

**MINISTRY OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
& INNOVATION OF CAMEROON**

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR EDUCATION

**INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM ON THE THEME
“AFRICA IN THE ERA OF CHANGE”
(Yaounde, Djeuga Palace Hotel) 23rd – 25th January 2008**

*Challenges and stakes in the africanisation process
of research, scholarship and university curricula,
in the context of Globalisation & in the perspective of African Renaissance*

Edited version of a lecture delivered on 05 September 2007 at the University of West Indies, Mona Campus, Kingston – Jamaica); from a paper first submitted to the National Conference on African Studies, UNISA, 26th – 28th February 2006

By: Dr. Samba Buri MBOUP

**Associate Professor, Centre for African Renaissance Studies
University of South Africa (UNISA)
Member of the Scientific Board, African Institute of Management (Dakar)
Former Ambassador of Senegal**

Pretoria – City of Tshwane, 10th January 2008

I – AFRICAN RENAISSANCE & THE GLOBAL CONTEXT: MAJOR CHALLENGES AND STAKES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

1. African Renaissance: its context, stakes and major challenges

1.1. An alternative and global project of society and Civilization

African Renaissance can be viewed as **an alternative and global project of society and civilization**, aiming at the creation of the objective conditions for the re-birth of Africa as a scientific, technological as well as economic and political pole of initiative and decision making on its own, in the world of today and to-morrow.

As such, African Renaissance seeks to address three major interconnected and interdependent issues or challenges, as identified by José Do Nascimento [See: “About the operational character of Cheikh Anta Diop’s thought, published in *Revue Nomade* - # 1/2; 1987: pp. 286/299]:

- the issue of renewal of African intellectual and cultural inventiveness and creativity, in a context whereby the harnessing of scientific knowledge and information and of technology, perform a key role in the wealth of nations as well as in the balance of powers worldwide;
- the issue concerning the creation of objective conditions for the material development of African societies, the spiritual upliftment of African peoples, in an international political context whereby issues of military security determine the possibility of success or failure of National strategies for economic development;
- the issue of the autonomy of African political conscience and of renewal of political intelligence in Africa, in the framework of an international global world civilization still dominated by conflicting national interests, as testified by certain dimensions of the current identity crisis of multilateralism and by difficulties encountered for the establishment of a more transparent and equitable world trading system in the WTO, notably because the dominant philosophies and practices, often tend to “instrumentalize” Man’s promethean intelligence at the service of selfish nationalist interests and “faustean” goals.

1.2. PanAfricanism as the doctrine for AR

1.2.1. The two dimensions of African Renaissance

In our view, AR refers basically to two things: both

A) to the ultimate, strategic, long-term goal for Africa and the African people – those at home and those abroad – in the 21st Century; as well as

B) to the long/protracted and complex process of transformation and self-transformation (transformation of Africa's position in the world and its relationship to other continents and peoples; transformation of African peoples' living conditions; self-transformation of Africans themselves), towards achieving the strategic goal as stated above.

Such a process implies the fulfillment of a number of tasks, among others:

- i) harnessing of agricultural, industrial as well as military technology and science;
- ii) the mental and cultural de-alienation and spiritual upliftment of African peoples and the de-colonization of their common history;
- iii) a clear option for the advent of "intentional sciences" and for a research policy at the service of the interests and aspirations of Africa and the African People.

If we agree on the definition and content of the concept of AR as stated above, therefore, PanAfricanism can be viewed as the political and economic doctrine for AR as both a strategic goal and the socio-historical process of transformation and self-transformation leading to it.

1.2.2. What is PanAfricanism?

A) Definition and content

The doctrine of PanAfricanism could be defined as the expression of the political (and historical?) conscience and position of the oppressed African masses /peoples worldwide. As such, it is rooted in the historical experience common to those peoples, i.e.: their common origin (Africa as the cradle of humankind and of human Civilization); their common history (and culture?); their shared common material conditions of existence and destiny; and therefore, their common historical aspirations as well as common material and spiritual interests.

B) Objectives and principles

- i) Three (3) objectives inter-related:
 - Total liberation of Africa and of African peoples from all forms of domination and oppression (class, gender, ethnic, racial, foreign/national etc.):
 - Unification of African peoples under a regime based on principles such as Ubuntu (integral humanism) and Maat (justice, equity, universal harmony): which includes principles of Gender as well as inter-generational equity;

- Edification of a united, prosperous and powerful African Nation of which Africans from the Diaspora shall be full citizens, more so because they would have been key actors for its edification and advent.

ii) Principles for action:

- Struggle against all forms of domination;
- African leadership (rooted in the social and political struggles of the African peoples) and ownership (by the same African peoples, particularly at grass-roots level);
- Autonomy of thought and action, based on the conviction that “We are our own liberators” and that, towards that end, we must first and foremost rely on ourselves;
- Unity in deed and in action
- International solidarity with all oppressed peoples and groups in the world.

