.

Mafeje goes on to point out that state capitalism is as ‘contradictory and unstable social form’. He reaches this conclusion after having consulted Sweezy who says: ‘I conclude that “socialism” defined as society characterised by state ownership of the means of production and comprehensive planning is not *necessarily* a way station on the journey from capitalism to communism, and that reliance on the theory that such a society must automatically develop toward communism, can lead to movement in the exact opposite direction i.e. reconstitution of class rule’ (Sweezy 1972e: 130, emphasis in original). For Mafeje (1978a: 34), state capitalism ‘carries within it the fruits of bourgeois rule and the seeds of proletarian insurrection’. He goes on to summarise this ‘basic ambiguity’ in six points: (i) there is a tendency to monopolise power by the petty bourgeoisie; (ii) a tendency to put a premium on technical skills (which were, in any case, the preserve of the technical and administrative staff); (iii) a tendency to leave state resources at the mercy of politico-bureaucratic elite who, in turn, appropriate state surpluses for themselves; (iv) a tendency to undermine the market principle through central planning, while at once keeping intact other elements of the capitalist system of production (labour as a commodity, private appropriation in the form of wages, extraction of surplus-labour etc.); (v) an overemphasis on an economic approach to the neglect of political and social solutions; and (vi) a tendency to mimic advanced capitalist countries ‘and thus interpret economic development and modernity in the bourgeois sense’ (Mafeje 1978a: 35).

The upshot of these six points is that they lead to: (i) a political system which undermines democracy and entrenches political rule by bureaucratic means; (ii) a neo-colonialist production structure (e.g. export orientated economies with little domestic demand); (iii) technological stagnation as a result of (a) dependency on foreign technical expertise and equipment, (b) skills sets which do not cater for the ‘backward sector’ of the economy, and (c) allocation of resources on sectors which yield little results for the overall economy; and (iv) slow growth rate due to compromised state interference and inefficient bureaucracy (Mafeje 1978a). Collectively, these four issues tend to lead to ‘a crisis of foreign reserves, chronic shortages and political malaise’. It should be noted that these issues obtain in those countries which adopted state capitalism (or were socialist-orientated). To that extent, they resembled their neo-colonialist counterparts.

It is important to remember that whatever the problems with state capitalism may be, the latter was a historical necessity in response to imperialism. Although imperialism represents a mature capitalist stage, in underdeveloped countries it had to contend with immature social classes. This is true both of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The nature of colonial administration was such that there would be an expansion of the petty bourgeois. They were

meant to take over at independence. Yet they proved to be incapable of playing ‘the historical role of either the bourgeoisie or that of the proletariat and simultaneously of their greater social maturity’ (Mafeje 1978a: 36). This notwithstanding, the problems associated with state capitalism must be seen as linked to what Mafeje calls ‘uneven development of classes’ in underdeveloped countries rather than petty bourgeois lapses and pervasions. The uneven development of classes is historically determined. The fact that the working class and peasants are weak in underdeveloped countries is a great source of hindrance to socialist transformation. Yet in spite of the weaknesses of the said classes, without state capitalism at independence no real progress could have been made. Whatever problems may have been associated with it, ‘the most useful way of contending with the problem under the given constraints is not to wish to by-pass state capitalism in underdeveloped countries but *to transcend it*’ (Mafeje 1978a: 36, emphasis in original). In spite of Nikolai Bukharin’s ([1920]1979: 134) contention that ‘the system of state capitalism is the most absolute of all forms of exploitation of the masses by a handful of oligarchs’, in the underdeveloped countries state capitalism could not have been bypassed. It was meant to be a catalyst for rapid accumulation in order to address the backward economy and to counter global capitalism.

Apart from the weakness of the working class and peasants in underdeveloped countries, one of the greatest constraints is ‘*lack of self-reliance*’. This issues in two things. First, underdeveloped countries are unable to process and turn into finished products local raw materials. Second, they cannot ‘produce capital goods to supply potential consumer goods, manufacture, agriculture and, ultimately, heavy industry’. (Mafeje 1978a: 39). Both of these factors mean external dependence and this undermines progressive ideological impulses on the part of underdeveloped countries.

Mafeje (1978a: 40) sees the alliance between peasants and workers as ‘the ultimate antithesis to petty-bourgeois hegemony and contradictions of state capitalism’. In theory, the alliance between peasants and workers seems natural, but in practice there is uneven development between the two classes something which may make their alliance hard to handle. Part of the reason for this is that workers constitute an insignificant number of the population in Africa. And, for that matter, workers tend to align themselves with urban classes and their values than with the peasants. Peasants, on the other hand, who constitute the vast majority of the population are excluded from ‘the benefits of modern life’, and are typically ‘deprived of education and scientific knowledge and often lack organisational and political skills on a national scale’ (Mafeje 1978a: 41). Although the peasants hardly side with their ‘urban class enemies’ and the state, they are nevertheless susceptible to ‘rustic ideologies’ and ‘hierarchies’.

Their working class counterparts, on the other hand, are less liable to conservative ideologies and hierarchies. As noted in the previous section of the thesis, the progressive nature of the peasants cannot be assumed (see Mafeje 1993b). Yet although Mafeje seems to ascribe a level of progressiveness on the part of the workers, the same rule applies to them. As he says about the peasants, 'their quality has to be ascertained before any presuppositions can be made about their potential role in the revolution', the same must be said about the workers – especially in the context of underdeveloped countries where industrial workers 'constitute an insignificant portion of the population' (Mafeje 1978a: 41). Yet in spite of the foregoing, Mafeje is quick to point out that 'a variety of field studies show that peasants have gone beyond the purely colonial identification of exploitation and have come to recognise the fact that their own governments indulge in exploitation through the marketing boards and the usual hierarchy of cooperatives and middle-men. They are also fully conscious of the exploitation they suffer as cheap, unskilled, migrant labour on the plantations and in the towns, as is shown by their songs and utterances' (Mafeje 1978a: 41-42). He sees the alliance between peasants and workers as 'the ultimate antithesis to petty-bourgeois hegemony and the contradictions of state capitalism'.

The mobility and willingness to sell labour power on the part of the peasants, contrary to classical theory, shows that they are not as land-rooted as the European or the classical peasantry. In countries such as China, Korea, Vietnam, Mexico, Cuba, Algeria, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Angola, and in South Africa with the peasants' revolts (Mbeki 1964; Tabata 1974), 'it is hard not to ascribe a certain proletariat quality to modern peasantries in the Third World' (Mafeje 1978a: 42). Thus although peasants in underdeveloped countries are not contemporaries of their worker counterparts in developed countries, they resemble them in some respect. Both strata are 'objects of exploitation by the same international finance-capital'. It is important to note here that peasants in underdeveloped countries are exploited in the market as small producers and also by capital as migrant workers. The latter point is important to remember as it was made in the previous section of the thesis. In the section that follows, this chapter grapples with Mafeje's critique of 'dual theories' of economic growth (see Mafeje 1972, 1977c, 1978a).

9.3 A Critique of 'Dual Theories' of Economic Growth

As noted earlier, Mafeje wrote at the time of the struggle for liberation and in the transition period to independence in Africa. As such, it is important to note that 'societies in transition are often a source of controversy, as they characteristically abound in ambiguities of both form and content' (Mafeje 1978a: 47). At the level of historical sociology, studying societies in

transition speaks to the question of continuity and change. This, of course, is as much a question in historical sociology as it is a question in epistemology. At the level of epistemology, Mafeje invokes the question of historical determinism. He argues that the outcomes of historical events are ‘not only conditioned but are also conditioning’. This should lead to the underlying theoretical tension in dialectics between determinism and voluntarism.

It is important to follow the unit of Mafeje’s thought in the present discussion. Here he is discussing the question of historical determinism such as it emerges in Marxist theory. Yet he concedes that the question of determinism is not unique to Marxist theory since it appears in liberal bourgeois discourses as well – particularly in this case in development theory. The kind of liberal determinism which appears in development theory, Mafeje maintains, is one which assumes that underdeveloped countries will have to travel the same path as western societies in order to develop. It sounds like something of an oxymoron to say such a view represents ‘ahistorical determinism’ (since to say something is determined is in part to say that it follows from what came before it or that it has antecedents). But *sensu stricto*, the much more insidious issue with ahistorical determinism of development theory is that it represents a partial and ideological view of development. Mafeje argues that this issue is manifest in the notion of ‘dual theories’ of development (see Cain 1976; Seidman 1970b; Silverman 1992). According to him, dual theories are not only problematic for the substantive reasons to be discussed below, but also for the formal reason that the idea of ‘dual theories’ is a tautology.

Mafeje sets out to demonstrate that the kind of determinism which obtains in liberal development theory is biased and ‘inherently conservative’. To expose these weaknesses, he contrasts liberal determinism with Marxist determinism. It should be noted, however, that Mafeje is not content merely to replicate what the Marxist theory says. He wants to evaluate, too, its ‘peculiarly European presuppositions’ which are usually applied *ex cathedra* to underdeveloped countries. To achieve this, he confronts theory with concrete historical experience of the countries of East, Central and Southern Africa. According to him, ‘underdeveloped countries are in a position to make a contribution by reflecting more closely on their experience which is already raising some important question marks about the logic of history’ (Mafeje 1978a: 47).

The main assumption of dual theories turns on the existence of different economic laws in underdeveloped countries. These refer to ‘traditional’/ ‘subsistence’ and ‘modern’/ ‘capitalist’ sectors. This notion of dual theories is the object of critique in Funani’s master’s thesis, *State, Democracy and Development: An Exploration of the Scholarship of Professor Archie Monwabisi Mafeje* (2016). In the thesis, Funani critiques not only Thabo Mbeki’s

perpetuation of this spurious concept, but also Patrick Bond and his colleagues who dedicated a special issue in *Africanus: Journal of Development Studies* (2007) to a critique of Mbeki's conception of dual economies. Funani argues that unlike Mafeje's critique of dual economies, the arguments raised by contributors to the *Africanus* special issue were not 'theoretically grounded'. In Funani's critique of dual theories, Peter Ekeh's widely-cited paper, 'Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical' (1975), comes in for a critical treatment for having fallen into the same trap as dualists like Mbeki. Significantly, however, Funani's engagement with Mafeje's critique of dual economies fulfils a triple-mandate. Firstly, he critiques the notion of dual economies for creating a false-dichotomy. Secondly, given the fact that neither Mbeki nor his critics in the *Africanus* special issue considered Mafeje's critique of dual economies, Funani raises a crucial issue about the ignorance or erasure of Mafeje's work in the South African intellectual discourse. Thirdly, in raising these issues at all Funani succeeds in re-centring Mafeje's work.

On the one hand, the so-called traditional/subsistence sector is said to have surplus labour, stagnant production technologies and deficient in net savings. On the other hand, the so-called modern/capitalist sector, is said to be characterised by efficient labour utilisation and a high rate of savings. In this regard, the view put forward is that growth occurs when there is a shift from the 'traditional' to the 'modern' sector. The former is said to be the supplier of labour to the latter since it purportedly creates employment. These assumptions, Mafeje posits, are valid only if one accepts the view that the traditional sector is characterised by the factors just mentioned. Moreover, they are valid if structural transformation and the process of development and change is viewed in lineal and timeless sequence as against being viewed dynamically.

As has already been stated, Mafeje attempts to evaluate Eurocentric assumptions in Marxist theory by studying the historical experience of East, Central and Southern Africa. Following Samir Amin (1972), he refers to these areas as the 'Africa of labour reserves'. Strictly speaking, Amin refers only to 'the eastern and southern parts of the continent' as labour reserves (1972: 504). He referred to Central Africa as 'Africa of the concession-owning companies' (Amin 1972: 504). It needs to be said, however, that East Africa (with the exception of Kenya) never had 'any serious white settler problem'. Furthermore, although it has no big mining industries, like the other regions it suffered from the 'dialectical effect' of labour migration and the 'underdevelopment of the African reserves'. This issue has colonial roots although it got intensified after World War II. Also, the flow of international capital accentuated the problem. What international companies did, having controlled exports and

imports, was to make 'common cause with domestic settler capital' (Mafeje 1978a: 64). So in spite of the dualistic theory of 'the traditional sector' and 'the modern sector', African people, 'whether peasant cultivators, wage earners, petty-traders, feckless layabouts, or intermittently all of these things, are subject to a pervading dialectic whose historical origins can scarcely be traced to anything called their past' (Mafeje 1978a: 64). The problem lay squarely with colonialism and imperialism. As Samir Amin puts it:

Under these circumstances, the traditional society was distorted to the point of being unrecognisable, it lost its autonomy, and its main function was to produce for the world market under conditions which, because they impoverished it, deprived the members of any prospects radical modernisation. This traditional society was not, therefore, in transition to modernity, as a dependant society it was complete, peripheral, and hence at the dead end. It consequently retained certain 'traditional' appearances which constituted its only means of survival. The Africa of colonial trade economy includes all the subordination/domination relationships between this pseudo-traditional society, integrated into the world system, and the central capitalist economy which shaped and dominated it. (Amin 1972: 520-521)

For Mafeje, the capitalist mode of production which emerged in Africa as a result of colonialism and imperialism shaped 'the specific socio-economic formations with which it is now supposed to be in competition or conflict'. The supposedly 'traditional sector' 'was a social emergence produced by *external forces*' (Mafeje 1978a: 66, emphasis in original). The issue goes beyond economic imposition in that colonialism altered the social fabric of the African people and ushered in 'special formations which are not attributable to tradition'. As such, the idea emerging from dual theories about the so-called traditional and modern sectors amounts to a rationalisation as against an explanation. In short, a dialectical reading of African social formations reveals that one cannot conceive of the 'traditional' outside the 'modern' sector. They are a dialectical dynamic rather than a binary or a dichotomy. Mafeje asserts that: 'In underdeveloped countries the question of the exclusiveness of the capitalist mode of production over time is not a foregone conclusion nor its blockage a problem of traditionalism. The fact that capitalism in its external expansion, unlike in its internal development, has not been able to sweep aside certain traditional institutions and modes of production points to a serious historical contradiction and not a transient natural phenomenon' (Mafeje 1978a: 66).

As such, 'dual theories' misconceive the phenomenon they sought to address and are therefore liable to the charge of studying appearance as against substance. Apart from the Eurocentric assumption that the modern capitalist sector will absorb the traditional subsistence sector, this view is ahistorical in that none of its premises have been validated in any ex-colonial African country since the end of colonialism. Africa is still a largely agrarian continent. Fundamentally, however, as has been pointed out in the course of this thesis, Mafeje was in search of an epistemological break. Thus for him, the foregoing discussion is precisely at the level at which an epistemological break should be pursued. Although dual theories and modernisation theories purported to be dealing with societies in transition, presumably from tradition to modernity, it is not clear why the traditional sector is seen as an impediment to progress. It is important to note, however, that this is where the Lewisian notion of 'traditional' should be demarcated from that contained in the modernisation theory. Lewis (1954, 1979) made no assumption or claim of the traditional sector as an impediment to development in the modern sector. For Lewis the two-sector economy model is more of a thought experiment than a description of actual economies. One of the basic assumptions is that you are dealing with a closed economy, one that clearly did not exist, and Lewis was well aware of this. Specifically, how exactly is the progressiveness of capitalism to be proved if it fails in Africa as a result of the 'backward' 'traditional' sector? By its own logic, is capitalism not meant to improve the supposedly backward sector?

The general point of this discussion is that 'European analogies' should not be used as a substitute for 'strict historical analysis'. Mafeje concedes that at one remove, the traditional sector can be a hindrance to capitalist transition. Yet the question still stands as to why colonial capitalism, as against classical capitalism, did not dissolve traditional structures *in toto*. This is not a real question because colonialism was not meant to 'develop' the colonised. According to Mafeje, it is a mere 'diversion' to look for answers in the traditional sector. To explain this issue, one has to study the structure and the mechanisms of the modern capitalism itself. Mafeje observes: 'This is a logical-starting point since, historically, the so-called phenomenon of "dualism" did not occur until the *external expansion* of Western European capitalism. In its imperialist form the objective of West European capitalism was *not* the transformation of traditional societies, wherever it found them, but rather their *incorporation* so as to secure markets and supplies of raw materials' (Mafeje 1978a: 67, emphasis in original). The point was not for capitalism to reproduce itself for the needs of those at the receiving end of colonialism. But rather, the point was to undermine their humanity and to produce a caricature of them.

Capitalism ‘contrived to maintain some semblance of traditional society on non-traditional terms’ (Mafeje 1978a: 68). Notwithstanding the persistence of some traditional systems, ‘the effect of the external expansion of capitalism in underdeveloped countries has been the *reconstruction* of the traditional societies to produce something other than the capitalist mode of production’ (Mafeje 1978a: 68, emphasis in original). Following Laclau (1971, 1977), Mafeje argues that the fact that the world capitalist system exists is no reason to infer that the capitalist mode of production has been vindicated the world over. From the point of view of underdevelopment, the primary contradiction, suitably understood, is between the capitalist mode of production and its social formations in such places as the African continent, and not between the traditional sector and the modern sector. To emphasise the pervasions of colonial capitalism, Mafeje (1978a: 68) observes: ‘in South Africa, the most highly industrialised African country, the development of the proletariat has been arrested by all sorts of mediation e.g. the “reservation” system, allowing tenuous ties to the land, a permanent system of migrant labour and anti-black urban and industrial policies, creating a sense of insecurity and dependence on kin in the countryside. The same is true of Rhodesia’. A similar kind of issue manifested itself in Kenya and Zambia. This resulted in a situation in which there emerged producers who assumed characteristics usually associated with two distinct social classes, *viz.* the peasantry and the proletariat. Equally, what would have been a local bourgeoisie, became a class subordinate and heavily dependent on ‘international finance capital’. Although this social formation is not only disadvantaged but also a handicap to underdeveloped countries, it is an advantage to developed countries. This framework ensured that there exists a readily available source of cheap unskilled labour for the benefit of foreign capital. This has been the case since the advent of colonialism (see for example Magubane 1996). It is a known datum by now that underdeveloped countries are a source of cheap labour for international capital. What this means, Mafeje (1978a: 69) maintains, is that ‘within the capitalist system itself there is an uneven rate of exploitation of labour by capital’.

9.4 Conclusion

The first part of this chapter was devoted to issues in the post-independence period such as neo-colonialism and underdevelopment. The second part of the chapter was concerned to understand the notion of state capitalism in the post-independence period. The remainder of the chapter gave a careful exposition of Mafeje’s critique of the notion of dual theories of

economic growth. The following chapter discusses part two of Mafeje's contribution to revolutionary theory and politics with specific reference to South Africa and southern Africa.