C) Nature, contents and dimensions of PanAfricanism

i) Continental and diasporal dimensions

- Undeniable specificities with implications (regarding strategy and tactics);
- Inter-related and complimentary (Senegal, USA, Brazil, Jamaica, Sudan): due to combined incidence of History, of sociology and political economy, together with the impact and role of oppressive nationalism and racism (rather racialism) in the mechanisms and processes of social differentiation and classification.

ii) Implications on the nature and content of PanAfricanism

- Doctrine for liberation and unity, liberation in unity;
- Holistic content as a doctrine: i) political (for the establishment of the US of Africa, with common federal institutions such as the PAP, the PSC; as well as a common African nationality and passport); ii) economic (for a continental integrated economy with a common market and currency); iii) cultural (need for critical re-assessment, re-codification and valorization of African cultures and languages; as well as of a qualitative reform of African information and educational systems to better serve the purpose and objectives of AR).

1.3. Challenges to Higher education and research institutions

Within the global context as presented above (see: § 1.1), the results of scientific research have long become a “negotiable” and “tradable” merchandise, a strategic weapon of considerable importance. Added to that, is the ongoing situation, assessed some 15 years ago, of quasi-exclusive monopolization of scientific knowledge by only 20 out of 120 countries who, with only 1/3 of the total world population, accounted for 95% of the expenses allocated to scientific research.

Therefore, both (Higher) Education and research in Africa, as frameworks and targets of the africanisation process - of their contents, approaches and goals - should aim at achieving something qualitatively different from the “indefinite reproduction of the vicious circle of structural dependence”.

According to Paulin Hountondji (cf.: dissertation about conditions of intellectual production in Africa presented at the IXth general assembly of CODESRIA in Dakar, in December 1998,) despite all the prevailing mythology about globalization, scientific research activities in “developing countries” especially in Africa take place in a context not very different from one of “perpetuation of the colonial pact”:

“The increasing participation of Third World researchers in intellectual activities does not necessarily mean transformation of either their base and modes of production or the nature of the relationships of production which stem from such base”.

So to speak,

“Similarly to the unequal pattern of exchange at the economic level, Africa has been, until recently, a sole provider of raw information and facts, transmitted as such to foreign laboratories and research centers, in order to be processed and transformed, the most important moment – the transformation process – taking place, at both economic and intellectual levels, outside Africa” – i.e.: out of its reach and control.

Moreover, beyond the major dimensions of globalization identified by Manuel Castells (key role of knowledge and information in the measurement of economic productivity and competitiveness; technological, organizational as well as institutional capacity to structure the entire planet, through telecommunications and informational systems, as a global, economic system with a global financial market as its core and capable of operating as a unit in real time), nevertheless, one should bear in mind that far from being a homogeneous, monolithic and neutral microcosm whose different parts perform similar or interchangeable roles and are treated on equal terms, “the

global world” is indeed, a well structured space with its own hierarchies and poles:

Neither does the global economy mean “that the entire world is one single economic system” - taking into consideration realities such as the existence of both local, regional and national labour markets – nor should one lose sight of the fact that the capacity of the global economy to operate as one single unit “refers fundamentally to its core activities, not to everything”..

For Prof. Christian Sina Diatta, former Senegal’s Minister of Scientific and Technological Research, globalization also account for its own perversions such as the aggravation of inequalities and injustices between continents, nations and groups, expansion and intensification of abject poverty, terrorism, certain forms of perverse tourism, drug addiction, among others. Particularly in the field of management of scientific research and its applications, globalization is also responsible for new forms of commercial and industrial exploitation of the human body such as cloning practices, (sometimes clandestine) removal and trafficking of organs, use of embryos and foetuses for identification of viruses or production of vaccines: all of which tend to confine the poor of this world to a continuously worsening infra-humane condition and status, as uninformed, defenceless subjects, in front of such often unethical practices.

Such is, in broad traits, a presentation of the background with some of the major trends, challenges and threats to be constantly borne in mind, for our reflection on the africanisation process of university curricula on our continent. To deal with those challenges and threats, African peoples, specially African political and intellectual elites and leadership must empower themselves. That could be achieved only through a concerted effort, in partnership with other civil society and private sector stakeholders, in order to correct the prevailing imbalances and discrepancies which, if unchallenged, might, in the very next future, seriously jeopardize the survival of many, including our continent and its peoples.

However, in this paper, our main focus shall be more specifically, directed towards discussion of intellectual and political stakes and challenges, particularly issues related to purposes and perspectives as well as methodologies of research in Social Sciences, with curricular contents and pedagogy, in Higher education.

2. The struggle for African universities and knowledges

This section of our presentation owes a lot to the seminal work edited by Adebayo Olukoshi & Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, on the International Conference on “African universities in the 21st Century”(See: Vol 1: “Liberalisation and internationalization”): Illinois (USA) and CODESRIA (Senegal).

2.1. Vocation and mission of African Higher Education at the dawn of the 21st Century

Such vocation and mission, revolving around a triple task - teach; research; service - does not seem to have changed, fundamentally, according to Olukoshi and T. Zeleza. Yet, in the opinion of the same authors, some of the very conditions in which African Tertiary institutions are currently struggling to fulfill their mission have changed, sometimes in a very significant way. This is, indeed, a context of hardly fought struggles and transformation:

- A) struggles of various kinds and intensities, waged within and outside the university system on the contemporary interpretation and operationalisation of its mission;
- B) Process of transformation taking place at the level of the State, the economy and society at large.

In that context, “all fields of scholarly research and knowledge find themselves in a state of transition, as a result of profound changes in social life and in thought”, occurring at 3 major levels; being the most important process, the accelerated pace of globalization, marked and accompanied by: rapid technological change; weakened capacity of the State, after 2 decades of economic crisis and structural adjustment; major shifts in the composition and orientation of the student body; iv) changes in the contents and systems of instruction; systematic brain drain.

The third transformation identified by the same authors concerns the area of the sociology and political economy of knowledge production, dissemination and consumption globally, and particularly in Africa.

Consequently, “traditional disciplinary boundaries” become progressively irrelevant, thus giving way to “new interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary configurations and research agendas” which require new organizational forms of knowledge production, dissemination and consumption. Furthermore, the centrality and multi-faceted role of the university is also affected, more so with the diversification of its internal as well as external constituencies and competitors such as Internet.

In our view, it might seem exaggerated and even irrelevant to present Internet as a competitor to university: indeed, it would be more appropriate to speak of Internet in terms of an instrument or medium for knowledge acquisition, rather than a competitor, although it may serve or disserve the goals of universities. One might wonder whether the authors views on Internet as expressed here, do not reflect, somehow, a rather simplistic or narrow perception of Globalization by some African intellectuals and middle classmen, through only or essentially some of its manifestations or components ?

2.2. Issue of ongoing/persistent relevance of African universities

In spite of all, Olukoshi and Tiyambe Zeleza are of the opinion that, to-day more than ever, “it is in the order of the day to both redefine the role and defend the importance of African universities”, in the face of the many and complex challenges facing African societies and peoples, at the dawning of the 21st century.

2.2.1. A significant fact: the U-Turn in the World Bank led neo-liberal paradigm and agenda, following dismissal in the 90’s of its anti-university crusade [Olukoshi & T. Zeleza: Ibid.]

Such phenomenon finds its expression through neo-liberal quibbles about the non-viability of African universities, as new challenges are posed by the strong market-instrumentalist logic which permeates the Bank’s new approach. For instance: “How to balance autonomy and viability, equity and efficiency, access and quality, internationalization and indigenization, academic freedom and professional ethics, privatization and the public purpose, diversity and uniformity, preservation of indigenous knowledge systems and adoption of global knowledge systems, knowledge production and knowledge dissemination, the knowledge economy and the knowledge society” etc.?

In an intellectual and socio-political environment marked by the “decomposition of the old tripartite contract University-State- society in which higher education was valued as a public and intellectual good”..., many questions and issues arise, among them: i) “how are African universities addressing the challenges posed by knowledge production and dissemination, especially “the questions of Africanising global scholarship and globalizing African scholarship”?; ii) issue of the scholarly publishing and research libraries...

3.2.2. Substantive changes in the terms and content of the development dialogue:

[Cf: Prof W. Nkuhlu : “The role of African Higher Education at the Dawn of the 21st Century”: paper presented at the launch of the Southern African Universities Vice Chancellors Association – 20th Feb. 2005)]

3.2.2.1. Factors and causes for the said changes:

- new developments in the global and African contexts which led to the launch of NEPAD and the establishment of the AU;
- being the major factor for such changes: the emergence and crystallization of a new African political will both at leadership and grassroots levels

- A) Result: creation of a more conducive environment whereby, in the opinion of Prof. W. L. Nkuhlu (former Chief Executive of NEPAD Secretariat), in order to entrench the new paradigm shift into Africa's development agenda, the spotlight has been placed, now more than ever, on capacity building: to build a "capacity for increased knowledge and technology creation in areas that would enable African countries to improve governance and competitiveness" (duties and responsibilities of African universities): (Nkuhlu, p 6)
- B) To achieve the same goals, arise "other duties and challenges for African tertiary education institutions to take the centre stage in order to become a knowledge base":
- to instill into the education system and Africa's youth, a culture of excellence and thirst for genuine knowledge and skills ("arm themselves with science");
 - training of (primary and secondary level) teachers;
 - improvements in peasant farming through high quality research programmes and policies;
 - need to provide a platform for intellectual rigor on issues of critical importance to Africa's development, including peer learning and knowledge sharing, both within and outside the continent;

Prof. W. Nkuhlu " (p 5) believes that "conditions for soliciting additional funding for higher education from governments and the international community have never been better. Such belief is anchored on the assumption – rather the conviction – that "the paradigm that precipitated reduction of funding for universities is dying" (sic!). The former Chief Executive of NEPAD Secretariat, thus, goes on urging managers and stakeholders of African tertiary institutions for learning (and research) to reposition their institutions appropriately "in the context of the AR, the AU and NEPAD" (p 6): which would also imply increased preparedness and ability to take advantage of opportunities which might stem at the level of Regional Economic Communities as well as out of the "NEPAD dialogue with the developed countries and multilateral development finance institutions" (Ibid, Idem)

For a number of reasons, it appears rather difficult to share Prof. Nkuhlu's (immoderate?) optimism about the issue of funding opportunities made available in the above-referred global context...