Chapter Ten

On Revolutionary Theory and Politics: Part II

10.0 Introduction

The previous chapter was devoted to Mafeje's *earlier* contribution to revolutionary theory and politics, such as it relates to Africa specifically and the Global South generally (Mafeje 1972, 1977b, 1977c, 1978a). This chapter is concerned to understand his *later* contribution to revolutionary theory and politics, such as it relates to the context of South Africa and southern Africa (see Mafeje 1986c, 1992, 1997c, 1998d). Although in 1978 Mafeje (1978b) published a paper on the Soweto uprising, much of his work on South African politics appeared in the mid-1980s up to the late 1990s. As has already been noted, in making the distinction between Mafeje's 'earlier' and 'later' contribution to revolutionary theory and politics, one is not suggesting that the two are theoretically or politically distinct, the distinction is made *purely* on the basis of scope and focus. To repeat, there is in fact a strong connection and consistency in his work on this area. It is important once more to stress the fact that Mafeje was in search of an epistemological break. This is a theme which permeates the three clusters of his work. The title of his book on revolutionary theory and politics, *In Search of an Alternative* (1992), is instructive in this regard.

Thus in contributing to revolutionary theory and politics, Mafeje wanted fellow revolutionary African intellectuals to avoid being dictated to by Euro-American scholars. In his work, Mafeje resisted derivative ideas and dogmas. His position was that succumbing to these weaknesses would alienate African intellectuals not only from the very same societies they are trying to understand, but also from each other as a community of intellectuals. In short, those African scholars who over-emphasise 'universal texts' (theory) cease to be 'authentic interlocutors'. Mafeje is interested in the relationship between universal and local history or 'universal texts' and the 'vernacular'. The former refers to theory while the latter refers to the historically concrete. Sometimes he speaks of nomothetic versus idiographic enquiry. He is interested, too, in the theory of society and theory of revolution.

10.1 South Africa: A Theoretical Overview

For Mafeje, in the process of historical development of social formations, 'authentic subjects' are neither a given nor are they fully formed. Instead, they exist in contradiction because 'in any given situation there is more than one truth'. In other words, 'interacting subjects mutually

create one another, whether in the positive or in the negative sense' (Mafeje 1986c: 95). In the context of the struggle for liberation, ideological standpoints imply diversity of opinion just insofar as they may be 'collective as well as exclusive or inward-looking'. It is important to remember, too, that in the struggle for self-discovery and self-assertion, there is the question of symbols. Symbols are as important as the substantive issues they often represent. In this instance, the question of language immediately comes to mind. Mafeje argues that ex-colonial countries have had to grapple with the distinction between 'universal' languages and 'vernacular' languages. Given that South Africa is a former British colony, English has assumed the status of a 'universal' language while local or indigenous languages, and to some extent Afrikaans, were relegated to the 'vernacular'. Thus, 'in the context of domination, universal languages are a supreme instrument for indoctrination and in the context of liberation "vernacular" languages are a powerful instrument for self-assertion and self-rediscovery' (Mafeje 1986c: 95).

It is partly for these reasons that African intellectuals call for 'indigenisation of the social sciences'. Although this may be acknowledged as highly important, there is no agreement as to what is really meant by it. For Mafeje, such disagreements are not a matter merely of theory but also a question of political choices – a terrain 'among classes and within classes'. In mentioning the question of class contestation, Mafeje believes that the latter will be of some value in understanding the petty bourgeoisie in Africa. Objectively every single African intellectual (revolutionary or otherwise) is a member of the petty bourgeois class. What they seek to do with their objective class location is a different matter. Although deploying such Marxist terms as petty bourgeoisie, he is well-aware of the fact that while Marxism has 'universalistic pretensions', it is in fact a product of 'European history at a particular juncture'. In this regard, he asks two related questions: 'If Marxism is a universal scientific theory, how does it overcome its own syntactical as well as semantic limitations? In other words, methodologically, how does it relate to vernacular languages, understood in the analytical, political sense' (Mafeje 1986c: 97)?

Mafeje argues that a number of Marxists are aware of the challenges arising from these questions but choose to ignore them out of 'political expediency'. According to him, Marxism and socialist politics arrived in South Africa after the Twenty-One Points of the Third International or the Comintern which were outlined for fraternal organisations. Filatova (2017:1) says in 1928 the Comintern sent an 'instruction' to the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) 'to work for an "independent native republic"'. This would have been a few years after Stalin had assumed office in Russia. But Mafeje points out that, suitably understood,

much of the Comintern principles were designed by Lenin and his party ‘specifically for the leadership of the socialist movement in capitalist Europe, where schooled Marxists and an experienced working class existed’ (Mafeje 1986c: 97). Allison Drew (2002), however, suggests that socialist groups in South Africa were found at the very start of the 20th century.

For Mafeje, the European immigrant workers in South Africa ‘were more than presumptuous’ in thinking that they could be authentic interlocutors in the South African political situation. As pointed out above, they were neither adept at Marxist theory and debates taking place in Europe nor were they familiar with ‘African political vernacular’. There was, too, an over-reliance on imported theoretical categories and European analogies e.g. such concepts as ‘communal land’, ‘feudal landlords’, ‘tribal economy’ etc. (see for example Wolpe *et al* 1980).

The upshot of the over-reliance on European analogies was two-fold: (i) the CPSA, unlike other South African Marxist or left-leaning formations such as the Unity Movement, relied heavily on the Third International; and (ii) they were unable to appeal to black workers, whom they deemed ‘semi-tribal’, hence they reached out to the black petty bourgeoisie which characterised the ANC leadership. The second point is controversial and inaccurate. There are indications that by 1928, the CPSA had a sizable black membership and that some of its leaders in the late 1920s and 1930s were black (Moses Kotane, Albert Nzula and Edwin Thabo Mafutsanyana) (see Bunting 1981). The CPSA adopted the ‘Native Republic’ thesis in December 1928–January 1929. The black petty bourgeoisie, according to Mafeje, were authentic interlocutors insofar as they understood both the ‘universal’ and the ‘vernacular’ as a result of their formal education. Mafeje raises this issue in the first place because he wishes to highlight the ‘ambiguity of the relationship between black and white South Africa’ (Mafeje 1986c: 98). He refers to one of the theoretical postulates of the SACP which holds that South Africa was a case of ‘colonialism of a special type’ or ‘internal colonialism by whites over blacks’.¹²⁵ This argument was to varying degrees endorsed by liberals and Marxists alike (see Friedman 2015; Marquard 1957; Wolpe 1975). If this argument be valid, then its assumptions must apply *mutatis mutandis* to white immigrant workers at the turn of the 20th century and the CPSA of the 1920s as well. This is so because both groups set out not only to impose on black workers, but also to act as their mentors. Mafeje argues that although the Afrikaners had no

¹²⁵ The CPSA was disbanded in 1950; the South African Communist Party (SACP) was formed in 1953 as an underground organisation. The SACP adopted formally the concept of ‘colonialism of a special type’ in 1962, although the concept of ‘internal colonialism’ has a longer genealogy and continued to be used by the likes of Wolpe (1975) and Magubane (1989).

universal language to superimpose on blacks (unlike their English counterparts) they were equally guilty of perpetuating oppression. They did so in the vernacular to exclude blacks from white bourgeois civilisation they themselves (Afrikaners) were not part of for a very long time.

Mafeje argues that ‘the class content of the struggle for the Afrikaners might not be different from that of the black nationalists’ (Mafeje 1986c: 98). Importantly, however, the theory of ‘internal colonialism’ or ‘colonialism of a special type’ in the South African context takes attention away from class analysis of the 20th century. Yet, if one must use it, one ought to be consistent and make no exceptions. If the SACP (CPSA) and the ANC accepted the premise that South Africa was a case of ‘internal colonialism’ or ‘colonialism of a special type’, then they are bound to accept the conclusion which follows from it that white people *in toto* are colonialists and therefore worth driving out – as was the case elsewhere in ex-colonies. Logically, the ‘internal colonialism’ thesis means that its white Marxist advocates must concede to surrender the land and the means of production to the indigenous population as was the case in the rest of the African continent. Thus the ‘colonialism of a special type’ or ‘internal colonialism’ thesis ‘makes nonsense of any claims about “our country” by groups other than Africans; not even just blacks’ (Mafeje 1986c: 98-99). In other words, the ‘internal colonialism’ thesis comes close to saying white communists were themselves colonisers and hence to hoisting their argument with its own petard. Mafeje has already mentioned above that CPSA white communists treated black workers as their underlings and sometimes as enemies as the aforementioned case of ‘Black Menace’ suggests. Elsewhere, Mafeje (1998c: 47) argues: ‘The white liberals (including the white communists in South Africa) reserved the right to exercise hegemonic power after independence. It is when this self-assigned prerogative is questioned or threatened that the white liberals rear their backs and their nasty praxis is exposed’. The South African white leftist, Heinrich Bohmke, argues that structurally, white people (wittingly or unwittingly) of all political persuasions continue to usurp black liberation (see Bohmke 2010). Bohmke (2010) sets out to critique what he takes to be the self-serving nature of the white left’s political discourses. Instead of seeing the white left as revolutionaries in their own right, Bohmke insists that their continued prerogative to speak for the black majority only amounts to new forms of *mission civilisatrice*. In short, for Bohmke (2010), the white ‘revolutionary is a missionary’. Similar issues are raised by Mafeje in his monograph, *The National Question in Southern African Settler Societies*, and he refers to the patronising nature of the white left within the SACP. In any case, it is important to note that Mafeje did not take the question of race to be central to his argument and he in fact took it to be nothing more than a ‘socially-constructed’ ‘epiphenomenon’ (Mafeje 2000a, 2001c). Indeed in the

abovementioned monograph he mentions that in the Unity Movement he was trained to believe that ‘nationalism’ or the ‘Africanist’ perspective was reactionary and they were thus in favour of not only class analysis but also internationalism.

Mafeje charges that the ‘internal colonialism’ thesis collapses different forms and stages/phases of oppression into ‘one fixed category’, *viz.* ‘colonialism’ – albeit ‘of a special type’. At the level of epistemology, the ‘internal colonialism’ thesis is liable to the charge of using taxonomic categorisations (rather than typologies) to understand social problems. As is known in the social sciences, the problem with taxonomic categorisations is that they are static and ‘incapable of dealing with dynamic processes’ (Mafeje 1988a: 93). Colonialism was not only a historically determined mode of political and economic domination, but also one whose method of extraction of economic value was extra-economic. Consistent with global political and economic trends, South Africa of the 1920s, paradoxically the period in which the CPSA adopted the internal colonialism thesis, had reached or entered what Lenin ([1920]1999) called the ‘highest stage of capitalism’, *viz.* imperialism or the monopoly stage. The notion of internal colonialism was a case of superimposing theory on data instead of using data to interrogate theory. In this regard, as has been noted, the CPSA were not authentic interlocutors. By the 1920s, South Africa did not ‘thrive by exchange value but rather by *surplus-value*’ (Mafeje 1986c: 98, emphasis in original). Having pointed out what colonialism consists of, it is important to define imperialism before the discussion goes any further. It is important to note that Mafeje was working with the Leninist definition of imperialism. Although imperialism is said to be an expression of colonialism, Lenin ([1920]1999) did not take imperialism to be a mere question of annexation.

Within Marxism, it is Karl Kautsky who saw imperialism in such simplistic terms. Kautsky saw it as ‘a product of highly developed industrial capitalism. It consists in the striving of every industrial capitalist nation to bring under its control or to annex all large areas of *agrarian* territory, irrespective of what nations inhabit it’ (Kautsky quoted in Lenin [1920]1999: 92, emphasis in original). For Lenin:

This definition is of no use at all because it one-sidedly, *i.e.*, arbitrarily, singles out only the national question (although the latter is extremely important in itself as well as in its relation to imperialism), it arbitrarily and *inaccurately* connects this question *only* with industrial capital in the countries which annex other nations, and in an equally arbitrary and inaccurate manner pushes into the forefront the annexation of agrarian regions. Imperialism is a striving for annexations — this is what the *political* part of

Kautsky's definition amounts to. It is correct, but very incomplete, for politically, imperialism is, in general, a striving towards violence and reaction. For the moment, however, we are interested in the *economic* aspect of the question, which Kautsky *himself* introduced into *his* definition. The inaccuracies in Kautsky's definition are glaring. The characteristic feature of imperialism is *not* industrial *but* finance capital. ...The characteristic feature of imperialism is precisely that it strives to annex *not only* agrarian territories, but even most highly industrialised regions. (Lenin [1920]1999: 93-94, emphasis in original)

Thus for Lenin ([1920]1999: 91), 'if it were necessary to give the briefest possible definition of imperialism we should have to say that imperialism is the monopoly stage of capitalism'. Yet even for Lenin this definition is incomplete. He elaborates:

But very brief definitions, although convenient, for they sum up the main points, are nevertheless inadequate, since we have to deduce from them some especially important features of the phenomenon that has to be defined. And so, without forgetting the conditional and relative value of all definitions in general, which can never embrace all the concatenations of a phenomenon in its full development, we must give a definition of imperialism that will include the following five of its basic features: (1) the concentration of production and capital has developed to such a high stage that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life; (2) the merging of bank capital with industrial capital, and the creation, on the basis of this 'finance capital', of a financial oligarchy; (3) the export of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities acquires exceptional importance; (4) the formation of international monopolist capitalist associations which share the world among themselves, and (5) the territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers is completed. Imperialism is capitalism in that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun; in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed. (Lenin [1920]1999: 92)

This is the background against which Mafeje's critique of 'colonialism of a special type' must be understood. It is not enough merely to point out that imperialism is consistent with colonialism because for Lenin, imperialism is to be distinguished from colonialism precisely

because of monopoly capitalism and all the five elements stated in the aforementioned definition. Thus for Mafeje, on the basis of the Leninist definition of imperialism, by the time the CPSA was formed, South Africa had consistent with global capitalism entered the highest stage of capitalism i.e. imperialism. Writing about Jack Simons and his popularisation of the ‘internal colonialism’ thesis in the CPSA, his biographer Hugh Macmillan (2016: 48) says: ‘Jack used to say he borrowed the idea from Leo Marquard... Jack intended this as no more than an analogy and was surprised that it became so well established... It was restated in a much more elaborate form as “colonialism of a special type” (CST) in the South African Communist Party’s manifesto, *The Road to South African Freedom*, in 1962’.

Magubane (1989), Mafeje’s contemporary, took the opportunity to respond to Mafeje and other critics of ‘internal colonialism’ and offered ‘what amounts to its defence’. Magubane asserts that:

Contrary to the shallow misrepresentation and disingenuous attempts by Callinicos and Mafeje to discredit the theory of internal colonialism at the time it was formulated, the SACP and the ANC had no coherent theory on the character of black oppression, and no comprehensive strategy for intervention and leadership in the struggle for national liberation and social emancipation. The great contribution of the Comintern Thesis on the national question, in 1928 and 1930, was that for the first time Communists and later nationalists confronted the specific nature of the South African state and broke with the liquidationist approach that had denied the fact that the African people in South Africa were subject to a form of oppression distinct from that of white class exploitation and oppression. Specifically, the theses recognised that black exploitation was a particular oppression and exploitation which required a comprehensive theoretical and historical analysis in its own right, and a special political strategy and programme to overthrow it. Specifically, the theses highlighted the fact that the struggle against white minority rule, was also a struggle against imperialism and a key to the struggle against for social emancipation in South Africa. (Magubane 1989: 203-204)

Instead of responding to the nuts and bolts of Mafeje’s otherwise sophisticated critique of ‘internal colonialism’, Magubane mobilises well-known historical facts and proceeds to state the obvious. Not only does he avoid a direct confrontation with Mafeje’s central argument, but he simply presupposes the very point at issue. Mafeje critiques ‘internal colonialism’ not only for lacking originality, but also for being Eurocentric insofar as it was imported from the Comintern. Although the Comintern proposed for South African communists the notion of a

‘native republic’, the CPSA remained a largely white-dominated organisation which was otherwise paternalistic and treated blacks as underlings. In any case, Magubane’s argument proceeds in circularity. Politically, Magubane’s argument may have been effective because the notion of ‘internal colonialism’ still holds sway among some South African intellectuals. Intellectually, however, his ‘defence’ lacks the theoretical subtlety and sophistication required to dispel Mafeje’s argument. Magubane’s assertion that ‘the theses highlighted the fact that the struggle against white minority rule, was also a struggle against imperialism’, is in fact a give-away for Mafeje and critics of ‘internal colonialism’. This is so because, as Mafeje points out, to speak of ‘internal colonialism’ after 1920 was not only to confuse different stages/phases of oppression but also to ignore the fact that consistent with global capitalism, South Africa had reached the stage of imperialism. Effectively, Magubane telescopes different stages of history and oppression into a single unit by arguing that colonialism was taking place concurrently with imperialism in South Africa post-1920. In cases where the two forms of oppression take place concurrently, the struggle needs to be waged in tandem but the point is that South Africa had by the 1920s entered the stage of imperialism. Indeed, in his book, titled *The Making of a Racist State*, Magubane (1996) himself points out that by 1875 the world had entered the imperialist stage. Ultimately, Magubane advances a trans-historical claim which overlooks Mafeje’s argument that oppression and exploitation are products of history and therefore change in accordance with economic and political development. As such, although colonialism is an expression of imperialism, the two represent different stages in history. This is even truer if one takes into account the fact that Mafeje is working with a Leninist definition of imperialism – i.e. the highest stage of imperialism and not mere annexation. It is true that black workers in South Africa suffered acute oppression in ways their white counterparts did not (Magubane 1996, 1989). But as pointed out above, Mafeje (1986c) readily accepts this fact of history.

The nature of colonialism throughout the continent was such that the indigenous population suffered more than the white working-class coloniser. What kind of colonialists would colonialists be if they did not oppress and exploit the indigenous people more than poor whites? In his seminal paper, ‘Underdevelopment and Dependence in Black Africa’, Samir Amin points out that southern Africa and East Africa exhibited similar characteristics of oppression and exploitation. He calls these regions ‘Africa of the labour reserves’ (Amin 1972). Samir Amin elaborates in this illustrated quote: ‘This was because there was great mineral wealth to be exploited (gold and diamonds in South Africa, and copper in Northern Rhodesia), and an untypical settler agriculture in the tropical Africa of Southern Rhodesia, Kenya, and

German Tanganyika. In order to obtain this proletariat quickly, the colonisers dispossessed the African rural communities – sometimes by violence – and drove them deliberately back into small, poor regions, with no means of modernising and intensifying their farming’ (Amin 1972: 519). In the final analysis, as Mamdani (1996) points out, the South African case may have been extreme but it was not exceptional.

For Mafeje, if one were to follow the ‘internal colonialism’ thesis to its logical conclusion, then one would have to commit to ‘racial classification and pedigree’, something which was the ideological commitment of the apartheid government. If the internal colonialism thesis were pushed to its logical conclusion, then no other racial group other than blacks and Coloureds could lay claim to South Africa. Thus on the basis of the ‘internal colonialism’ thesis, Asians would have to be excluded as well in spite of being oppressed the same as blacks and Coloureds. Yet this would have problems of its own since Asians have no history of colonising blacks (although some discriminate against blacks). Much more importantly, the term ‘black’ changed radically in South Africa of the 1970s onwards thanks to the Black Consciousness Movement. This is so to the point that Coloureds and Asians were self-referentially ‘Black’. What is important to note here is that Mafeje employs a *reductio ad absurdum* and attempts to show that if one were to follow the internal colonialism thesis, s/he would reach absurd conclusions such excluding Asians and Cape Malays (Coloureds) because they arrived with the colonisers. He is not saying Coloureds and Asians must be excluded, he is simply deriding the adherents of the ‘internal colonialism’ or ‘colonialism of a special type’ thesis. These groups, unlike whites, have no history of oppressing black people. Mafeje seems to have a great deal of foresight in that after having made this point, he asks: ‘Does this signify anything important or is it merely a passing phase’ (Mafeje 1986c: 99)? This is an important question because in the post-1994 dispensation, there seems to have been a reversal of the gains of the Black Consciousness Movement which sought to unite all the oppressed groups under the concept ‘Black’.

Having critiqued the notion of ‘internal colonialism’, Mafeje proceeds to discuss the ‘national question’. Although he does not define what a nation is, Mafeje seems to be working with the classical definition of what constitutes a nation i.e. ‘a historically evolved stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture’ (Lenin 2002: 197). Mafeje (1986c) concedes, however, that because classical definitions of the national question derive from ‘universal languages’ i.e. imported from Europe, they are ‘quickly getting antiquated’. Mkandawire agrees with Mafeje:

The national question has always been closely associated with the history of oppressed or colonised peoples. For much of the twentieth century, the national question involved first, simply asserting one's humanity or the *presence africaine* as the title of the main outlet of Negritude writing suggested; second, the acquisition of independence, and third, maintaining the unity and territorial integrity of the new state. National identity, whether based on ethnicity or not, always contains a territorial component. It does not matter how the borders of that territory were drawn. In the post-colonial period the problem was simply 'how to hold the country together'... (Mkandawire 2009: 132)

To clinch his point, Mafeje uses as an example the fact that 'different waves of South Africans' have lived in this piece of land for over 500 years – the latest arrivals being the British and Indians who arrived over 150 years ago (Mafeje 1986c). Thus the national question, according to him, is not as self-evident as is assumed but rather an object of enquiry to begin with. Precisely who constitutes a nation in South Africa is not, according to Mafeje, as obvious as it is assumed. As such:

[One] is puzzled and at the same time embarrassed to acknowledge the fact that the position of the South African Communist Party on the question of 'nationalities', though inspired by a liberatory ideology, coincides with that of the government on Bantustans. Fortunately, one does not have to strain to establish this point because the Communist Party has more publications on this issue than any other political organisation in South Africa. From its inception the Communist Party has been guided by Stalin's thesis on the right of nations to self-determination and the recommendations of the Third International/Comintern to fraternal organisations. (Mafeje 1986c: 100-101)

For Mafeje, 'the universal texts' of the Comintern/Third International had to be 'translated into the vernacular'. In other words, before anything at all can be said about theory, one had to study conditions on the ground in order to enrich theory or ultimately reach an epistemological break. It is not enough to know what theory says, the point is that where possible, one must transcend it in order to produce alternative knowledge systems. In doing so, Mafeje was not thereby committing himself to empiricism. On the contrary, he understood that the search for an epistemological break could only be made meaningful if one studies social formations on their

own terms (Mafeje 1981, 1986c, 1991a, 1995c, 1996, 2001a). The most glaring problem with Mafeje's argument, however, is that although he talks about learning from the local in order to arrive at the universal, he is actually relying on a universal text – Leninism. This is a much more devastating critique of Mafeje's argument just insofar as it highlights an internal inconsistency in his argument.

Mafeje goes on to highlight another instance in which the notion of 'internal colonialism' runs into difficulties. According to him, in their struggle for liberation, South Africans, unlike Africans on other parts of the continent, spoke not of 'independence' but of 'non-racial democracy' and 'national democracy'. This may have been a tacit acknowledgment that South Africa was an independent country – particularly after it pulled out of the Commonwealth in March 1961. Yet to accept that South Africa was an existing state and still anticipate or agitate for 'national democracy' which includes white people was, according to him, a 'contradiction in terms'. If South Africa was a case of 'internal colonialism', as the SACP/ANC suggests, how does one account for the inclusion of colonialists (i.e. whites) in the notion of 'national democracy'? The question imposes itself precisely because as everywhere else in the ex-colonies, colonialists are worth driving out. Yet the precise focus of the argument of 'internal colonialism' is on racial oppression. Once you create an equality of all races, then it ceases to be a case of internal colonialism. Deracialisation becomes a solution to settler colonialism. You end settler colonialism by ending the special status of the settler. Yet for Mafeje, it behoves the ANC/SACP to reconcile this mutually-contradictory position of: (i) diagnosing South Africa as a case of 'internal colonialism'; and (ii) accepting the coloniser as part of the 'non-racial' 'national democracy'.

The upshot of the 'internal colonialism' thesis was the 'two-stage theory' of the revolution – i.e. liberating black people first as an oppressed racial category and then as an exploited class secondarily. Mafeje's critique of the 'two-stage theory' is that it was untenable both for theoretical and for historical reasons. The key components or determinants of what constitutes a 'colony' are political and economic relations. Chief among these is the domination or oppression of pre-capitalist formations by a capitalist formation and, as has been noted, the 'extraction of value by largely extra-economic means' (Mafeje 1986c: 102). The general point here is that by the time the CPSA was formed, South Africa had passed this stage. Importantly, however, extraction of value by extra-economic means was not unique to her. Incidentally, although Magubane (1989) tries to defend the notion of 'internal colonialism', elsewhere he (Magubane 1996) goes at some length to argue that blackness is not a necessary condition for racism. Indeed, he uses the case of Ireland, 'the Irish Question', to clinch his argument and

argues that Ireland can legitimately be called the first colony of England (Magubane 1996). Moreover: 'Both the United States and Australia (and the Cape as is shown by the Great Trek) were *white* colonies of Britain and suffered the same ravages as everybody else' (Mafeje 1986c: 102, emphasis in original). Although Mafeje neglects to mention the extermination of the native peoples of both countries, the point is fairly clear – South Africa was not exceptional. Incidentally, again, Magubane makes the same point in his book, *The Ties That Binds*, when he says 'experiences of Afro-Americans and of the black people of South Africa share a great deal in common' (Magubane 1987a: 207). In his paper, 'Race and Class Revisited: The Case of the North America and South Africa', he argues that: 'It is in these societies that race and class and class and race are primary issues of sociological, philosophical and political discourse' (Magubane 1987b: 6). It is not altogether clear, therefore, why he strains to defend the notion of 'internal colonialism' when he himself readily acknowledges that South Africa and the United States share a great deal in common. Mafeje's verdict, therefore, is that perhaps South Africa should be characterised as a case of '*racial oppression* in an age of capitalism or imperialism', rather than trans-historical characterisations which telescope different stages of oppression and mutually-contradictory claims about 'internal colonialism' (Mafeje 1986c: 103, emphasis in original). To object to Mafeje by pointing out that this is not different from Magubane's position, is to neglect the fact that Mafeje already argued that apartheid South Africa had entered the Leninist imperialist stage and therefore surpassed colonialism. Thus, when he says South Africa was a case of racial oppression in the age of imperialism, he does not need to address 'the colonial dimension'. In his view, this question does not arise. He denies that apartheid was 'colonialism of special type' to begin with.

Mafeje argues that the struggle for liberation and the ANC/SACP theoretical positions did not say much about what black people will do once they are in power. He argues that: "Non-racial democracy" is the common denominator. This is a demand for inclusion in the body polity of the country and guarantees the national integration that has been frustrated by apartheid hitherto' (Mafeje 1986c: 103). Indeed the inclusion in the body polity is precisely what took place after 1994 since there was no major overhaul of the structural determinants of apartheid. Blacks are still largely poor while the whites still own the land and have control over the means of production. For Mafeje, notions of 'majority rule' and 'non-racial democracy' are perfectly consistent with liberal democracy and therefore the kind of 'non-racialism' adopted by the ANC says very little about socialism. To respond by saying the ANC is not a socialist organisation because it is primarily a 'nationalist' movement with a primary focus on racial oppression, would be to neglect the fact that the ANC/SACP are in pursuit of the two-stage

theory of a revolution i.e. national liberation followed by class liberation of the workers. It would not be asking the wrong question to evaluate whether the ANC has a socialist programme or not. Instead, it would be to take them on their own terms. Indeed, to deny this would be to make nonsense of their own stance of a 'national democratic revolution' in pursuit of the 'second transition' to 'economic liberation in our lifetime'. If the current posturing about 'nationalisation' of mines, 'expropriation of land' and 'radical economic transformation' is not a gesture towards a socialist path (even if rhetorically) then what is it about? What seems to matter for Mafeje is that those who are waging the struggle for liberation must win the support of all oppressed classes. Whether or not the struggle is socialist-orientated, history shows that the ex-colonies pursued their national democratic revolution through the unification of the said classes. This has been pointed out in the previous chapter.

The Communist Parties of China and Vietnam respectively, relied on the support of the peasants as well as the progressive elements of the petty-bourgeoisie. According to Mafeje, this bears testimony 'to the leading role of the petit-bourgeoisie in underdeveloped countries' (Mafeje 1986c: 112). On the basis of this, he is able to conclude that all nationalist or national movements in underdeveloped countries are likely to be shaped by the interests of the petty-bourgeoisie. It is true that there exists a progressive section of the petty-bourgeoisie in underdeveloped countries. Yet it does not follow that they are or will be sympathetic to a socialist struggle. In any case, the progressive petty-bourgeoisie tends to be a minority.

Furthermore, Mafeje argues that unlike the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the state petty-bourgeoisie cannot reproduce itself. This may not be true however. He says its available option is to win over the working-class and the peasants and other disgruntled sectors of the population. This is precisely what the Afrikaners did through policy protectionism and economic nationalism. This way, they were able to appease the working-class, businessmen and farmers. As a result, there developed an Afrikaner bourgeoisie in the true sense of the word. The Afrikaner bourgeoisie was, in Mafeje's words, the 'foster-child' of the Afrikaner petty-bourgeoisie. At any rate, this is cold comfort to the black majority who were the objects of adverse inclusion. Yet the black petty-bourgeoisie was always much more conciliatory in its political and theoretical orientation, as evidenced by the notion of 'non-racial democracy'. In spite of its rhetorical flair, the 'non-racial democracy' slogan does not 'represent a nation in itself and by itself, as happened elsewhere in Africa (barring Zimbabwe)' (Mafeje 1986c: 116). Yet non-racial democracy is irrelevant in non-settler societies. According to Mafeje (1986c: 104), 'the South African state is a state without a nation'. Consequently, although the nature of oppression of the people of South Africa was always known, there was no real agreement on

the nature of the national democratic revolution. For example, the ANC/SACP has always been keen on the notion of the ‘two-stage theory’ of the revolution (see Mafeje 1978b, 1986). Yet ‘the grounds for supposing that a socialist revolution is implicit in the South African national liberation struggle are as tenuous as the postulated link between the national democratic revolution and the social revolution in the two-stage theory’ (Mafeje 1986c: 116).

Consistent with Mafeje’s search for an epistemological break, this was not a matter merely of political struggles, but also a contribution to revolutionary theory and therefore knowledge production. Thus the question of the two-stage theory on the part of the ANC/SACP was a case of using universal texts without sufficient attention to local history. Politically, the danger of such a practice is that it ‘underestimated the capacity of the petit-bourgeoisie in the new states to mount their own political enterprise and frustrate any attempts towards a socialist transformation’ (Mafeje 1986c: 117). One would also need to worry about the bourgeoisie itself. The post-1994 South Africa provides a good example of this. Significantly, ‘under conditions of monopoly capitalism, imperialism will abort the national democratic revolution by imposing a petit-bourgeois comprador class whose interests will be opposed to those of the majority of the people’ (Mafeje 1986c: 117). The workers and the peasants both have no option but to prevail on the petty-bourgeoisie. One of the problems of the two-stage theory, which is still being touted today through ANC/SACP notions of the ‘second-transition’, is the un-Marxist assumption that socialism itself is a finite stage to which South Africa is transitioning or progressing. As pointed out in the previous chapter, socialism is not a mode of production but a transitional stage in itself. This notwithstanding, in the South African context: ‘*Socialist democracy* is on the agenda precisely because of the unrealisability of bourgeois democracy under conditions of imperialism and monopoly capitalism’ (Mafeje 1986c: 119, emphasis in original). Socialist democracy, contrary to the ANC/SACP ‘second-transition’, is on the agenda primarily because of the failures of the liberal democracy they have chosen, not because of the successes of their chosen path.

10.2 Black Struggles in South Africa: Conceptual Issues

Mafeje observed and projected that in South Africa and Namibia, ‘the constellation of internal as well as external forces does not favour a one-party state. The idea of any liberation movement or party being the “sole and authentic representative” of the people has become obsolete. Instead, there is a conscious effort to find pliant petit bourgeois organisations which will be drawn into negotiations with the intention of establishing national reconciliation government on the near-right’ (Mafeje 1992: 39). Indeed, as Mafeje points out, the negotiated

settlement meant that the black 'petit bourgeois leadership is being groomed from all sides for a leading role. In exchange it has to give assurances about its commitment to bourgeois rights, including inviolability of the property of the South African White bourgeoisie' (Mafeje 1992: 40). On his schema, the black petty bourgeoisie and the white bourgeoisie became 'strange bedfellows' (Mafeje 1992, 1998c). The negotiated settlement, such as Mafeje understood it, meant that 'a foundation [was] being laid for an undemocratic alliance between the right fractions of the Black petit bourgeoisie and the White bourgeoisie in order to outflank those forces which might insist on majority rule...' (Mafeje 1992: 40). What makes the African petty bourgeoisie attractive to imperialism is the fact that it is corruptible.

In trying to understand black struggles, Mafeje speaks about three kinds of nationalism. First, there is, according to him, 'black nationalism' in South Africa which is a response to white domination. Second, for him 'black nationalism' is part of 'African nationalism' against white structural racism. Third, there is 'Third World nationalism' against imperialism. All of these forms of nationalism overlap just as the dialectical units they respond to overlap. Importantly, in its various forms, nationalism can be part of socialist struggles 'without contradicting itself' (Mafeje 1992: 43). This is an important point to take note of because black/African nationalism and European nationalism proceed from different logics. Contrary to the conventional view, which not only sees black/African nationalism as reactionary, but also sees it as the same as European nationalism, the former was more of a response to oppression and exploitation than it was an attempt to dominate and superimpose on others. The assumption that black/African nationalism is a flipside of European nationalism is not only ahistorical, but also comes very close to suggesting that Napoleon Bonaparte and Jean-Jacques Dessalines or Toussaint L'Ouverture are fellow-travelers. Of course it seems extraordinary that this could be so. One cannot make such an assumption without drawing a moral equivalent between the black liberation struggle and the oppression and exploitation to which it was a response. It is for this reason, for example, that Adesina says:

'Nationalist' is, of course, a misnomer – a label that reveals more about the crisis of scholarship than the object of enquiry. Categories such as the nation and nation-state, and even nationalism or nationalist, are of dubious value in making sense of Africa during the post-colonial or late-colonial periods. Strictly speaking, nationalist movements were not nationalist but anti-colonial; they were hardly concerned with the political or territorial redemption of people with shared linguistic and cultural heritage or consanguinity. The aspiration they espoused was not about 'unity' based on

consanguinity (imagined or real), but overcoming ethnic and religious divisiveness on the basis of which colonialism had flourished, and which were primal weapons of colonial-demagoguery. The commitment they espoused had more to do with state-territory than the nation-state. (Adesina 2009: 37 fn.1)

Similarly, Magubane (1987a: 1) says the thing about ‘black nationalism’ is that it ‘lacks a territorial base’. So unlike European nationalism, which was not only a superimposition on others but also an attempt to construct ‘nations’ along ethno-linguistic lines within specifically defined geographical boundaries, ‘black nationalism’ transcended borders or geographical boundaries. Strictly speaking, the trans-border and trans-continental nature of black liberation struggles, not only call into question the veracity of the notion of ‘black nationalism’, but also render it a contradiction in terms. Perhaps the time is right to reconsider altogether the appropriateness of this term. At any rate, Mafeje was in search of socialism. According to him, ‘socialism is part of universal history by virtue of having been put on the agenda by the negations of capitalism and imperialism which are a universal force’ (Mafeje 1992: 43). As such, Mafeje is able to conclude that universal and local histories are not in conflict. He is interested in building theory and therefore learning from the socio-historically concrete. For him, ‘there is no contradiction between universal and local history’ (Mafeje 1992: 43). According to him, the idea that universal and local history are mutually contradictory is founded on the assumption that historical materialism is a ‘model rather than a method of analysis whose subject matter is determined by actual struggles’ (Mafeje 1992: 43). Baregu shares this sentiment and argues that African scholars ought to ‘depart from the received and largely hackneyed wisdom handed down either by sympathetic but idealistic Africanists or by the doctrinaire neo-Marxists. While the former have tended to confuse advocacy with analysis and thus ended up with disillusionment, *the latter have suffered from a proclivity to mis-apply Marx to historically different situations*’ (Baregu 1987: 124, emphasis added)

Correctly, Mafeje points out that Karl Marx’s analytical categories were rooted in the European historical struggles of his time. As such, before Marx’s analytical categories can be used in other parts of the world, they ought to be subjected to critical scrutiny in line with new or different experiences. This is the level at which new knowledge occurs and Mafeje is well-aware of that. He makes an important distinction between what he understands to be ‘theory of revolution’ and ‘theory of society’. According to him, the latter is in fact what Marx’s revolutionary theory was about. Marx wrote a theory of history itself while Lenin and Mao were theorising history in Russia and China, respectively. Yet Mafeje concedes that both of

these are revolutionary theory in spite of the qualitative and analytical distinction he makes. The suggestion seems to be that Marx's revolutionary theory may have been pitched at a meta-theoretical level. On the basis of this, Mafeje (1992: 44) concludes that: 'If the point of departure of dialectical materialism is the rules of social reproduction and production within finite modes of production, then dialectical materialism cannot, within its terms of reference, have a theory of societies in transition. It is one thing to elucidate dialectical principles and another to predict their concrete expression'.