II – CHALLENGES FOR AFRICANISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULA AND RESEARCH POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

1. Other structural gaps and bottlenecks which account for the irrelevance and unresponsiveness of African universities

1.1. A symptomatic case study: situation in SADC: 63 institutions for a population of about 210 millions: “low levels of matriculation into both secondary and tertiary education institutions; high prevalence rates for HIV and AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis; serious (cyclical) food shortages; acute scarcity of scientists and technicians; brain drain: thousands of medical doctors, accountants, scientists in high priority fields, leave annually for developed countries”, in search for greener pastures and/or working and living conditions more suitable to their own needs, aspirations, interests, affinities and convictions... [Cf. Nkuhlu: *Ibidem*].

1.2. Other major challenges and stakes

1.2.1. Liberalisation and privatization of Higher Education

[See: paper presented by Teboho Moja at the same Conference]:

A) Policy responses to global transformation in Higher Education:

They include:

- (worldwide) need to implement substantive reform in order to adapt to a context whereby the knowledge-based economy has become the motor for economic growth and competitiveness.
- critical issues to be addressed in that respect: quality; expansion; access; funding; technology.

In the framework of discussions occurred during the above mentioned Conference, were identified [Tiyambe Zeleza], some consequences of the paradigm shift from the “development university” of the 60’s/70’s to the “market university” of the 80’s/90’s, in terms of threats as well as opportunities, for the development of African universities, research centres and conditions of scholarship. These include: threats to academic freedom becoming more economic and less political (T. Moja), in addition to other manifestations and consequences of the liberalization process: i) growth of private universities; ii) privatization of programs and funding sources; iii) issue of affordability of higher education (tuition fees, books and other learning materials including accessibility of ICT facilities and other research requirements); hence the issue of students’ loans etc. (B. Thaver)...

For P. Robinson et. Al, opportunities have emerged in the area of technology and academic exchange, being one success story: the Curriculum Co-Development Project in the area of transnational e-learning, between Tufts

University, Makerere and the University of Dar Es Salaam; together with new opportunities for distance education provided by ICTs, under the condition to adequately address some major challenges and stakes: “global competitiveness; growing autonomy in the range of programmes provided (autonomy meaning essentially Africanness); increased efficiency/competitiveness of delivery infrastructure and organizational models and capacity”. [G. Adekanmbi: *Ibidem...*]

In the same framework, the presentation by Michael Cross and Sepideh Rouhani has contributed substantially to document the positioning of South Africa and UNISA in particular, as “preferred destinations for transnational staff and student mobility”. Obviously, such a fact could not be understood without reference to some historical and structural reasons related to the legacy of South Africa’s colonial past, in the framework of Apartheid multi-faceted hegemonism, as a former watchdog for Western interests and a sub-system of subjugation of African countries and their peoples in the SADC region and on the continent.

Finally, issues of the brain drain and the role of the African intellectual Diaspora were also tackled, namely by Uwem Itse (*“Return to Sender: Using the African Intellectual Diaspora to Establish Academic Links”*) and by Cassandra R. Veney (*“Building on the past: African and American linkages in the 21st century”*) [See: pp. 263/279]. One possible way out would consist in “mediating the double process of globalization of African academia and Africanisation of global scholarship”; the reality of this assertion having been further validated by some recommendations and resolutions of the Dakar October 2004 Conference of African Intellectuals from the Continent and the Diaspora and by a crucial initiative in the area of African scholarship such as the NEPAD Council initiative.

2. Structural and epistemological bottlenecks for “Africanisation of global scholarship and globalization of African scholarship”

2.1. The Double Gap Syndrome

If we agree that one of the primary roles of both Education and School is to form citizens and prepare them for their harmonious insertion in society, then, it seems that most of African learning and training institutions have, in many respects, failed to fulfil such objective: failure to bridge the gap between School on the one hand and, on the other hand, the family milieu, society at large and the labour market in particular; but also, failure to help build and consolidate a genuine African awareness and consciousness, as a cornerstone for African Renaissance.

In that respect, Higher Education is no exception.

In our own view, that situation has a lot to do with inappropriate curricular contents and methodologies of research in most African Higher Education institutions, especially in anthropology and historiography, as specific disciplines and fields of research and knowledge in social sciences. Indeed, beyond these two disciplines, until recently, the general picture could have been broadly described in terms of a *strategic vacuum* in the field of both political and scientific discourses and thought in Africa:

- At the level of scientific research, beyond the general lack of adequate infrastructure and conditions, as a consequence of inappropriate research policies, the prevailing tradition still owes a lot to the dominant paradigm of “research for research’s sake”, what Prof. Theophile Obenga calls the non intentional social sciences paradigm; i.e.: research and scientific activity mostly disconnected with or rather unresponsive to African peoples’ aspirations and needs, as well as to major challenges facing our continent;
- At the level of political discourse and thought, also prevailed, in most instances, a rather wide gap, due to a certain degree of ignorance or lack of appropriate information about Africa’s historical, anthropological, cultural realities.

A number of conditions and factors seem to be accountable for such a situation, being one of them related to the existence of a methodological gap in social sciences in general, particularly in anthropology and historiography. Among the problems encountered in that field are:

- i) imbalances and biases at the level of sources (tendency to favor foreign and written sources);
- ii) lack of autonomy and in most instances, alienation of African research and researchers;
- iii) inadequate methodologies of research, with a deepening conceptual confusion, aggravated by inflation of concepts and terminologies and the tendency to nationalization of intellectual perspectives;
- iv) inappropriate and often discriminatory use of concepts and terminologies such as “Tribe”, “Clan”, “Dialect”; all of which account for the existence of
- v) theoretical biases and traps as a result of Eurocentric perspectives and approaches imposed upon most of their African counterparts by the often unchallenged hegemony of Western academic gurus, “specialists”, “africanists”, whose degree of familiarity with African realities, languages and cultures appears to be very limited, in most instances.

Within such a context, many of African researchers and academics could legitimately aspire to no other status than that of intellectual and cultural “zombies”, “learned parrots” or “talkative shadows”, whose sole heritage is many centuries of recitation/repetition and mea culpa, and who always arrive at intellectual/cultural gatherings, bear handed and empty headed, as a result of individual and collective renunciation any intellectual autonomy or initiative.

Hence, on the one side, Africa’s prevailing “lethargic absence” or symbolic presence at major cultural and intellectual gatherings, in the world of to-day; and, on the other side, the fact that most of our national educational systems continue to produce non citizens: another breed of cultural monsters, who are “neither meat nor fish” or, in other words, neither African nor something else: indeed, a stifling factor for both self identification and nation building in Africa, to-day.

At societal level, those distortions in our image of self as well as in the way we perceive our relationship to other peoples, beyond other structural causes related to the socio-economic living conditions of African masses, account in many ways for social and political evils such as “Tribalism”, “Black on Black violence”, the prevalence of certain extreme forms of male chauvinism (rape, women and child abuse), together with the very serious crisis of the African family, as witnessed in many instances. At a more global level, the distorted and negative image forged and disseminated over centuries about our continent and its peoples, also accounts, to a large extent, for the current state of affairs in Africa, particularly regarding its historical setbacks and ongoing marginalization, on the world stage.

2.2. Limitations of educational research policies and programmes

If, in spite of some encouraging trends towards transformation and success stories scored in that area, education in general and in particular Higher education can rightfully, continue to be labeled as, “per se, the area of cultural conflicts in Africa”, such a fact has a lot to do with the limitations of educational research, due to scarcity of resources allocated to research for the development of African IES/indigenous educational systems and, generally, the lack of interest for such IES, on the part of our educationists, teachers, professors, curricula developers and on the part of African researchers themselves. Such a situation is all the more paradoxical in that, as elsewhere, those IES have always performed a critical and irreplaceable role in the process of education, training and socialization of the African child in the 0 to 6 age group.

Furthermore, if we consider the still hegemonic role in most of our educational systems, of former colonial languages as a medium of teaching and training, at the expense of African national languages, in addition to the absence of a true reform of the curricular contents, therefore, it does not come as a surprise that

education in general and particularly Higher education, continues to be per se, “the area of cultural conflicts in Africa” and why, almost nowhere on our continent, has access to education become a mass phenomenon. This is shown by the worrying tendency to high illiteracy levels among African populations, in many cases.

2.3. Role of history and historiography

We all know of the importance of history and historiography (the way History is told, taught and perceived), especially in strategies of domination as well as in those for political emancipation. According to Pr. J.F.A.Ajayi, the role of historiography is not only to enable the explanation and comprehension of all events and facts which make up history; moreover, it also has to deal with the way in which the totality of those same events and facts are perceived individually and collectively, within a given society. In other words, particularly for a people subjected to foreign subjugation, it is of paramount importance to understand how its current situation came to be what it is. More importantly still, is the capacity for that people to identify in both its history and current situation, the major tendencies as well as alternative models and references for the future.