What Mafeje seems to be suggesting here, as pointed out in the previous chapter, is that socialism is transitory. What is not entirely clear is the corollary of the claim that dialectical materialism cannot have a theory of societies in transition. The idea that dialectical materialism cannot have a theory of socialism is surely likely to startle some Marxists. His explanation is that this is a problem of history i.e. a 'process a change'. As such, the kind of change that comes with it is subject to the struggle between contending forces. Thus any theory of change cannot occur in a vacuum. On those bases, it is a matter of 'interpretation' and 'subjective representation'. Short of committing himself to relativism, Mafeje (1992: 44) remedies his formulation by saying the winner will win on the basis of his 'correct reading of historical conjuncture and the formulation of an appropriate strategy'. He credits Lenin and Mao both for having excelled in reading historical conjunctures. The implication of this point is that Lenin and Mao both, brought the concrete realities of their locales to bear on historical materialism. It is at this point that Mafeje cautions against overreliance on classical concepts. For him, relying on local history is much more rewarding than superimposing theory on local history.

Mafeje discusses briefly the revolutionary strategy of South African political organisations which comprised the South African liberation movement. He focuses on the ANC/SACP, the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) and the Unity Movement. He argues that the Unity Movement rejected the notion of 'multi-racialism' of the ANC which was an acknowledgement or recognition of races. The Unity Movement, moreover, had reservations about the progressiveness of 'black nationalism'. According to them, 'black nationalism' was progressive to the extent that it was anti-colonialist. On the other hand, they denounced 'black nationalism' as reactionary to the extent that it was not anti-imperialist. But as has been noted, Mafeje pointed out three levels of nationalism and concluded that it can be read as anti-imperialist. The Unity Movement position referred to here was specifically a memorandum to the African heads of state who comprised the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The Unity Movement accused the OAU leaders of being party to an 'imperialist conspiracy' to keep Africa in bondage.

In a 1975 theoretical and policy document, titled *The New Road of Revolution*, the PAC invoked the Maoist concept of the New Democracy. In the document, the PAC speaks of anti-imperialism and the leading role of the workers and peasants as a *sine qua non* for socialist and nationalist liberation. In other words, the PAC saw the two as intrinsically linked. The ANC, on the other hand, although well-aware of the existence of imperialism, and the presence of a 'large and growing working class' in South Africa, confined itself to the national question. The ANC *Strategy & Tactics* document says: 'we in South Africa are part of the zone in which national liberation is the chief content of the struggle' (ANC Strategy & Tactics 1969: 1). In this formulation, Mafeje sees the influence of the SACP two-stage theory of revolution. According to him, an inference can be drawn that for the ANC, anti-imperialism and the leading role of the workers and peasants 'are not a necessary condition for national liberation but a sequel to it' (Mafeje 1992: 50). For Mafeje, the ANC strategy showed lack of awareness of what had happened on the rest of the continent as a result of similar strategies. He asks rhetorically, 'what are its grounds for supposing that things will be different in South Africa? Is the ANC on the basis of those grounds, prepared to settle for another Lancaster House Agreement' (Mafeje 1992: 50)?

On the basis of the foregoing, Mafeje makes a distinction between a nationalist and a socialist conception of the national democratic revolution. The former is bourgeois or capitalist and therefore consistent with imperialism. The latter is perforce anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist. He finds it 'ironical' that the nationalist conception of the national democratic revolution is 'advocated by the ANC, the only Black organisation in South Africa that has been associated with SACP' (Mafeje 1992: 50-51). Perhaps this position is not ironical at all since the ANC is a 'nationalist' organisation with bourgeois and capitalist inclinations. It would seem that the ANC, if one is to follow the two conceptions of the national democratic revolution outlined by Mafeje, was perfectly consistent with itself. In contrast, the Unity Movement and the PAC, both of which were very critical of the ANC and SACP, at different stages in history endorsed the socialist conception of the national democratic revolution. Apart from the organisations mentioned above, there was the largely youthful Black Consciousness Movement which 'must be credited with some radicalism' (Mafeje 1992: 56). According to Mafeje: 'Insofar as its stalwarts have stood firm against severe odds... and rendered the country ungovernable, they must be credited with a militancy which far exceeds that of the liberation movements' (Mafeje 1992: 56). There was, too, the United Democratic Front (UDF) which, although anti-apartheid, 'cannot be looked upon as a third alternative'. 'It calls for the destruction of a pernicious system, without putting forward a clear alternative. ...From what

we know, none of the constituent factions of the UDF has a comprehensive programme for the South African revolution' (Mafeje 1992: 55).

In the light of this discussion, Mafeje points out that there existed among South Africans a stark choice between 'two contending tendencies'. He refers to the 'petit-bourgeois constituency' and the 'worker/peasant constituency'. He makes this distinction on the basis of the liberation movements' programmes of demands and potential supporters. As such, 'there is now growing realisation that within each liberation movement there are different constituencies, whose development or lack of it will determine the character of the new state' (Mafeje 1992: 57). On the basis of the character of post-independence Mozambique and Zimbabwe, there was a call for 'national socialism' (de Braganca and Depelchin 1988; Mafeje 1992; Mandaza *et al* 1986). Curiously, the SACP was opposed to this on the basis of its two-stage theory of revolution. Mafeje (1992: 58) concludes that the 'class character of its constituency is therefore clear and consistent with petit-bourgeois interests. In fact, the ANC had for its own convenience, officially accepted this theoretical position'.

Although Mafeje has made all these distinctions between the South African political organisations, he points out that in spite of their differences – theoretically, politically and otherwise – historically their programmes were conceived in the period of petty-bourgeois nationalism of the independence movement on the rest of the continent. This is an important sociological insight insofar as it relates the South African experience to its structural whole. Yet by the time South Africans were about to gain democracy, the rest of the continent was in the process of negating the historical period which informed the programmes of the South African liberation movements. The lesson available to them was to learn from the history of the independent African states. Mafeje's proposal was that the South African revolutionaries should not be bogged down on 'formal bourgeois rights'. But rather, they should attempt 'participatory democracy i.e. the right of the people to act on their own behalf' (Mafeje 1992: 65). When Mafeje talks about 'the people', he refers to workers and peasants. Yet he had tremendous foresight, informed in any case by the lesson of history, that 'this category of people will be shunted off, as has happened elsewhere in Africa' (Mafeje 1992: 65). The issue, for him, was that the notion of 'power-sharing' is empty rhetoric since it does not include the question of redistribution of wealth. In any case, 'logically, the ANC could not accept a dialogue with the White capitalists ("businessmen") and liberals and at the same time threaten to expropriate them' (Mafeje 1992: 67).

A further important point to note is that apart from the maturation of South Africa's internal contradictions, there was a constellation of regional and international events. The

period of the Cold War meant that the liberation movements were faced with difficult tactical and strategic questions. This issue was more acute in the case of liberation movements which were stationed outside of their countries. As was the case with South African liberation movements, they had to rely on sympathetic countries in order to survive in exile. Inherent in this is a contradiction between ‘progressive states’ and revolutionary movements. For Mafeje, states set out to consolidate their power base and as a consequence ‘they cannot be revolutionary but at best be progressive’ (Mafeje 1992: 69). Thus the Trotskyist or Maoist notion of ‘permanent revolution’ cannot refer to the state but to forces outside of state power. Mafeje thus takes the opportunity to ask, in the context of what appears to be an incongruous alliance between the South African Communist Party and the ANC: ‘after the “negotiated settlement” where will the communists and their celebrated programme be? In jail or in the new bourgeois government’ (Mafeje 1992: 83)? The latter has not only proven to be the case, but also serves to highlight Mafeje’s point that for a permanent revolution to occur, it would take forces outside of state power. Interestingly, Mafeje suggests for the Trotskyist or Maoist ‘permanent revolution’ to be realised, one would have to take seriously Lenin’s theory and emphasis on the revolutionary potential of the alliance between workers and peasants. In the Chinese revolution, it was the peasants (not the petty bourgeois or communist government as such) who expropriated the landlords. Equally, in the urban areas it was the workers who took over foreign enterprises. What the communist government accomplished upon getting into power, was to declare this expropriation a *fait accompli* and legalise it (Mafeje 1992).

Mafeje goes on to argue that liberation struggles in Africa and the Global South turned on the national question. Although he says the national question means different things to different people, the tie that binds all discussions of it is ‘nationalism’. A thread running through three forms of nationalism mentioned by Mafeje is the attempt to combat colonialism and imperialism. As such, the two call for ‘*qualitatively* different types of nationalism’ (Mafeje 1992: 90, emphasis in original). These two types of nationalism are proto-nationalism and meta-nationalism – two concepts mentioned in chapter eight. The former was concerned primarily with political domination by ‘aliens’, ‘without relating it to its modal foundations since the end of the nineteenth century’ (Mafeje 1992: 90). The latter came about as a result of disillusionment with the former and of an ‘understanding of imperialist domination’. In the African context, the two types of nationalism, consistent with the two stages of domination in history i.e. colonialism and imperialism, represent pre- and post-independence political struggles. It is important to note that there would have been an overlap in some countries where

pre- and post-independence struggles were merged – particularly those countries which attained independence after 1975.

Mafeje goes on to make a much stronger claim and argues that the economic collapse of the 1980s meant that the national question was not resolved anywhere in Africa. The kind of disillusionment with neo-colonialism meant that there was a second phase of national struggles with a twin-project – to fight imperialism and the comprador class. In contrast, the earlier nationalists were fighting colonialism. According to Mafeje, the anti-imperialist and anti-comprador struggles in Africa are best understood as nationalist rather than socialist in character. This distinction is important for Mafeje for at least two reasons:

First, to justify their self-motivated interventions in under-developed countries, the imperialist countries have always found it ideologically convenient to brand any anti-imperialist movement in Africa and elsewhere in the Third World as ‘communist’ or ‘Marxist-Leninist’. In the context of the Cold War this was credible. It also suited the comprador proto-nationalists in Africa whose position has become more and more precarious. Second, as a response to the historically-determined meta-nationalism, anti-imperialist movements in Africa confirmed the illusion of ‘socialism’ through their own rhetoric and Marxist-Leninist pretensions. As would be expected, this manifested itself more blatantly in those countries which were approaching their independence at this point in time. (Mafeje 1992: 91)

Such southern African states as Angola, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe are working examples of what Mafeje is saying. It is important to note that in raising these issues at all, Mafeje is not quibbling about chronology such as which country got independent before the other. At issue here are historically-determined contradictions on the African continent. Specifically, Mafeje is concerned to understand whether or not the national question has been resolved in the historical period of anti-imperialism and anti-comprador. Although South Africans tend to think that what applies to other African countries does not apply to them, Mafeje argues that the distinction he makes between proto- and meta-nationalists applies to them as well. The exclusion of blacks by the whites in their own country was an invitation to nationalism. The formation of the ANC in 1912 made proto-nationalists of them. This remained so until 1955. What buttressed their commitment to proto-nationalism came from an unlikely source in the form of the SACP. This is so because the SACP advanced the ‘colonialism of a special type’ or ‘internal colonialism’ thesis. Furthermore, this meant that prior to 1955 and the adoption of

the Freedom Charter, the ANC never raised the question of imperialism and 'its local agents'. Following the recognition of imperialism, the national question was thus understood in meta-nationalist terms.

It is possibly for the preceding reason that Mafeje concludes that: 'Nationalist struggles against colonialism and imperialism are decidedly progressive and might even be necessary condition for would-be socialism' (Mafeje 1997c: 7). He argues that history reveals that even in countries with an advanced proletariat there is always nationalism of some kind. Perhaps it is for this reason that Adesina says the Chinese Communist is best understood as a nationalist party. For Mafeje, the problem with socialist internationalists has always been to universalise the European historical experience. In the southern African settler societies, 'black nationalism is not only an important last line of defence but also a liberating and transcendent force' (Mafeje 1997c: 7). This is much more accentuated in southern African settler societies. Mafeje is quick to point out that the kind of nationalism he speaks of should not be associated with classical definitions which derive from European history.

Mafeje does not, however, offer an alternative definition, save to say nationalism 'will mean different things in different historical epochs and in different social contexts' (1997c: 8). It is for this reason that such Eurocentric concepts as 'nation state' or 'nations' are getting antiquated through cross-border migration and regional integration. This is possibly the best thing to happen in post-independence Africa insofar as it undermines and threatens colonial borders and the idea of the 'state' which, in any case, was formalised in Africa through the 1884 Berlin Conference. While the national question initially referred to liberation from colonial domination and oppression, the post-independence African state had to contend with ethnic conflicts and as such the notion of the nation-state remained elusive. In South Africa, the wealth of the country is still in the hands of the white minority while the black majority remains poor. This is 'the juxtaposition of a settler splendour of swimming pools, picnics, fishing and hunting trips and a squalid black world of drudgery and grinding poverty in southern Africa' (Mafeje 1997c: 9). This is what ANC/SACP theorists refer to as 'colonialism of a special type' or 'internal colonialism'. As has already been noted, Mafeje rejects this characterisation of South Africa for several reasons. On logical grounds, he refers to it as nonsensical because colonialism cannot be internal since the term connotes historically-determined external imposition. The phrase 'of a special type' does not render the ANC/SACP argument valid. What one finds ideologically amusing is the fact the white liberal and communist proponents of the 'internal colonialism' would not think of themselves as colonialists, in spite of the implications of the concept (see Marquard 1957; Wolpe 1975). Yet

liberals and communists ‘cannot prove that they are not liable because in practice they are as much of white supremacists as the openly racist Whites’ (Mafeje 1997c: 9). The only difference, Mafeje argues, is that the liberals and communists absolve themselves by pointing out that they are on the side of the blacks. This is part of the reason that led Biko, when talking about liberals and leftists, to declare:

A number of them are defensive... A number of whites in this country adopt the class analysis, primarily because they want to detach us from anything relating to race. In case it has a rebound effect on them because they are white. This is the problem. So a lot of them adopt the class analysis as a defence mechanism and are persuaded of it because they find it more comfortable. And of course a number of them are terribly puritanical, dogmatic, and very, very arrogant. (Biko 2008: 34)

As noted in the previous chapter, in contending with issues concerning dispossession of black people, it is not uncommon in South African intellectual discourse to come across the notion of ‘two economies/nations’ – ‘an oppressing and exploiting white nation and an oppressed and exploited black nation’ (Mafeje 1997c: 10). Yet, for Mafeje, in defending and protecting ill-gotten wealth, whites cannot be said to be a ‘nation’ so long as they live in the same land that is contested by blacks. By the same token, in fighting oppression and exploitation black people cannot constitute a nation ‘while the “white problem” pervades all society’ (Mafeje 1997c: 10). In talking about a nation, Mafeje is talking about black South Africans generally. He is not making divisions among them e.g. amaXhosa, amaZulu etc.

For Mafeje, those would count, rightly or wrongly, as ‘ethnic groups’. It is for this reason that the national question in southern Africa turns on anti-racial domination and redistribution of wealth. In the absence of these two issues, Mafeje argues that there can be no social democracy in South Africa. For him, social democracy in South Africa would involve ‘a conscious and continuing improvement of the conditions of livelihood of the oppressed and exploited mass of the population’ (Mafeje 1997c: 11). Given that this never happened, he concludes that ‘the policy of reconciliation in three white settler societies in southern Africa is a social and economic fraud’ (Mafeje 1997c: 11). As such, the national question such as Mafeje conceives of it, remains unresolved. According to him, ‘at the theoretical level, the National Question cannot be subsumed under a socialist political project. The latter implies a struggle between two irreconcilable forces, capital and labour, whereas the former does not necessarily

entail a class struggle, but a coalition of classes against a common enemy, whether it be landlords and compradors or white settlers and monopoly capitalism' (Mafeje 1997c: 15).

This is part of the reason which inclined the ANC/SACP to speak of a 'two stage theory'. Yet this need not be the case since the two can be carried out concomitantly. But to subsume the national question under a socialist perspective is to presuppose that socialism was on the cards to begin with. Yet in South Africa that is not the case. Notwithstanding the existence of a proletariat and a trade union movement, Mafeje argues that this is not a 'socialist constituency' but a 'militant nationalist constituency'. According to him, this constituency is not revolutionary but progressive insofar as it espouses social democracy. Thus the material conditions in South Africa may be ripe for a socialist transformation, but what is lacking are 'committed agents' to advance it.

10.3 Conclusion

Strategically and tactically, Mafeje argues that there is no value in socialists marching ahead of the popular classes and insisting on socialism on behalf of 'the people'. Mafeje seems to want the revolutionary situation to impose itself rather than socialists actively creating conditions for it. But he goes on to argue that in the meantime, the available avenue for African socialists is not only social democracy but also regional integration which would 'obviate the negative implications of "socialism" in one country, as Cuba got to know in its torturous path to socialism' (Mafeje 1997c: 18). Here Mafeje is saying socialism in one country is meaningless without socialism in its neighbouring countries – hence regional integration. Yet in spite of putting forward social democracy as a placeholder for socialism, Mafeje (1997c: 18) is well aware of the fact that social democracy 'is not a panacea for all social ills in society'. It has its limitations. It is extremely important to contextualise this apparent deviation on the part of Mafeje from socialism to social democracy. Mafeje advanced these ideas in the mid-1990s in the wake of the South African liberal democracy at a time when radical intellectuals like him felt defeated. Thus the social democratic route was a 'strategic consideration' to salvage whatever was left in the wake of the 1994 euphoria.

The following words are instructive: 'If in the face of apparent defeat we cannot maximise our gains, then it is imperative that we minimise our losses' (Mafeje 1997c: 19). A message to his 'militant comrades' was: 'my plea is that under the determinate conditions in southern Africa in particular, and in Africa in general, social democracy should be seen, if not as a necessary condition for a socialist transformation, as a necessary condition for testing the

limits of the capitalist model of accumulation and distribution of value. This is more of a strategic consideration than a theoretical postulate' (Mafeje 1997c: 19). This should be the best place to end this chapter. The next chapter resumes the question of social democracy by exploring Mafeje's work on development and social democracy.