Hence the function fulfilled by historical collective memory as the womb for an alternative identity and image of self as a people, and, therefore, as a potentially subversive space for political initiative and self re-assertiveness. As a consequence, it becomes urgent for African peoples to launch a cultural revolution in order to mentally free themselves from the shackles of psychological bondage. This implies a concerted effort in order to correct the falsified versions of history as told or written by others, in order to achieve a greater and more effective autonomy for African historical and political consciousness, the main objective being, not a rehabilitation of African history as such, but rather to enable African people to “know and understand exactly what happened, how and why it did happen”.

Such a project consists in a double process of (re)conquest or restitution:

- reconquest by African people of their historical and political memory (pharaonic as well as post-pharaonic and African Diaspora heritage), to lay the foundation for the alternative project of society and civilization embedded in the African Renaissance worldview and initiative;
- reconquest by the African political as well as intellectual elites, of self-confidence and trust in their own capacities.

III - AFRICANISATION PROCESS AND DE-COLONIZATION OF AFRICA'S IMAGE AND OF THE DISCOURSE ON AFRICA

1. For an African-centered perspective in research and curricular contents - contribution of the African scientific School of thought

1.1. The Founder: Cheikh Anta Diop

1.1.1. Political and intellectual profile of the militant for the African Cause

Born in Senegal in 1923, Prof. Cheikh Anta Diop has always been a tireless defender for the cause of Africa as well as oppressed peoples throughout the world. A genuinely committed Pan-africanist, he was one of the first of his generation to clearly articulate the need for political independence and unity for Africa, after a documented proposal for intensive reforestation of the continent, within the framework of a global strategy for combat to drought and environmental preservation, in the early 50's.

As early as in the 60's, he further tried, in a concerted and well documented effort, to draw the attention of African leaders, Heads of States in particular, as well as that of international public opinion, to the nuclear threat represented for the collective security of the continent by the then apartheid regime, in its attempt to build around Pelindaba and Koeberg, a nuclear arsenal that would enable it with the capacity to target any point on the African continent with a nuclear missile.

From an intellectual point of view, Prof. Diop underwent pluri-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary training in many fields of knowledge such as history, linguistics, anthropology, egyptology and philosophy. He was, in the first instance, a specialist in nuclear physics, having, in that respect, established in Dakar and managed, until his death on 7th February 1986, the radiocarbon laboratory for dating of archeological and paleontologic artifacts, where other radiometric methods such as potassium argon were also in use, making it possible to achieve absolute chronologies in dating processes.

Dr. Diop was one of the most outstanding members of the international scientific committees established by UNESCO for both a General History of Africa and a new version of the History of Humanity. In that respect, he made an outstanding and challenging contribution to the Cairo Colloquium (February 1974) on "The population of Ancient Egypt and the deciphering of Meroitic writing system". He was also Chairperson for the Association of Black Researchers and Scientists and full Professor in history at the university of Dakar, now renamed after him. During the World Festival on Black Arts and Cultures in Dakar (1966), Prof Cheikh Anta Diop co-shared with another key African giant, Prof. W.E.B. Dubois, the Award to the Black Scientist whose work most positively impacted on the education of the Black youth and people, in the XXth century.

1.1.2. the man and his work: purpose, principles and methodology of research

Once again, the major challenge consists in creating conditions in order to adequately respond to the double need:

- to assign a clear political objective to scientific research in Africa, in natural as well as in social and human sciences; and
- to confer political thought and discourse with consistent and effective knowledge about Africa's historical as well as anthropological and cultural realities, by means of research conducted from a scientific, Afro-centric perspective.

As put by José Do Nascimento, if Prof. Diop's aim is to lay out the scientific foundations for the consolidation of an all-African political and historical consciousness, the major concern or purpose of his work aims at the creation of the objective conditions for the renaissance of Africa in general, as a scientific, technological as well as an economic and political pole of initiative and decision making on its own, in the world of to-day and to-morrow.

It is also important to state that Prof. Diop's work reflects a careful scrutiny and profound knowledge of Africa's history and the realities of its peoples, their cultures, lifestyles, value systems and other systems of representations stemming from their inter-relation with their own habitats and environment.

Dr. Diop's contribution to African as well as world historiography could be summarized through the scientific establishment of two assertions or thesis:

- that Africa is the cradle of humankind and human civilization;
- that, beyond undeniable specificities, there exists a deep historical, linguistic as well as anthropological and cultural unity between all African peoples.

1.2. Conceptual independence and maturity

According to Cheikh Anta Diop, there is an urgent need to undertake a cultural revolution in the sense of the re-activation of African creativity in the fields of exact as well as social sciences, whereby what is most needed is a historical perspective without which African studies might be subject, still for a long time to come, to ongoing ineffectiveness and irrelevance. As a matter of fact, in the present situation, despite some progress, African research globally remains as inconsistent as the personality of many Africans subject to individual and collective amnesia, and whose vision of African history does not exceed the 15th century: beyond this temporal limit, extends a dark night era, in the way most Africans of today perceive their own history.

To be successful, the process of reformatting the hearts and minds of African peoples - particularly African women and youth – requires a deliberate,

qualitative change in the perspectives and conceptual tools used for research in social sciences.

Since the International Cairo Colloquium, whose debate was undoubtedly dominated by two African scholars – Profs. Cheikh Anta Diop and Theophile Obenga, the scientific establishment of the two aforementioned assertions - on Africa's contribution to human Civilization and on the historical and cultural unity of its peoples - has now become a matter of evidence universally accepted, except by some nostalgic Western scholars and their African counterparts. Besides, such scientific fact is becoming a fact of historical and political consciousness for a growing number of Africans on the continent and throughout the Diaspora.

In the study of African societies, the two assertions established by Prof. Diop and his disciples may have a number of relevant methodological implications:

- At a synchronic (horizontal) level, given the fundamental historical and cultural unity between African societies and peoples, therefore, it is impossible to understand and, let alone, explain any part of Africa in its own respect, out of its global continental context;
- From a diachronic (historical) point of view, a permanent dialectical movement is necessary between contemporary Africa and Egyptian antiquity, insofar as the intellectual journey back to Egypt and Nile valley civilizations, makes it possible to understand many aspects of African contemporary societies; at the same time, the nature of contemporary Africa provides conceptual tools for the relevant interpretation of ancient Egyptian realities, re-framing them back into their own African context.

Only then, shall it be possible to overcome what Prof. Obenga calls the “anarchic dispersal of contents”, and the current state of relative intellectual underdevelopment of African research in social and human sciences, still dominated by monographic and fragmented perspectives, without any historical depth nor cultural consistency. At the same time, such perspective founded by Prof. Diop, provides a new framework and scheme for the analysis and interpretation of the relationship between African and other peoples of the world.

To give one good example of how to best perpetuate and expand Prof. Cheikh Anta Diop's intellectual legacy, we shall refer to the ANKH Journal of African civilizations, edited by Prof. Obenga with the involvement of a group of young, well-trained, sharp and conscious African researchers, most of whom also very active within the Shabaka association.

The first issue of the ANKH Journal – regularly published since February 1992, includes, among other very well-researched, interesting articles, a presentation of the laser AmonFont, invented by Cheikh Mbacke and Samory Candace Diop, a computer software programme for the composition of hieroglyphic texts on Macintosh computers, in addition to a summary by its

author, young Cameroonian physicist Jean Paul Mbelek, of his book published in 1991, under the title of “Photons and gravitons – incompleteness of the equations of electro-dynamics and gravitation”. Dr. Mbelek proposes a reformulation of the Rutherford Soddy axiomatic law on the disintegration of radioactive nucleuses, with important implications in the areas of nuclear physics, radioactivity theory and cosmo-chronology, particularly for the determination of the age of the solar system and the study of nucleo-synthesis processes in the stars. The author also succeeds in recapturing and reintroducing the African concept of Nun (the original materia prima), as an operational, modern concept, in the area of cosmology.

The example represented by Dr. Mbelek and his companions of the ANKH Journal, portrays to some respect, what Prof. Derrick Swartz meant when referring to the need for African intellectuals to “grow on our own” and, above all, the need to mature intellectually while growing. This is one precondition for African people , specially African academics and scholars, to reconquer their rightful place as full citizens, in the global world of to-day and to-morrow.

What is at stake here is, indeed, a qualitative change in the methodologies of research in social sciences, with considerable impact in the area of political thought and in African peoples’ perception of their own image, inasmuch as such a change of perspective, also paves the way for a more consistent effort for mental liberation and self-assertiveness. Yet, such requirement needs to be extended to all fields of human knowledge and social experience, more so because true liberation or progress is, according to Guy A. Kouassigan, not only “expansion of self” but also and above all, a process of self-assertiveness and self-consolidation, being each people, the primary source and agent for their own liberation.

1.3. Intellectual and political relevance of “African Africa”

1.3.1. Need for a critical assessment and re-appraisal

In most instances, the Africa referred to in this paper, is the *African Africa*, i.e.: Africa which is still itself and continues to abide by its own rules, principles and value systems, beyond and in spite of foreign domination or influences.

Far from the too often portrayed so-called mosaic of conflicting “tribes”, alien and hostile to each other, and speaking all kinds of strange “dialects” in stead of true languages, such Africa displays, beyond undeniable specificities, as a result of the universal law of uneven rhythm and pace in historical development, from one society to another and even within the same social formation, a profound unity between its peoples, from a historical, cultural, linguistic and anthropological point of view.

As regards political and institutional patterns of organization, in the African Africa, the conception of political power clearly differentiates between the notion of power as such, in terms of a crude capacity of coercion, on the one side and, on the other side, that of authority, considered as both the foundation

of the legitimacy and the cornerstone of real power. As well documented, such African conception of power, is conceived and organized around key notions such as: *Ubuntu* (humanity as both an ontological category or status and a political and ethical principle); and *Maat* (justice, truth, equity, righteousness).