Chapter Eleven

Ideology, Development and Social/New Democracy in Africa

11.0 Introduction

Of Mafeje's writings, the question of development and social/new democracy is possibly the least developed. Although he wrote about development theory as early as the 1970s, the bulk of his work on development and social/new democracy appears mainly in the 1990s and the early 2000s (Mafeje 1978a, 1993c, 1995a, 1995b, 1995d, 1997d, 1998a, 1998c, 1998d, 1998e, 2000b, 2002a, 2002b). What is noteworthy in this aspect of his work is his restless engagement with the concepts of social democracy and new democracy. This chapter comprises two main parts: The first part focuses on the purported link between ideology and development. The second section discusses the question of social/new democracy and the African discourse.

11.1 Ideology and Development

Mafeje wrote about 'development theory' as early as the 1970s (Mafeje 1978a). His discussion of this issue was largely historical and conceptual. To get a clear idea of the nature of the relationship between ideology and development, he raises three issues. These relate to the relationship between dialectical unities which may be ranged as follows: (i) theory and practice; (ii) science and ideology; and (iii) subject and object. In discussing these issues, Mafeje's attempt is to contrast positivist epistemology with materialist epistemology. In discussing 'development theory' he attempts, in the first instance, to meet (neo)positivists on their own turf before discrediting their ideas. He takes 'development theory' as the realm of bourgeois (neo)positivists whose ideas reign supreme in the academy. In contrast, he favoured 'revolutionary transformation' such as it was espoused by fellow radical/revolutionary intellectuals.

It should be noted, however, that in doing so, Mafeje was not content merely to regurgitate received theory (radical or not). In this regard, he sought to contribute to epistemology by subjecting theory to critical analysis using case studies of underdeveloped countries. To use his preferred language, he subjected 'universal texts' to the 'vernacular', or subjected 'universal' history to 'local' history. In his earlier work on development theory, Mafeje (1978a) pointed out that African nationalists and international donor agencies attributed the main hindrance to development in Africa to 'lack of scientific knowledge' and 'adherence to outmoded traditional values' (Mafeje 1978a, 1985b, 1987a). In contrast, African

revolutionaries attributed the delayed African revolution to the absence of socialist ideology and complicity of the social sciences (Mafeje 1978a; Mandaza *et al* 1986; Nabudere 1988).

According to Mafeje, in spite of their surface ideological differences, both the nationalists and the revolutionary socialists had a lot more in common than they were willing to admit. Formally or analytically, the fact that both sides treated the absence or existence of this or the other ideology/scientific knowledge as an impediment to or a necessary condition for development is a case in point. Substantively, ‘a superstitious belief in science is as ideological as belief or disbelief in traditional values and practices’ (Mafeje 1978a: 75). For Mafeje, if development or revolution were as important as nationalists and revolutionary socialists say it is, then this belief should not remain at the level of rhetoric and slogans. This is so because none of the pronouncements from either camp illuminate the nature of the relationship between ideology and development. The idea that there ought to be some revolutionary ideology in order for the revolution to occur ‘is as naïve as it is anti-Marxist’. If history means anything, then Western Europe, ‘the cradle of modern revolutionary theories’, would have seen the long-awaited revolution.

Mafeje mentions Cuba as a case study of where a revolution occurred in spite of a clear socialist ideology even among the leaders who led the revolution. But he is not interested merely to understand the relationship between ideology and development/revolution, Mafeje wants first to understand where ideology comes from. ‘Where cometh ideology?’ is his question. Before responding to this enquiry, he wants to undermine the liberal false set of alternatives that development and modern science cannot coexist with traditional beliefs and superstitions. He observes:

First, the equation fails to explain contrasting cases such as India and China, where science and technology do not seem to be the main differentiating factor. Second, and more serious, it abandons the fundamental question of the anthropology of man and his circumstances in the world in favour of a narrow technocratic positivism, which is best described by Marx’s notion of the ‘fetishism of commodities’ in the first volume of *Das Capital*. Third, it treats science as extra-societal, generative, without being corruptible and, therefore, partially destructible as all knowledge. (Mafeje 1978a: 76)

This is one of the important lessons of Mafeje’s *oeuvre*; the insistence on the sociology of knowledge or the recognition of the fact that knowledge is shaped by the environment/context from which it emerges. Above all, Mafeje is concerned to understand what he calls ‘the problem of emergence in human societies’. He is not necessarily concerned with formal or

procedural analysis of such concepts as ideology or development. He is much more interested in the processes to which those concepts refer. Characteristically, once he has discussed those processes, if the two concepts are found to be inaccurate or inadequate, they will be liable to re-definition. He understands ideology to mean 'a set of beliefs about man's nature and the world in which he lives; about the proper conduct of life; the organisation of a humane society and the ultimate destination of human history' (Mafeje 1978a: 76). "Development", he says, 'though also broadly defined, will be constructed in a less conventional way. It will certainly not be left to the tyranny of "fetishism" of such measurable things as GNP, income per capita, the number of motor vehicles per passenger mile or the number of fridges per unit population. It will attempt to reach out and include such intangible things as the "human condition" and the "quality of life"' (Mafeje 1978a: 76).

Mafeje admits that the foregoing expressions are 'vague' and 'evaluative'. Yet, they can still be given concrete relevance if one understands 'development' as 'the expanding and adaptive capacity of society to satisfy the changing and increasing needs of its members, be they material or cultural' (Mafeje 1978a: 76). Although he believes that these can be investigated using both qualitative and quantitative indices, he is not thereby advocating empiricism. For him, the question as to whether ideology determines development does not only lead to empiricism, but also to 'simple-minded scientism'. As has already been noted throughout this study, he believes that one can rely on hard facts without being an empiricist. The issue is that real knowledge occurs at the level of interpretation of facts. For that matter, although Marxists are anti-empiricist or anti-positivist, they still set a great deal of store by the 'historically concrete'. So Mafeje is not trying to have his cake while eating it, as the saying goes. He is well aware of the social baggage with which the intellectual travels (Mafeje 2001a). For example, he argues that the liberal principle of 'knowledge for its own sake' 'is a demonstrable fraud and historically is meaningless' (Mafeje 1978a: 77). In this regard, Mafeje taps into the old Marxian distinction between the superstructure and the base. He argues that ideas do not independently change historical processes but in order for them to do so, they must be related to society more generally or to 'material factors'.

To the extent that this is true, ideas 'are a reflection of prevailing socio-economic conditions' (Mafeje 1978a: 78). For Mafeje, the idea that 'the truth' is outside of historically and socially determined factors is futile and must be abandoned. This is a critique of positivism. In any case, historical sociology and the sociology of knowledge permeate the three clusters of Mafeje's work. This must be seen as a clear sign of consistency rather than repetition. Following Marx, Mafeje (1978c: 79) argues that 'ideology is a picture or reflection of a

“wrong” world which, though adequately depicting reality, does not reveal its wrongness and, insofar as that is true, it serves to conceal the actual meaning of social conduct rather than reveal it’. This is unique to bourgeois social scientists or ‘the defenders of the *status quo*’. The task of the proletariat is to debunk such an ideology and not only to overthrow the bourgeois society, but to form the new society in the image of themselves (the proletariat). But this is not an easy task since bourgeois society conceals ‘the means of mental production’. In other words, the proletariat is kept in the dark by the bourgeoisie and manipulated for the benefit of the latter. It is at this point that science, at least normatively, is supposed to unmask society and make it apparent for all its ‘ontological wrongness’. Critique, Mafeje argues, becomes the revolutionary praxis of the intellectual. ‘The actualisation of theory depends upon whether reality presses for it or not’ (Mafeje 1978a: 79). According to him, this flies in the face of the claim made by African revolutionaries that what Africa lacks is ideology. Ideology is immanent in society as a result of its material conditions. For him, Africa lacks a whole lot more than ideology.

The point which Mafeje seeks to emphasise is the dynamic link between theory and practice. To emphasise a point already made throughout this study, according to Mafeje ‘it is theory that has to adjust to practice and never the other way round’ (Mafeje 1978a: 80). Two key issues ride on this. First, this is a recognition that theory does not come out of nowhere. Second, in order to enrich epistemology one should never use theory as if it were outside space and time. The insistence on taking seriously the social context in which ideas emerge is likely to be dismissed as ‘unscientific’ and therefore ‘ideological’. Yet, as Mafeje points out, the difference between the two is relative because:

- (i) Insofar as both are logical schemes for looking at the universe, they are the same;
- (ii) insofar as each is not exhaustive of the same universe it seeks to depict they both distort;
- (iii) insofar as both occur in human society and are socially and historically determined, they are both manipulable and corruptible;
- (iv) insofar as an ideologist (e.g. Chairman Mao) has to devise programmes that are workable to achieve his goals, he is a scientist and insofar as scientists’ choices and uses (e.g. the American professors at MIT who are knowingly furthering the aims of the militarists in the American Navy and the State Department) are influenced by non-scientific and evaluative considerations, he is an ideologist. (Mafeje 1978a: 81)

It would not suffice merely to point out that science is both generative and self-correcting. The same can be said about social practice. If that were not so, then it would be difficult for anybody to speak of 'social change', 'modernisation', 'development' etc. Thus, Mafeje concludes that the two are mutually-constitutive both logically and practically. Well-aware of the controversy of this argument, he refers to it as a 'minor heresy'.

Having argued that 'all human knowledge has a determinate social context', Mafeje sets out to understand the problem of objectivity-subjectivity. According to him, objectivity and subjectivity do not exist in isolation. Furthermore, they are neither a dichotomy nor a continuum. Instead, they are best understood as contraries. The two 'can exist within the same system without necessarily negating each other or limiting themselves, as individual members, to any particular single contraries i.e. individual human beings do not have to be (and usually are not) consistently objective and subjective about the same things in all situations' (Mafeje 1978a: 82). On these bases, Mafeje argues that insofar as there is no pure ideology, neither of the two '*determines* development'. Mutually, however, the two are capable of promoting it. It should be recognised that although ideological commitment may provide the will, it is the job of science to provide the means. Equally important to note is the fact that the existence of both, or a combination of them, does not necessarily mean that development would occur on the desired scale and in the best way. Mafeje says it takes 'organisation' to realise the full potential of the combination of the two. In short, the 'three critical variables in the process of development' are, according to him, ideological commitment, scientific knowledge and organisational ability. The three of them are mutually-constitutive and none can promote development in the absence of the others. While stressing this point, Mafeje is quick to point out that dialectically, organisational ability is the most important variable of the three. But the importance of all these variables is reversible according to context. In the African context, Mafeje suggests, the problem seems to be organisation more than ideology and science.

Later on, Mafeje (2001d) returned to this topic by examining the impact of social research or the social sciences on 'development', 'human rights' and 'democracy'. This time he was not referring to the hard sciences but the social sciences. Continuing with the themes he had pursued in the 1970s, Mafeje argues that the idea that the social sciences can have an impact on development and democracy is a 'positivist illusion'. Given what is known about the impact of ideas on public policy and public policy on development, it is not clear why this is supposed to be an illusion and specifically a 'positivist illusion'. In using the concept of 'development', he takes positivists on their own terms and uses the term to refer to an 'increase in material wealth'. The reason why he rejects the idea that the social sciences, and their social

research output, can have an impact on development is that ‘unlike the physical sciences, social science insights are not reducible to operative technologies. Instead, their concepts and the insights they yield are perennially debatable’ (Mafeje 2001d: 2).

This is a remarkable shift from his earlier submission in which he not only said ‘if there is any difference between science and ideology, it is only a relative one’, but also that ‘arguments that science is not only generative but also self-correcting will not suffice because the same is generally true of social practice. Otherwise it would be impossible to talk of “social change”’ (1978a: 81). He seems to have been on solid ground in his earlier representation on this subject. In his critiques of the positivist illusion in his later submission, he seems to commit himself to the very same positivist assumptions in that he rather abandons his earlier claim that not only does science have a ‘determinate social context’, but also that it is ideological. In this particular instance, Mafeje seems to have lost his fidelity to the sociology of knowledge. It is important to contextualise this shift in Mafeje’s thought. Without belabouring this point, it should suffice to say his change of mind is a result of experience or hindsight. He argues, for example: ‘Experience has shown that there is no correlation between the existence of economic theory or economic research and “development” even in the positivist sense, let alone in the sense of “social development”’ (Mafeje 2001b: 2). Furthermore: ‘In the 1960s planning was in vogue. ... This did not produce any results. Production targets were never met and governments often had to adopt extra-economic measures to mitigate the effects of unforeseen negative consequences of unrealised five-year plans’ (Mafeje 2001b: 2). This is brave and almost reckless. Planning might not have delivered in all cases but to say that it produces no result will have to find alternative explanations for countries ranging from South Korea to China and Mauritius. Planning presupposes concerted efforts at implementation and being nimble footed enough to respond to unforeseen circumstances. Unforeseen negative consequences (and their mitigation) would not suggest the futility of planning. It is the tendency to concentrate on the negative aspects of the African experience that often confounds one in Mafeje’s works – but one that is in consonance with most left positions. The glass is always half-empty.

Even if Mafeje advanced the foregoing argument with the benefit of hindsight, little of what he says undermines his earlier submission that: (i) science is ideological; (ii) science and ideology on their own have very little impact on development; that (iii) it is science, ideology and organisational ability combined which can bring about change; (iv) and that although these three variables are necessary for development, it is organisation which must be viewed as ‘ultimate’. Notwithstanding his critique of the social sciences, Mafeje is not thereby saying the social sciences are irrelevant. ‘If this were the case, I could not account for my own existence’

(Mafeje 2001b: 4). If his argument is that the social sciences are neither useless nor irrelevant, then a question immediately imposes itself: How does this square with the argument he makes elsewhere that all of the social sciences are imperialist and Eurocentric (see Mafeje 1976a, 1996, 2001a). Is he not contradicting himself? This need not be the case in that in critiquing the social sciences, he need not throw away everything that comes with them. Further, in talking about non-disciplinarity, he rejects disciplinary boundaries in favour of what amounts to a rival to the social sciences, *viz.* ‘ethnography’. Without losing track of where the argument is going, let it suffice to say for the purposes of the present discussion, he uses ‘social science’ interchangeably with his proposed non-disciplinary ‘ethnography’.

Although he argues that the social sciences are not necessarily ‘useless’ or ‘irrelevant’, Mafeje never lost sight of the fact that insofar as ‘all the social sciences were concerned to develop positive science of society’, they ‘cast themselves in a false role’ (Mafeje 2001d: 5). Again contradicting his earlier work (Mafeje 1978a), he declares: ‘In reality, unlike what is true of the natural sciences, social science propositions cannot be verified except in retrospect, as was intimated earlier. Secondly, social science propositions are not value-free. In contrast to the natural sciences, this intrinsic element of subjectivity renders them scientifically incorrigible’ (Mafeje 2001b: 5). But neither is natural science, broadly. One assumes that was the point of not drawing too rigid a line between ideology and science. The issues that natural scientists put on the table are as value driven as those by social scientists; and as Kuhn demonstrates evidence is not always sufficient to dislodge the position that natural scientists take – many of these are entangled with value position.

Yet the idea that the natural sciences are ‘self-correcting’, seems to be the same as saying the natural sciences can be verified in retrospect. Otherwise, what exactly is being corrected if not an earlier experiment? Secondly, the supposition that the natural sciences are, in contrast to the social sciences, ‘value-free’ is in conflict with his earlier claim that ‘all human knowledge has a determinate social context’ (Mafeje 1978a). Apart from that, Mafeje betrays the sociology of knowledge insofar as he assumes that scientists have neither a social baggage nor ideological predispositions. It is a question as to whether he is not committing himself to a positivism of his own. Such a suggestion may seem a bit uncharitable. At any rate, elsewhere he seems to be well-aware of the submission that science is ideological (1978a, 1986a). What Mafeje wishes to criticise are the positivistic assumptions of Euro-American social scientists which quantify social indices in order to measure ‘development’. Following Gunder Frank (1970), he argues that ‘modernisation theories’ were ‘an excuse for Eurocentrism and

justification for imperialist domination’ (Mafeje 2001d: 5). He wants to critique ‘American instrumentalism and ideological presuppositions about development’.

Mafeje rejects these issues in favour of what he calls ‘social development’ which African scholars would do well to embrace. But this would be possible only if they reject American instrumentalism and positivist conceptions of ‘development’. In this regard, he argues that the social sciences are closer to social philosophy than they are to the natural sciences. Yet unlike the latter, the former have an advantage in that they have methods and techniques to gather and systematise social data. Importantly, he says, these do not in and of themselves yield any significant meanings. The latter are, properly understood, products of critical reflection. This is akin to the claim he makes elsewhere that real knowledge does not occur at the level of facts but rather at the level of interpretation. He proposes that ‘the alternative to positivist social science is normative social science, that is, a social science that does not only acknowledge the fact that it is not “value-free” but is willing to confront and objectify social and moral issues such as poverty, racism, and globalisation’ (Mafeje 2001d: 6).

Elsewhere, Mafeje (1988b) had argued that the ‘missing link’ in African developmental discourse is the question of culture. According to him, the problem of culture and development is as old as the social sciences. He argues that the two dominant traditions in western social sciences have been materialism and idealism. In contemporary discourse these are known as liberalism and Marxism, respectively. It goes without saying that liberalism enjoys much more prominence in the academy generally and in the social sciences specifically. The same cannot be said of materialism/Marxism. It features in (sub) fields such as development studies thanks to political economists. At times, particularly from scholars of the Global South, this has caused some confrontations and controversies in the social sciences since scholars of the said area began to question the Eurocentric nature of the social sciences. This, according to Mafeje, is a reflection of anti-imperialist struggles.

Mafeje argues that although scholars of a radical persuasion, i.e. Marxists, have come to criticise Eurocentrism in the social sciences, they have not taken time to elaborate on the concept of culture for development. In Marxist theory, a distinction is made between the superstructure (philosophies, ideologies, laws, culture, religion etc.) and the base (means of production, relations of production etc.). Thus because culture belongs to the former, it is seen as a reflection of what takes place in the latter realm. Yet, although culture may be dominant according to Marxists, Mafeje (1988b) still believes that culture requires a full treatment from African scholars. In saying this, he is not suggesting that culture is static or that Africans can

go back to the past. Indeed he says, ‘all cultures are subject to mutations and transformations’ (Mafeje 1988b: 9). The point of raising the question of culture at all is, according to him, part of the ‘indigenisation of the social sciences’. Mafeje says this well-aware of the fact that ‘there is no way in which modern Africans can re-live their pre-colonial past’ (Mafeje 1988b: 9). Whether or not one agrees with him on this issue, which seems to be an addition to, rather than a contradiction of his three ‘critical variables’ for development in Africa, the general or overriding principle is a search for an epistemological break – the question of ‘indigenisation of the social sciences’ is key in this regard. At all times, even when writing about political issues, Mafeje was preoccupied with epistemological concerns. This should be good enough background for a discussion of social/new democracy and the African discourse.

11.2 Social/New Democracy and the African Discourse

Although Mafeje has always been preoccupied with questions of revolutionary theory and politics since the 1970s, he seems to have focused specifically on questions around the link between development and democracy in Africa only in the 1990s (Mafeje 1993c, 1995a, 1995b, 1995d, 1997d, 1998a, 1998c, 1998d, 1998e, 2000b, 2002a, 2002b). Properly understood, the debate on democracy and development among CODESRIA-affiliated African scholars seems to have been inaugurated by Peter Anyang’ Nyong’o in the 1980s (1987, 1988, 1989a, 1989b, 1991, 1995). Mafeje (1995d) himself says as much. This is not the same thing as saying Anyang’ Nyong’o was the first African scholar to write about either the question of development or that of democracy in Africa. However, it appears that among CODESRIA-affiliated African scholars, his handling of this issue was provocative enough to elicit a lively debate (see Amin 1993; Anyang’ Nyong’o 1987, 1988, 1989a, 1989b, 1991, 1995; Gutto 1990; Hutchful 1995; Ibrahim 1993a, 1993b; Mafeje 1993c, 1995d; Mamdani 1995; Mandaza 1990; M’Baya 1995; Mkandawire 1988, 1991, 1995b; Shivji 1989). Much of this debate, which went on for several years, was carried out in the pages of the *CODESRIA Bulletin, Africa Development* and *Southern Africa Political & Economic Monthly (SAPEM)*. Over and above the substantive issues discussed by the authors, the debate is testament to the high-level of self-awareness on the part of the African scholarly community. Anyang’ Nyong’o’s two-pronged thesis was that when the national alliance formed during the independence struggle disintegrated, it led to a phase of dictatorship in Africa. Secondly, the ensuing lack of democracy as a result of this is what caused lack of development in Africa. As such, there can be no development without democracy in Africa (Anyang’ Nyong’o 1987, 1988, 1989a, 1989b, 1991, 1995). Mkandawire (1989, 1991, 1995) took issue with this and pointed out that

democracy is neither necessary nor sufficient for development and he went on to mention countries which ‘developed’ in spite of democracy e.g. Germany, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea. Anyang’ Nyong’o pointed out that Kenya and Cote d’Ivoire were two African countries which achieved development precisely because of some form of democracy. Mafeje (1995d) says this was ‘dubious’ and can be considered valid only if one subscribes to the prescripts of the World Bank and the IMF. A further charge levelled at Anyang’ Nyong’o by Mkandawire (1989, 1991) was that the former was guilty of ‘instrumentalism’ insofar as he assumed that democracy was a necessary condition for development or that you need democracy for development to take place.

Having critiqued Anyang’ Nyong’o, Mkandawire (1989, 1991) threw out the baby with the bath water and suggested that liberal democracy was better than nothing. This took attention away from his important suggestion that democracy was a value in itself, regardless as to whether it serves developmental needs. The controversial view that liberal democracy was better than nothing was carried forward by Gutto (1990) and Ibrahim (1993a, 1993b). This was a missed opportunity for all concerned to evolve an endogenous African discourse on democracy instead of importing the liberal conception of it. Shivji (1989) entered the fray by accusing African governments of ‘compradorial democracy’, a characterisation which Mafeje (1995d) found ‘etymologically vulgar’ and ‘theoretically underdeveloped’ but nevertheless justified. Mandaza (1990) was in agreement with Shivji although he found him guilty of determinism. These debates generated a great deal of interest. The purpose of this section of this chapter is to come to grips with Mafeje’s search for an African discourse on democracy.

Mafeje (1993c) conceives of democracy not merely as a concept but also as a socio-historical process. According to him, in spite of what the liberal ideology suggests, with its emphasis on individual freedom, human rights, civil rights etc. all of these are ‘not attributable to individual achievements but rather to social struggles’ (Mafeje 1993c: 19). Historically, in Europe the whole point of fighting for these rights and freedoms was to liberate ‘whole classes from either bondage or political subordination’. There is no doubt on Mafeje’s part that to liberate people collectively is to liberate the individual, something which, in his view, has ‘great intrinsic as well as strategic value’ (Mafeje 1993c: 19). Social liberation is the collective responsibility. These issues were foremost in the minds of the European bourgeoisie up until the first quarter of the 20th century. In order to realise and protect individual freedoms, they had to rely on collective action. To reconcile the two, a distinction was made between ‘the state’ and ‘civil society’. The state would impose itself on the individual and the individual would avoid this by asserting his/her will to operate outside the state. ‘Thus “civil society”

came to symbolise a community of private citizens who by virtue of their collective existence and political vigilance guaranteed individual freedom' (Mafeje 1993c: 19).

This is not as straightforward as its adherents believe. This is so for at least two reasons: 'First, as is known, civil society derived its strength from organisation. Secondly, insofar as civil society is organised into different social groups with different interests, it is open to social competition for power. Thus, the necessity for social organisation and the self-imposing imperative to protect common interests in practice make nonsense of the abstracted "individual" of the *laissez-faire* theorists' (Mafeje 1993c: 19). Individuals cannot defend their freedoms independently, since they need collective commitment to do so. Thus the liberal ideology is self-contradictory. In this regard, its adherents wish to have it both ways. The liberal view is that it is not only the right of the state to protect the individual but also its duty. Yet, the state cannot do all of this without overruling or vetoing the individual. Furthermore, the distinction between 'the state' and 'civil society' does not fully account for the origins of the state. For Mafeje (1993c: 19): 'There is no such a thing as an undifferentiated civil society. Part of civil society accounts for the origins and the social character of the state and this part is organised to guarantee the social reproduction of the state and benefits by it'. A good example of this would be petty bourgeois or neo-colonial African governments which are 'not autogenous appropriations but rather a reflection of the social interests of the emergent African elites' (Mafeje 1993c: 19).

Curiously, although some African countries are one-party states with 'life presidents', some of those states actually speak of democracy and have written constitutions. The solution to these kind of problems in other parts of the world, Mafeje argues, has not been liberal democracy. According to him, World War I marked the end of liberal democracy. He argues that contrary to Ibrahim (1993a), African revolutionary intellectuals need not "demolish" liberal democracy because that had already been done by the societies which invented it' (Mafeje 1993c: 20). As such: 'Metaphorically, albeit inelegantly, it could be said that: "liberal democracies evolved social democracy". But, historically and analytically, this obscures the fact that it was those who objected to the omissions of liberal democracy, namely, the workers and their socialist/Marxist allies, who were instrumental in the evolution of social democracy within *bourgeois* society' (Mafeje 1993c: 20, emphasis in original). The whole issue turned on the question of distribution of resources and political power between classes. As has been noted in the previous chapter, the national question in Africa has not been resolved. As such, to the extent that civil rights and national self-determination are needed, the national question is still firmly on the agenda.

In discussing the prospects for social democracy on the African continental, Mafeje is not content merely to discuss concrete political matters. He wants to enrich theory, if not break with epistemology proper. As has been pointed throughout this study, this search for an epistemological break was a life-long mission of Mafeje's. As regards, the African discourse on the theory democracy he says:

For instance, it is not unworthy to point out that it is one thing to endow theory with immanent qualities and another to perceive of theory as a tool for making apparent the meaning of its object of analysis, e.g. 'democracy', which is at once a concept and a socio-historical process. Likewise, while discourse might be predicated on a particular object, e.g. 'theory', it is worth noting that by so doing it does not confer upon theory any ontological attributes but at best aims to illuminate its possible connotations under determinate conditions. So will it be with African discourse on theory (used as a collective noun) of democracy. (Mafeje 1995d: 5)

The significance of this will be made apparent in the ensuing discussion. In discussing the question of democracy in Africa, Mafeje traces historical roots of democracy and its conceptions. The starting point is the classical Greek definition of democracy as rule by the people. Yet over and above the Greek definition, the French Revolution of 1789 represents an important part of European history.

After the Revolution, the European political and theoretical discourse gave the world three concepts of democracy, *viz.* liberal, social and socialist. Each succeeded the other 'as a critique of pre-existing forms of rule and distribution of wealth' (Mafeje 1995d: 5). Following the end of WWI in 1917, the three coexisted or lived side-by-side in Europe. Western Europe can be said to have been sympathetic to liberal democracy, Scandinavia to social democracy, while Eastern Europeans spoke of social democracy (however imperfect it may have been). Liberal democracy of Western Europe extended to North America. Although this meant that there were three competing conceptions of democracy, in terms of political and economic organisation, this produced two competing systems, *viz.* capitalism and socialism. The genius of Mafeje consists in recognising that the 'folly' of underdeveloped countries was taking these two competing systems as models rather than systems whose substance was informed by their organic conditions. Not only did ex-colonial countries see themselves as extensions of European countries (their erstwhile colonisers), but they also set out to mimic them. But Mafeje's theoretical self-reflexivity inclines him to conclude that any radical change in this

mode of thinking will be preceded by disillusionment before the people can consider their options. The objective conditions or the march of history dictate so. He argues: 'In the process certain elementary and intuitive impulses will be transformed into fundamentally different perceptions and modes of thought which seek not merely to overthrow received models but, more specifically, to discredit the intellectual foundations upon which they rest' (Mafeje 1995d: 6).

Anti-colonial struggles in Africa are a good example of what Mafeje is referring to here. Recollect that in his critique of anthropology and the social sciences, his objection or critique of radical anthropologists such as Magubane specifically was that they had to be part of the colonial enterprise in order to experience its limitations or 'frustrations' (Mafeje 1976a). In other words, Magubane (1971) could not have been so critical of it if he did not experience its adverse effects first-hand. As such, a high-level of theoretical self-awareness and auto-critique was needed in order to lend depth to his critique. On this question, Mafeje's observation is complete unexceptionable. This is a dialectical as well as a historical analysis. By historical analysis, one is not talking merely about chronology but rather the importance of context and antecedents. It will be through their failures that the Africans will consider change and finding alternatives. Mafeje's view is that 'it is precisely the discrepancy between what is experienced in real life and what is perceived as ideal life that is a source of tension in society and, therefore, a spring for revolutionary impulses' (Mafeje 1995d: 6).

Mafeje goes on to argue that even after the revolution the ideal society would still remain unrealisable. According to him, this is of theoretical significance in that utopia is a 'permanent feature' of social life. This is yet another dialectical observation in that although a revolution would mean qualitative change, it plants seeds for 'unknown and unknowable history i.e. a new utopia' (Mafeje 1995d: 7). This is what Mqotsi means when he says 'it devolves upon the left to adopt a dialectical view of the process of revolution, including our own revolution. What seems to be our ceiling today could be our ground-floor tomorrow, and so on and so forth. For life travels up in spirals and there is no mechanical way we can definitely tell where the voyage will end' (Mqotsi 1979: 106). By his own admission, Mafeje states that the three conceptions of democracy he enumerated are not as straightforward as he suggests. Of the three, liberal democracy is the eldest. It remained unrivalled in Europe and in North America for two hundred years. As such, it is the best studied, well-advertised and its ideals (freedoms of speech, association, press; individual rights etc.) are still valued by many. It is well to remember, however, that concepts are socially and historically determined. Therefore, they are relative and can be transcended or overthrown. The recognition of the perversions of

liberal democracy in 19th century Europe i.e. class exploitation and domination, ensured the rise of social democracy. In this regard, liberal democracy came up against limits it could not overcome.

In the 19th century there were very few labour unions and social organisations. As such, when the International Workingmen's Association was formed in 1864, there were few groups available for membership. According to Mafeje (1995d: 9), what the socialist internationalists of that period such as Marx and Engels did not fully appreciate was the fact that 'social democracy was, and still is, an intrinsic part of the national question in Europe'. It was a miscalculation to assume that socialism could develop outside the national question. By the time the First International was formed, the European nation-state was still being developed. It failed primarily because the workers delighted in the idea of belonging to a 'powerful nation-state'. Upon formation in 1889, the Second International set out to address the question of social democracy and national self-determination. Both themes turned on the national question and became complicit in imperialism. This is what Mafeje calls the 'political duplicity' and 'intellectual hypocrisy' of Europeans. If African revolutionaries fail to see this they do so at their own peril. What is important to note, however, is that throughout Europe, the struggle for social democracy was led by the labour movement, leading to the formation of social democratic parties. These were formed under the leadership of socialist intellectuals. It was in Germany in 1863 where the first workers' union was produced – the German Workers' Union which was later renamed the German Social-Democratic Workers' Party. By 1911 it had not only dropped the tag 'worker' to become Social Democratic Party, but had also become the biggest party in Germany.

The party had abandoned its revolutionary path once it embraced German nationalism to the point of being pro-imperialism. Mafeje says they became 'patriotic, liberal capitalist at home and imperialistic abroad', something which led to 'the ultimate pervasion of German social democracy' (Mafeje 1995d: 10). The history of social democracy in other European countries is quite similar to the one explained in the preceding paragraphs. Social democracy came to England in 1881 via the Social Democratic Federation which, hot on its heels, came the Fabian Society in 1884. Both groups were formed of left-leaning intellectuals. The Independent Labour Party was formed in 1893 under the leadership of the Trade Union Congress. The formation of the British Labour Party in 1906 meant that the social democratic movement would be moved from the hands of the workers into parliamentary politics. It was the right-wing of the social democratic movement which abandoned the cause. They managed to turn the workers into pro-imperialists in the lead up to WWI. It was the Fabian Society which

tried to salvage what it could under those conditions and introduced ‘the principle of public utilities into Labour Party politics’ (Mafeje 1995d: 11).

In the final analysis, however, to gain some level of respectability in British parliamentary politics, the Labour Party embraced some nationalistic and imperialist sentiments. What Mafeje finds ‘interesting’ is the fact that ‘of all the western European socialist or democratic parties, only the Irish, the Russian and Serbian... did not recapitulate in the period leading up to the First World War’ (Mafeje 1995d: 11-12). This is due to their anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism which they advanced from the standpoint of the less fortunate nations in Europe. This history is not lost on meta-nationalists of the underdeveloped countries. The French Socialist Party, which was formed in 1895, ‘was betrayed by its inability to deal with the national question’. The social democratic movement there suffered the same fate as their counterparts in England and Germany. The problem was the failure to ‘elaborate a comprehensive national democratic programme’ (Mafeje 1995d: 12). It infused the workers with anti-nationalist and anti-patriotic spirit. Historically, Italy also had a strong social democratic movement. Yet it failed to capitalise on that tradition and, like Germany, became a victim of fascism both in the First and Second World Wars.

The social democratic movement was strong in Holland and their sentiment was that imperialist wars were a huge burden on the European working class. Yet the right-wing within the movement felt that Europe needed colonies precisely to improve the lives of the European working class. The Dutch Social Democratic Party managed to defend social democratic values domestically. These values became part of their political culture. Importantly, Mafeje argues that the Dutch succeeded in this primarily because they were nationalist rather than internationalist. Although the Second International was floundering by 1914, social democracy survived in Holland and the Scandinavian countries. The latter are considered the epitome of social democracy. What is noteworthy is the fact that their social democratic values survived in spite of the fact that these countries did not figure prominently in the social democratic movement as represented by the First and Second Internationals. According to Mafeje, there does not seem to have been any foremost socialist theoreticians in the Scandinavians like other European countries.

At any rate, in spite of the successes of the Scandinavian countries, Mafeje argues that: ‘First, under conditions which favour the right or the Christian Democrats, they are no longer prepared to pay the price in the same way that the socialist “revisionists” did in the decade preceding the First World War; second, in the meantime the subordinate classes, sensing that all is not well with social democracy, are beginning to rebel against being patronised from

above' (Mafeje 1995d: 14). On the basis of the two observations, Mafeje warns that both of them combine to 'sound the death-knell' of social democracy in Scandinavia and threaten the future of social democracy universally. Following the collapse of the second International and what can be described as the defeat of socialist internationalists, socialist struggles migrated to the East. Those were, of course, preceded by the First World War from 1914 to 1918 and the first socialist revolution in Russia in 1917. The conditions were ripe for the revolutionaries of the East to evolve a new discourse on democracy. They spoke of the 'new democracy'. As regards the genesis of the concept, Mafeje says:

The underlying supposition was that, since liberal democracy was one of the achievements of a triumphant national bourgeoisie in leading capitalist countries in Europe, through imperialist imposition the same countries had now usurped the right of colonial and ex-colonial countries to produce their own autonomous national bourgeoisie. Not only this, the argument ran, but the imposition itself had in most cases inhibited the development of a national bourgeoisie because this had become a prerogative of the representatives of international capital. It was further supposed that under the circumstances the would-be national bourgeoisie in colonial and ex-colonial countries could at best play second fiddle to representatives of international capital in the imperialist countries. (Mafeje 1995d: 14)

Although Lenin may have been its chief architect, the Russians could not advance the concept on new democracy politically. According to Mafeje, it was Chairman Mao and the Chinese Communist Party who actualised it. While Marxists agree on the revolutionary role of the proletariat, some have reservations about the role of the peasants and the petty bourgeoisie. Not Lenin, however. He believed that the former have a revolutionary potential and could form an alliance with the proletariat. Lenin rejected the petty bourgeois nationalists. Such a position was not unique to him and Trotsky but consistent with the international socialist perspective. But, as Mafeje (1995d: 15) observes, 'as the history of the Second International shows, such a philosophy failed to address the national question not only in colonial countries but also in colonising and imperialist countries'.

Following Lenin's death, Stalin set out to resolve this problem by suggesting that the Third International should work with petty bourgeois nationalists in colonial countries. This was in order that they speed up anti-colonialist struggles. He went so far as to bring Chiang Kai-Shek to close quarters. In turn, the latter sought to destroy the Chinese Communist Party

from within. For Mafeje, it was leaders such as Mao and Ho Chi Minh who succeeded in locating the national question within the socialist path of their colonised countries. The way in which they deployed the concept of the 'new democracy' was such that it was cross-cutting. That is to say, 'progressive and patriotic factions and strata from classes other than the peasantry and the workers qualified for membership in the democratic national alliance against colonialism and imperialism, provided their participation did not, in Mao Tse-Tung's words, "threaten the conditions of livelihood of the majority of the people"' (Mafeje 1995d: 15). Here the comprador was excluded. On the basis of the above, Mafeje argues that the concept of 'new democracy' is anti-liberalism. The new democracy has as its target 'the majority of the people' and derives its national character from the fact that it is anti-imperialist.

Moreover, it gave the national democratic alliance to all classes. All these factors signalled a significant break with European socialist orthodoxy which saw social democracy as predicated not only on working class internationalism but also on 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'. The concept of new democracy re-centred national democracy and did not limit itself to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Furthermore: 'It also aimed at forestalling petit-bourgeois excesses by emphasising the critical role of the workers and peasants in the struggle for national democracy whose objective was to guarantee the minimum "conditions of livelihood" for the majority of the people' (Mafeje 1995d: 16).

Simply, 'it could be asserted that the "new democracy" is neither liberal, social democratic in the sense of bourgeois democrats in Europe, nor socialist in the sense of the European internationalist socialist who swore by the "dictatorship of the proletariat" until their demise' (Mafeje 1995d: 17). The concept turns on two key issues: national democracy and equity. Having discussed the history of the theories of democracy, Mafeje argues that it is possible that there may not be an African discourse on democracy or, at the very least, not yet. Discourse, such as he conceives of it, stems from a set of conceptual tools which are drawn from a coherent theoretical framework. His assessment is that by the mid-1990s, African scholars were eclectic in their debates on democracy (see Amin 1993; Anyang' Nyong'o 1987, 1988, 1989a, 1989b, 1991, 1995; Gutto 1990; Hutchful 1995; Ibrahim 1993a, 1993b; Mafeje 1993c, 1995d; Mamdani 1995; Mandaza 1990; M'Baya 1995; Mkandawire 1988, 1991, 1995b; Shivji 1989). He argues that so far, the debates on democracy in Africa led to 'arbitrary taxonomic classifications' which lack theoretical value. According to him, much of this problem can be traced to the uncritical reception of American political science empiricist concepts and categorisation. Yet, there does not seem to be legitimate grounds for why this should remain the case since a systematic study of only one or two countries could yield deeper

insights in the same way Lenin or Mao did with Russia and China respectively. Each of them independently did stellar work in their respective countries. They succeeded primarily because they studied in great detail the specific conditions of their respective countries. In doing so, ‘the intention was not to compare countries but to find historical grounds for pitting theory against theory’ (Mafeje 1995d: 18). Mafeje considers that to be indispensable to intellectual discovery and refutation. Mafeje himself did this with great aplomb as is shown by his brilliant study of the Great Lakes (Mafeje 1991a). The failure on the part of African scholars in the debate on democracy in Africa is that they did not establish the social and historical foundations of their chosen problematic. The historical origins and failures of liberal democracy have been pointed out in the preceding discussion. Thus there is no need to repeat it, save to say ‘in insisting on liberal democracy, some African scholars can be accused of mistaking the form for its substance’ (Mafeje 1995d: 18).

What is required from African scholars is to identify contending social forces in their societies and discern what kind of democracy may be at work on the African continent. Again, Mafeje reminds the reader about the sociology of knowledge and argues that in order to understand particular concepts, the researcher ought to take seriously the social and historical context from which the concepts emerge. What is observable and acknowledged is the fact that the post-independence African state is a product of colonialism. This is so in at least two ways: ‘Not only is it an heir to the colonial state but also is a product of anti-colonialism which denotes a negative condition which brought together not so much an alliance of classes, as is popularly believed, but a coalition of different peoples’ (Mafeje 1995d: 20). Mafeje argues, as does Magubane (1968), that far from creating classes in Africa in the capitalist sense, colonialism stunted them. Magubane points out that it is the confusion of class analysis with stratification theory to speak of classes in Africa during colonialism. The petty bourgeoisie, due to its bureaucratic power, as did the colonial administration before, ‘usurped all the other classes in the process of developing’ (Mafeje 1995d: 20). Apart from this, in the process of consolidating its political power, the petty bourgeoisie failed to transform itself into the national bourgeoisie.

This stalled the development of what could have been contending classes in the urban sector an area where industrialisation is key. On the basis of this, Mafeje argues that the idea that the independence movement was an alliance of classes amounts to looking for classes where none exist. To speak of class alliance in the independence movement is to mistake form for substance. What the preceding discussion points to, is Mafeje’s critical enquiry and suspicion of received categories which are not sensitive to history and context. At any rate,

after having discussed these issues, he does not seem to have found a suitable alternative to such problems as he discussed. For example, although having praised the ‘new democracy’, he reverts to ‘social democracy’ and says:

Regarding present conditions in Africa, this can refer only to two things: first, the extent to which the people’s will enters decisions which affect their life chances; and, second, the extent to which their means of livelihood are guaranteed. In political terms the first demand does not suggest capture of ‘state power’ by the people (workers and peasants) but it does imply ascendancy to state power by a national democratic alliance in which the popular classes hold the balance of power. The second demand implies equitable (not equal) distribution of resources. Neither liberal democracy imposed ‘multi-partyism’ nor ‘market forces’ can guarantee these two conditions. It transpires, therefore, that the issue is neither liberal nor ‘compradorial’ democracy but social democracy. (Mafeje 1995d: 26)

This is consistent with the proposal he makes in *The National Question in Southern African Settler Societies*, as pointed out towards the end of the previous chapter. Yet later on, he seems to favour the new democracy. What is important to note is his restlessness and constant search for alternatives. Insofar as it deepens the debate among the African scholars he is justified, but insofar as it involves borrowing of ideas already widely in circulation (Social Democracy/New Democracy) it could not constitute an epistemic break – however weakly one wishes to define that. Perhaps he found social democracy inadequate. He argues, for example, “‘social democracy’ can be subsumed under the ‘New Democracy’”. While the former cannot be used as a basis for national liberation, the latter can’ (Mafeje 2002b: 87). It would be remembered that towards the end of the monograph, *The National Question in Southern African Settler Societies*, Mafeje ruefully settled for social democracy. This was only a few years after South Africa had just settled for liberal democracy. By his own admission, Mafeje considered that a moment of defeat for revolutionary African scholars. Perhaps in going back to the drawing board, he remembered that the new democracy was still an option. *Apropos* the new democracy, he says: ‘in proposing a new democracy a new approach should be adopted. First, the sovereignty of the people should be recognised as both a basic necessity and a fundamental right. Second, social justice, not simply formal rights, should constitute the foundation of the new democracy. Third, the livelihood of the citizens should not be contingent on ownership of property but on equitable access to productive resources. The aim is clear: to create the

conditions that would allow modern islands of agribusiness to take possession of the land they need in order to expand' (Mafeje 2002b: 81).

11.3 Conclusion

Of Mafeje's writings, the question of development and social/new democracy is possibly the least developed. Although he wrote about development theory as early as the 1970s, the bulk of his work on development and social/new democracy appears mainly in the 1990s and the early 2000s. What is noteworthy in this aspect of his work is his restless engagement with the concepts of social democracy and new democracy. This chapter consists of two main parts: The first part focused on the purported link between ideology and development. The second section discussed the question of social/new democracy and the African discourse.

Chapter Twelve

Conclusion

12.0 Introduction

This concluding chapter comprises three main parts. The first section of the concluding chapter provides a detailed summary of each chapter of the thesis. The second section of the chapter locates Mafeje and his work within the African intellectual and scholarly community. It provides a detailed discussion of the scope and importance of this thesis and therefore its contribution to the existing body of literature or knowledge.

12.1 Summary of Discussions

As has been noted, this thesis consists of four main parts, each of which contains various chapters. The first section of the thesis contextualised Mafeje's work by discussing his intellectual and political environment. The second section focused on his critique of the social sciences. The third section explored his work on land and agrarian issues in sub-Saharan Africa. The fourth section discussed his work on revolutionary theory and politics (under which is included his work on development and democracy). The summary of the main arguments in the chapters is as follows:

Chapter One: The main purpose of the introductory chapter was to furnish the reader with the general introduction to the thesis. In doing so, the chapter proceeded in the following order. The first section of the chapter provided background and context to this study. The second section stated the importance and scope this study. The third section provided a detailed discussion of the literature on the question of biography. The fourth section of this chapter stated the problem at hand. The fifth section outlined the objectives of this study. The sixth section provided the research questions. The seventh discussed the methods of the study. The eighth section dealt with research ethics. The last section outlined the structure of the chapters of the thesis.

Chapter Two: This chapter was not meant to be a life history of Archie Mafeje. Instead, it was an attempt to locate him within his intellectual and political environment so as to have a better understanding of his writings. In this regard, it was argued that the chapter should be understood as an attempt to contextualise his work. Every attempt was made not to present a linear narrative of Mafeje's intellectual trajectory. Insofar as this chapter attempted to

understand Mafeje's intellectual and political environment, it relied mainly on archival resources and in-depth interviews with Mafeje's family, friends and former colleagues. In this regard, lengthy quotations were used in order to present a fair and accurate account of the issues involved. The first part of the chapter dealt with Mafeje's background and early political and intellectual development. The second part dealt with his intellectual training at the University of Cape Town, his political interaction within the Unity Movement and his time at the University of Cambridge. The third part of the chapter dealt with his intellectual and political environment in exile and his return to South Africa.

Chapter Three: To a large extent this chapter focused on Mafeje's critique of the concept of 'tribalism' and its counterpart, 'ethnicity'. This is so for at least two reasons. First, his essay on tribalism seems to be the one that effectively establishes a clear radical break with Mafeje's early liberal functionalism, although it constitutes a thematic critique of anthropological categories rather than a programmatic critique of the social sciences. Second, Mafeje's handling of the concept of tribe led to misinterpretation on the part of his readers, which were in this thesis clarified. Mafeje does not reject the entity or the institution of tribe as having been non-existent, but rather rejects it for being anachronistic. What he rejects, fundamentally, is the ideology of tribalism. Over and above that, this chapter was intended to demonstrate Mafeje's thematic critique of anthropological categories, while the next two chapters are intended to demonstrate his programmatic critique of the social sciences proper.

Chapter Four: This chapter was concerned to dispel the standard view or the conventional view that Mafeje's critique of the social sciences was limited to a critique of anthropology only. The chapter sought to demonstrate that such a view is a partial reading of Mafeje's work in that the latter was quite clear that all the social sciences are Eurocentric and imperialist. Importantly, the chapter attempted to show that the claim that Mafeje's critique centred on anthropology only, turns Mafeje into a reformist rather than the revolutionary scholar that he was. Equally, the object of this chapter was to emphasise the fact that his critique of the social sciences is best understood as 'programmatic' rather than his 'thematic' critique of anthropological categories such as the ideology of tribalism etc., as discussed in chapter three. This chapter proceeded as follows: (i) it underlined Mafeje's serious treatment of the sociology of knowledge and his totalising critique of social change; (ii) it offered his critique of positivism and functionalism in anthropology; (iii) it re-centred his notions of ideographic versus nomothetic enquiry in the social sciences; and (iv) it underlined his search for an epistemological break and the critique of the lingering problem of alterity in anthropology.

Chapter Five: Together with Chapter four, this chapter should be considered part of Mafeje's programmatic critique of the social sciences. Significantly, however, this chapter was meant to show how Mafeje sought not only to break with epistemology, but also to demonstrate what he meant when he spoke of non-disciplinarity and the search thereof. The approach adopted in this chapter was to discuss in detail his *magnum opus*, *The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations*. This book is not only Mafeje's epistemological and methodological statement on what he meant when he spoke of an epistemological break and non-disciplinarity, but also his attempt to make good on his claims. The chapter can be summarised as follows: it outlined the matrix of the problem and Mafeje's theoretical and conceptual clarifications. Second, it gave an overview of the ethnography and social formations of the interlacustrine. Third, it gave an account of the mode of political and economic character of the interlacustrine kingdoms. Fourth, it offered a reconsideration of the mode of production in Africa. Lastly, it underlined the fact that Mafeje does not offer a negative critique of the social sciences but that in the wake of his deconstruction of the social sciences, he sought to reconstruct something – hence non-disciplinarity.

Chapter Six: This chapter was divided into five sections. The first section set the scene by discussing the intellectual matrix of the problem of land and agriculture on the African continent. The second section used the case of Buganda in Uganda in order to get a deeper understanding of the evolution of the agrarian revolution and the land question in Africa. The third section was concerned to understand the agricultural crisis in African agriculture and its causes. The fourth section discussed the dynamics of African land tenure systems. Finally, the remainder of this chapter discussed government responses to the agrarian question.

Chapter Seven: This chapter is the second and final offering in the thesis's exploration of Mafeje's contribution to the land and agrarian question in Africa. The chapter discussed the following issues: (i) Mafeje's understanding of the African small producers or peasants and their role and responses in sub-Saharan Africa; (ii) it dealt with the agrarian question, food production and food security issues in Africa; (iii) prospects for agrarian reform; and (iv) Mafeje's critique of the liberal notion of poverty alleviation and his emphasis on poverty eradication instead. The issues raised in this chapter and chapter six, can be said to be diagnostic. It was the object of the following chapters of the thesis to discuss Mafeje's prognosis via his work on revolutionary theory, development theory and democracy.

Chapter Eight: This chapter examined Mafeje's (i) struggle for 'authenticity' in social scientific writings, (ii) the role and responsibility of the African intellectual, (iii) the question of Africanity, and (iv) prospects and projections for the indigenisation of political and

intellectual discourse. This chapter prefaced the following chapters on Mafeje's revolutionary theory and politics.

Chapter Nine: This chapter formed part one of the two chapters on revolutionary theory. The first part of this chapter was devoted to issues in the post-independence period such as neo-colonialism and underdevelopment. The second part of the chapter was concerned to understand the notion of state capitalism in the post-independence period. The remainder of the chapter gave a careful exposition of Mafeje's critique of the notion of dual theories of economic growth. The following chapter discussed part two of Mafeje's contribution to revolutionary theory and politics with specific reference to South Africa and southern Africa.

Chapter Ten: This chapter was part two of the two chapters on revolutionary theory and politics. It focused on Mafeje's contribution to revolutionary theory and politics, such as it relates to the context of South Africa and southern Africa. This work appeared in the mid-1980s up to the late 1990s. This chapter had two main parts: the chapter gave a theoretical overview of South African politics and conceptual issues in the struggle for black liberation.

Chapter Eleven: Of Mafeje's writings, the question of development and social/new democracy is possibly the least developed. Although he wrote about development theory as early as the 1970s, the bulk of his work on development and social/new democracy appears mainly in the 1990s and the early 2000s. What is noteworthy in this aspect of his work is his restless engagement with the concepts of social democracy and new democracy. This chapter had two main parts. The first part focused on the purported link between ideology and development. The second section discussed the question of social/new democracy and the African discourse.

12.2 African Intellectuals: Locating Mafeje

Adesina argues that 'the defining basis of African sociology is that it takes African *ontological standpoints* as its point of departure, not just the description or analysis of the African conditions' (Adesina 2008c: 664, emphasis in original). As has been discussed, this is quite consistent with Mafeje's approach of taking African societies on their own terms as against using imported concepts and 'theoretical frameworks'. He argues, for example, that 'African scholars [ought] to study their society from inside and cease to be purveyors of alienated intellectual discourses' (Mafeje 2000a: 66).

According to Mkandawire (1995a), since independence there have been three generations of African academics. Each of these generations, he argues, 'have witnessed changes in their countries' economic fortunes and political trajectories, as well as cultural and

societal transformation' (Mkandawire 1995a: 75). Taken together, all of these issues had an impact on their academic careers. The first generation of post-independence African academics, to which Mafeje and Mkandawire undoubtedly belong, was produced overseas particularly in Europe and North America. After having completed their postgraduate studies in some of the most prestigious universities in the West/North, they returned to the African continent to teach mainly in their home countries. The same is not entirely true of Mafeje as has been shown in chapter two of this thesis. He did, however, return to Africa albeit not to the country of his birth. Many of them were at the forefront of calling for 'indigenisation' of the African universities. Some of the debates which ensued in the light of these calls had an influence on Mafeje. For example, his earlier call for interdisciplinarity (which shifted to 'non-disciplinarity') must have been influenced by discussions and calls for the same at Dar es Salaam in the 1960s and 1970s. Again, though one cannot say this with certainty, his later call for 'non-disciplinarity' may have been influenced by discussions at CODESRIA where a number of scholars were in favour of the political economy approach. In his speech at the 8th Annual Thabo Mbeki Africa Day Lecture, Mamdani (2017) detailed how the CODESRIA collective had been in favour of the political economy approach and the question of non-disciplinarity. This is the environment in which Mafeje was operating and these discussions and debates had an influence on him. One can say this without denying his originality as a scholar. The point is that interacting with one's interlocutors, one way or the other, shapes one's thinking. In other words, context matters.

Mkandawire (1995a: 75) goes on to argue that the return of the first generation of African academics 'was motivated by material and moral incentives'. In the wake of independence, the morale was very high and living conditions were comparatively better. This no doubt had an influence on African intellectuals and academics. The calls for indigenising and 'Africanising' universities and curricula was a result of this. The political atmosphere was 'largely favourable' and, Mkandawire (1995a) observes, most intellectuals shared the state's 'developmentalist ideology'. There was a certain 'vibrancy' about the works of the intellectuals of that period, with their journal articles published in reputable journals and their books by international publishers. This meant that the academic standing of this generation of African academics and intellectuals was quite high and they enjoyed international acclaim. The same can be said about Mafeje. As indicated in chapter two, the University of Dar es Salaam wanted to employ him as a full-professor within five years of completing his doctorate and the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague bestowed on him full-professorship at age 36 in 1972. He had

already co-authored a book, published by Oxford University Press, several journal articles and a PhD from the University of Cambridge. He seemed to tick all the right boxes.

Due to the fact that some of these academics were scattered all over the continent and cut-off from research networks, they set up continental and sub-regional organisations or institutions such as CODESRIA and a bit later the African Association of Political Science (AAPS). Helmi Sharawy recalls that although Mafeje worked with AAPS, he nevertheless did not take political science seriously and considered it a superficial social science. Although he attended AAPS conferences and symposia, he nevertheless referred to its members as ‘those guys’.¹²⁶ It was because of their commitment to ideas and finding lasting solutions that Mafeje associated himself with organisations such as CODESRIA and AAPS. These ‘networks were to devise programmes specifically geared to later generations or that new networks were created to serve the needs of new generations’ (Mkandawire 1995a: 76). In an interview with this author, Mkandawire recalled that as Executive Secretary of CODESRIA, the organisation used to task Mafeje to work on various projects such as writing proposals, review manuscripts, to submit articles, to write reports, and so on.¹²⁷ He says Mafeje particularly enjoyed reviewing manuscripts by up-and-coming researchers and he would give them extensive and voluminous constructive feedback. Thus Mafeje belonged to a generation which ‘was profoundly pre-occupied with problems of nation-building, of economic and intellectual dominance and the continued dependency of their respective countries on their erstwhile colonial masters’ (Mkandawire 1995a: 76). Although this generation went on to occupy – and some of them still do e.g. Mkandawire’s professorship at the prestigious London School of Economics – key positions in and outside of the academy, some of them have retired while others have passed on. One of their main preoccupations has been the reproduction of the African intellectual community.

The second generation of African researchers, Mkandawire argues, was also educated overseas but many of them had taken their first degrees or undergraduate studies in their home universities. But unlike their predecessors, many of those who studied abroad stayed there while those who returned home went back overseas for greener pastures after a short period at home. Mkandawire (1995a) gets into a brief discussion of the nuances and challenges which afflicted this generation. He argues that the Nigerian case is an interesting one in that the second generation there returned home due to attractive salaries and expansion in the university

¹²⁶ Interview with Helmi Sharawy on 10 September 2016 in Cairo, Egypt.

¹²⁷ Interview with Thandika Mkandawire on 15 July 2015 in Cape Town, South Africa.

system. In the case of Nigeria and the expansion of the university system, Mamdani (1993: 8) observes: 'At the end of the colonial period, there was one university in Nigeria with a thousand students, the University of Ibadan. By 1990, Nigeria had 31 universities with 141,000 students'. Nor is Nigeria an exception. The university system expanded in East Africa as well. Yet a significant number of the said Nigerian academics were, at the time when Mkandawire wrote the article in 1995, 'on the lookout for greener pastures'. Also, in the French-speaking African countries conditions continued to be attractive (Mkandawire 1995a). Those African academics of the second generation constituted, Mkandawire observes, the first wave of the so-called African 'brain drain'. There were a number of reasons for their disillusionment. Mkandawire explains:

The reasons for their disenchantment were many. First, in a number of countries, especially those in West Africa, by the time this generation was ready to return home, the indigenisation programmes had been virtually completed. This meant that promotion would be more competitive than for the first generation. Furthermore, with this new African professoriate being relatively young, upward mobility would also be slow. Second, there was the economic crisis ravaging African countries. High inflation rates and the massive devaluations of currencies had, by the 1990s, so reduced local salaries that only a few African scholars abroad could be persuaded to come back or stay on. And as if this was not bad enough, by the mid-1970s and certainly by the 1990s, academia and the state were virtually at each other's throats (literally in the case of the throats of the former). Growing political repression added academic political refugees to the growing stock of academic 'economic refugees'. (Mkandawire 1995a: 77)

What is most observable about the first and second generations is the fact that both of them had access to universities abroad and were comparatively mobile. The third generation, Mkandawire observes, was largely trained locally due in part to increased student funding. But more importantly: 'The failure by members of the second generation to return home after completion of their studies, the brain drain, and the setting up of local graduate school programmes has either undercut much of the rationale for sending students abroad or obviated the need to do so. It has even led to doubts about the wisdom of insisting on high standards in local universities if this only facilitated the brain drain' (Mkandawire 1995a: 78). It was the third generation that assumed leadership positions in the universities and constituted 'the medium to senior levels of the academic hierarchy'. Mkandawire confesses that he runs the

risk of generalising, yet it is necessary to quote him at length on what he takes to be the characteristics of the third generation:

The first is that a number of them, especially the ones entering graduate schools in the latter part of the 1980s, received their training under extremely difficult circumstances. One such difficulty was the extremely repressive environment within which this generation lived its adolescence and entered its adulthood. 'Born free' in the sense of being products of independent Africa, it has spent much of its life under extreme political repression and restrictions on academic freedom. A second difficulty has been the scandalous material conditions within which they studied and taught. A third difficulty is related to the identity crisis that African universities face. Having achieved their mission – 'meeting the high level manpower needs of the nation' (read 'public administration') – African universities lost their original *raison d'être* in the eyes of the state and sometimes the public. Compounding matters about the ambiguity of their academic status was the swarm of experts that came along in the wake of structural adjustment programme and the resumption by donors of control over key economic functions of the nation and the consultancy missions. These visiting teams either brought 'our own Africans' or often employed local ones whose degrees and certificates they could decipher (US or European-trained were key words). Those with local degrees were generally disadvantaged and in many ways, were victims of the same disdain to which national institutions and endeavours were now held. Add on to all this, the argument that the 'rates of return' of African universities were much lower than that of primary and secondary education, and the result is a beleaguered academic community fighting for every ounce of respect and resources coming its way. (Mkandawire 1995a: 79)

As a result of the aforementioned factors, the third generation lacks international exposure and are thus less 'marketable' than their predecessors. Whether true or false, this points to the serious challenges in the African academy. Mkandawire concedes that there were overlaps and that issues may not be as neat as he outlined in his argument. In broad strokes, African scholars such as Ki-Zerbo (1994, 2005), Mkandawire (1995a, 1999, 2005), Zeleza (2005) and many others are all agreed on the need for increased research networks and intellectual communities in order to find solutions to challenges facing the African continent. CODESRIA, among

others, is one of those organisations which enables such networks and it is the organisation with which Mafeje associated himself for a good part of his academic career.

12.3 Contribution and Importance of this Study

This thesis was written at a time when the South African universities were confronted by the progressive student movements such as ‘Rhodes Must Fall’ and ‘Fees Must Fall’. The rise of student movements not only exposed problems within South African higher education sector, but also exposed South Africa’s macroeconomic policy choices. The student movements not only demand free higher education, but also call for decolonisation of the same. One of the recurrent questions brought about by the student movements is this: ‘Is it possible to have a decolonised university in a colonial society?’ The question is important not only because of its political connotations, but also because it is theoretical. It speaks to the old dialectic between the superstructure and the material base. The former relates to issues which do not deal directly with production e.g. ideology, culture, religion, education, law, and so on. The latter relates to the means of production and relations of production. Some students have argued that the assumption that one can decolonise the university, in what is deemed to be a colonial society, seems to give priority to concerns of the superstructure at the expense of infrastructural issues.

This diffuses the question of decolonising the university into the sociology of knowledge and relates it to its wider societal context. This is done without denying the university its own internal dialect. Yet the question is founded on positivist assumptions because there are no ‘value-free’ or non-partisan academics. The people who comprise the university are members of the wider society primarily. Does decolonising the university connote the same thing as decolonising the wider society? That is not necessarily the case. Apart from that, it seems that sometimes when people speak of a colonial university they have in mind only the so-called white universities. Such a view is itself premised on a false-dichotomy between the white and the black university. One would collapse this dichotomy by saying, although it seems extraordinary that this should be so, there are no black universities in South Africa to begin with – there are universities *for* blacks. Magubane argues that ‘in South Africa, only Fort Hare deserved the designation “historically black university”’ (Magubane 2010: 355). Insofar as there are no black universities in South Africa, all South African universities are colonial in character. There are, of course, differences in form but not in substance. Here reference is made specifically to the core business of the university i.e. research and teaching. In spite of these reservations about a decolonised university, the university has

its own internal dialectic. Hence questions around decolonising curriculum and knowledge production remain pertinent.

As has been noted in this thesis, Archie Mafeje's contribution to the understanding of the social, economic and political problems in Africa is widely acknowledged but rarely discussed in any meaningful way. In the South African academy, this case is more acute. Mafeje shoulders a heavy burden in a double-sense. First, in the mainstream social sciences Mafeje is treated as something of an *enfant terrible* (in the original French meaning of the term)¹²⁸ (see Bank 2010, Bank with Swana 2013; L. Bank 2016). Second, and much more problematically, although black intellectuals readily acknowledge his intellectual prowess, they nevertheless reduce him to a bogeyman whose name is deployed to intimidate anthropologists when they get out of line – Mafeje as a 'combative' 'warrior' who 'single-handedly demolished anthropology' (see Hendricks 2007a, 2007b, 2008a, 2008b, 2012; Mngxitama 2007, 2010). From either side of the divide, Mafeje's work does not enjoy the serious attention it deserves. This is to be expected from mainstream social scientists given his critique of Eurocentrism in the social science. But there does not seem to be a justification for this practice on the part of black intellectuals.

Although Mafeje's name is mentioned, there is little effort to engage with his scholarly works. From both sides of the divide, Mafeje and his work emerge as a distorted parody rather than the serious and theoretically sophisticated scholar that he was (see Bank 2010, Bank with Swana 2013; L. Bank 2016; Hendricks 2007a, 2007b, 2008a, 2008b, 2012; Mngxitama 2007, 2010). Consider, for example: 'I have argued the critique of social anthropology in South Africa, which was first popularised by Archie Mafeje in the 1970s is flawed, in my view, because it assumes that a single or unified tradition or version of anthropology emerged in southern Africa, which was close to state power and the voice of the white ruling class' (Bank 2016: 292). This is possibly one of the strangest critiques of Mafeje's work. To start with, in his article Leslie Bank cites (entirely without analysis) only three of Mafeje's writings: the master's thesis, *Leadership and Change* (1963a) and the two articles 'A Chief Visits Town' (1963b) and 'The Ideology of Tribalism' (1971). Second, as has been pointed out in part two of the thesis, these three publications form part of Mafeje's thematic critique of anthropological categories rather than anthropology as a discipline or field of study. Although the article on the ideology of tribalism constitutes a radical departure from his early liberal functionalist writings, it is not a critique of anthropology as a field of study. Importantly, while Bank (2016) cites

¹²⁸ An unruly child who embarrasses his elders by untimely remarks – see the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

(without analysis) Mafeje's master's thesis and the article 'A Chief Visits Town', these publications have little to do with the so-called critique of anthropology of the 1970s. Third, while he criticises Mafeje's critique of anthropology for being 'flawed', nowhere in his article does Bank (2016) actually engage with Mafeje's critique of anthropology. Had he done so, Bank would have discovered that Mafeje actually criticised all of the social sciences for being 'imperialist' and 'Eurocentric' (Mafeje 1976a; 1996, 2001a). The problem with anthropology, was its epistemology of alterity or epistemology of subjects/objects and its lack of a 'totalising critique'. Bank is able to get away with this issue precisely because his article is received by an audience that is not thoroughly familiar with Mafeje's work. Although Bank claims to be discussing Mafeje's critique of anthropology of the 1970s, nowhere does he actually engage with Mafeje's critique of anthropology and the social sciences in the 1970s (see Mafeje 1975, 1976a).

While Mafeje wrote on a wide variety of topics, South African intellectuals usually focus on his life circumstances rather than what he actually wrote. As noted in this thesis, his scholarship can be categorised into three broad areas: (i) a critique of epistemological and methodological issues in the social sciences; (ii) the land and agrarian question in sub-Saharan Africa; and (iii) revolutionary theory and politics (including questions of development and democracy). It was pointed out, too, that in the wake of his passing there has been a great deal of interest in him. This prompted leftists and liberals alike to contend with his life and work. Yet while this interest is to be commendable, much of what has thus far been written on Mafeje leaves much to be desired (Bank 2010, Bank with Swana 2013; L. Bank 2016; Hendricks 2007a, 2007b, 2008a, 2008b, 2012). This is so because such treatment as he and his writings gets, where it is not merely tentative, is so inaccurate to the point of being misleading. This is part of what motivated for this rigorous intellectual biography of Mafeje i.e. a study which seeks to locate his writings within the broader intellectual and political struggles of the African continent.

In general, it was stated that this study is located within the current debates (or literature) surrounding the erasures and silences of Africa-centred scholarship in the South African academy (Adesina 2002, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2008a, 2008b, 2010; Mamdani 1992, 1993, 1998a, 1998b, 2008; Lebakeng 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2010; Nyoka 2012a, 2013; Seepe 1998, 2004; Sitas 2006; Thaver 2002; Hendricks 2006). In particular, the study attempts to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and debates around the nature of knowledge and epistemological decolonisation in the social sciences in South Africa. In this thesis, part of what is meant in referring to knowledge and epistemological decolonisation is tapping into

the African knowledge archive or African scholarship. In this thesis, knowledge decolonisation is understood in two senses: the narrow sense and the broad sense. The former refers specifically to the question of engaging the works of African scholars. The latter refers to engaging not only the works of African scholars, but also taking seriously what Adesina (2005) calls ‘ontological discourses and narratives’ of the African people. It needs to be said, however, that Adesina does not talk about decolonisation but rather ‘endogeneity’. His concept of ‘ontological discourses’ is borrowed here to refer to the lived experiences of the African people. In engaging in these processes, one avoids importing theory in order to understand local conditions. On the basis of these two meanings, the thesis attempted to shift the discussion from merely talking about ‘decolonising’ knowledge to engaging in the actual *process* of decolonising knowledge. This was done through engaging the works of Archie Mafeje and the African societies he wrote about.

Although the call to decolonise knowledge has gained a lot of currency in the South African academy, there is little in the form of transcending this call and getting into the actual business of ‘decolonising’ (however the term is understood). Thus in many ways the call to ‘decolonise’ takes on a life of its own. Politically, this is what has been called the ‘politics of suspension’ – talking about decolonisation long enough without engaging in the actual *process* of decolonising so that the term loses its content. The main worry is that talking about ‘decolonising’ without actually doing it renders the process irrelevant and diminishes its importance. Intellectually, this has been referred to as ‘epistemic posturing’ – *talking* about the need to engage in knowledge ‘decolonisation’ is not itself the *act* of decolonising knowledge. Nor is talking about knowledge decolonisation in and of itself a break with epistemology. To speak of Eurocentrism and ‘coloniality’ in and outside of the academy is now something of a platitude. Eurocentrism has long been an object of critical analysis by African scholars. The works of Cheikh Anta Diop on the interpretation of Egyptian civilisation or Kenneth Onwuka Dike on African historiography and several other African scholars point to a longer genealogy of the ‘decolonisation’ discourse and critique of Eurocentrism in the African social sciences (see Akiwowo 1980, 1986, 1988, 1991, 1999; Amadiume 1987; Amin 1989; Dike 1956; Diop [1955]1974, [1981]1991; Fadipe [1939]1970; Mafeje 1971; Magubane 1968, 1969, 1971; wa Thiong’o 1972, 1981, 1986). This thesis left behind talks about decolonisation. It proceeded to do precisely what in this thesis is meant by the concept i.e. tapping into the African knowledge archive. A critique of Eurocentrism or ‘coloniality’ is necessarily inbuilt in the process of tapping into the African knowledge archive and engaging the ontological narratives of the African people.

In his study of Harold Wolpe, titled *Race, Class and Power*, Steven Friedman points out that the book is a biography just insofar as ‘it focuses on one individual and his contribution to our understanding of our society’ (Friedman 2015: 1-2). Yet in spite of it focusing on one individual, the book is not a life history. It is not an attempt to unearth Wolpe’s experiences, feelings and thoughts but rather his ideas. Friedman’s approach in his book is similar to the one adopted in this study. This study is an intellectual biography of Mafeje insofar as it locates his work within the broader African intellectual and political environment. Yet although this study is dedicated to Mafeje’s work, it is *not a life history* of him. It is, rather, a critical engagement with his work.

First, the unique perspective of this thesis, and therefore its primary contribution to the existing body of knowledge, is that it seeks to overturn the idea that Mafeje was a critic of anthropology *only*. The view that Mafeje was a mere critic of anthropology was referred to as the ‘standard view’. As an alternative, the thesis argues that Mafeje is best understood as criticising all of the social sciences for being Eurocentric and imperialist. This was offered as the ‘alternative view’. It was argued here that the standard view makes a reformist of Mafeje, while the ‘alternative view’ put forward in this thesis seeks to present him as the revolutionary scholar that he was. This interpretation lays the foundation for a deeper analysis of Mafeje’s work and argues that in saying that all the social sciences are Eurocentric and imperialist, he sought to liquidate them by calling for ‘non-disciplinarity’. It should be noted that in this regard, the primary focus of this thesis was to follow the unit of his thought and not whether he succeeded or failed in this difficult task.

Second, as far as this author is concerned, this thesis is the first comprehensive engagement with the entire body of Mafeje’s scholarship. The thesis locates him and his work in the general African intellectual community. Thus regarding the other dimensions of this thesis, over and above addressing the question of correcting his critique of anthropology and the social sciences, consists in highlight Mafeje’s unique contribution not only to the question of land and agrarian issues in sub-Saharan Africa, but also on revolution theory and politics. Mafeje wrote a lot on the question of land tenure systems in Africa. In fact, his study of the land question turns, both conceptually and empirically, primarily on the misconceptions and uniqueness of land tenure in Africa. The bulk of his work on the land question for various decades touches in one way or the other on land tenure. This thesis attempted to characterise this issue more fully. Furthermore, for Mafeje, as against some liberal and Marxist scholars writing on land and agrarian issues, the concept of peasants (small producers) is not simply an analytical category but one which has a concrete referent – land. Mafeje treated this concept

with the seriousness it deserves and dedicated to it several studies. Significantly, the peasants are, in several of his works on land and agrarian issues, considered the main custodians of land. Food security and poverty alleviation issues are as important in Mafeje's study of the land question as the study of land tenure itself. In particular, the question of land and agriculture centres precisely on what people can do with land once they have obtained it. It is for this reason that food security issues and agriculture matter to Mafeje.

Mafeje's revolutionary theory and political writings are grounded, as is his corpus generally, on the search for an epistemological break. Even when writing on matters political, at the centre of Mafeje's discourse is the question: 'how do we make sense of this situation?' The opening chapter of his book on revolutionary theory, *In Search of Alternative*, is important in this regard. Thus knowledge-making remains at the centre of Mafeje's discourse. Within his work on revolutionary and politics may be included his work on development and democracy. As noted above, this is the least developed aspect of Mafeje's *oeuvre*. This work appears mainly in the latter part of Mafeje's career as argued in chapter eleven of this thesis.

12.4 Conclusion

This chapter comprises three main parts: The first section of the concluding chapter provided a detailed summary of each chapter of the thesis. The second section of the chapter tried to locate Mafeje and his work within the African intellectual and scholarly community. The third and final section provided a detailed discussion of the scope and importance of this thesis and therefore its contribution to the existing body of literature or knowledge.

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