The same not only acknowledges some basic principles such as the principles of separation and balance of power, those of representation and decentralisation; it also recognises and protects constitutional rights for minorities, foreigners and of course women.

As a matter of fact, it is also well documented that, beyond and in spite of undeniable differences from one African society to another, due to specificities in their own modes of production, lifestyles and habitats, one rather commonly shared anthropological trait is a certain matricentrality as a key organizing principle for social relations. Meaning that many African pre-colonial societies were centred around – not dominated by - women, despite the general tendency to male hegemony, in many instances of decision making and political power, at the central level. Not only such societies acknowledged and granted constitutional rights to women in many respects; moreover, certain rights and privileges could – and somehow, still can be transmitted only through women, according to the positions held in their respective “matrilineages”. Among those rights and privileges are: land property rights and the eligibility to certain political functions or titles, etc.

1.3.2. Investigating and operationalising African Indigenous knowledge and educational systems

As ancestors of humankind and human Civilization, African peoples have also produced discourses about their own practices. Hence the need, especially for African scholars, to (re) discover, recapture and re-actualize the gnoseologic and theoretical principles underlying their own discourses on God, the being, society, politics, as well as on economics or the nature of power.

For example: we all agree that dialectics is nothing but the theory of change and of the specific. So being, we only need to go back to the solar theory of power and creation in khemitic (ancient Egyptian) thought, as regards, in particular, the complex relationship between the concepts of “Nun” or original materia prima and those of “RoMut” (conscience coming out of matter in its transformational phase) and “Neter” (active principle of change and categorial transformation), in order to understand that African people did not wait for Marx - let alone for African marxists, to discover and adequately formulate in a scientific manner, and for the first time in history, some of the basic principles and laws which govern the relationships between matter and conscience.

As demonstrated by Prof. Pathe Diagne, the African continent was the theater of a history of knowledge as old as the world; “and whose singularity should be stressed not in terms of a racial phenomenon as such, but rather as a purely cultural and historical one”. As a matter of fact, “there exist a number of discourses characteristic of the African world view on economics, society,

politics, the State, ethics, aesthetics, theology, God, death and life, or about the equilibrium of communities together with their cultures in the world”. Obviously, the specificities of this intellectual context, particularly its varied discourses and orders of discourses, “could escape neither the mark of time and history nor diversity, nor even contradictions or conflicting interests”.

Nevertheless, it is possible today to retrace, through space and time, and to reconstruct the continuity and the coherence of such African thought and discourse, demarcating them from the Indo-European as well as from the Semitic, epistemological contexts. We also need to bear in mind that the first significant epistemological revolution in history took place within the context of pharaonic Egypt; and also that, out of such original context, the same scientific spirit of observation, experimentation and conceptualization which gave birth to mathematics, astronomy, geometry and to monumental architecture, never deserted the African peoples and societies, as proven in many respects, throughout the history of knowledge in post-pharaonic contexts, including in the African Diaspora.

Therefore, to contend building a “theory of development, democracy or social progress” while ignoring such African national thought and knowledge, would be the same as digging under our own feet, a vacuum of several millennium which could be filled by no political or scientific dissertation, learned and brilliant as such a dissertation might be.

Within a context whereby, a clear cut distinction exists between the superficial knowledge (or approach) about realities and facts, on the one hand and, on the other hand, the deep or inner knowledge (or approach), which is assumed to be the only way to attain scientific knowledge, it is generally recognized to the old man bending under the weight of years of experience and acquired wisdom, the faculty of seeing very far away, whereas the adolescent standing on his tip toes, stares blindly at the horizon. Underlying such assumption, is the very nature of the dialectical relationship identified by Antonio Gramsci, between the organic intellectual and his people, being the latter a collective intellectual on its own right and, as such, the principal source of inspiration of the former, out of its socio-historical experience.

2. Major challenges and stakes in the perspective of NEPAD and the African Union

2.1. Establishment of “think tanks” and data bases of African expertise and best practices

The availability of and accessibility to an intellectual expertise constitutes a powerful factor in order to achieve the growth, development and other objectives of NEPAD and the AU. In that respect, UNISA and the CARS should actively involve themselves in major initiatives such as the project for

establishment of an African Agency for Sciences and the definition at continental level, of a common policy on science and scientific research, with respective programs and strategies of implementation.

Beyond those two issues, African Tertiary education institutions and research centers could use their intellectual and other institutional capacities, in order to fulfill with NEPAD and the AU, the role of both think tanks, watchdogs and resource institutions, either in the implementation and monitoring of their activities, or and in drawing the political leadership's attention to some issues which might have been, not yet contemplated or inadequately formulated in the NEPAD and AU documents.

Among the tasks to be addressed in that respect are:

- The need to “deconstruct” certain concepts such as “Globalization”, against Africa’s strategic interests and to propose an approach of the same on our own terms, so as to make them more intelligible and transparent and, therefore, more manageable by African peoples and their leadership as a whole.
- The need to clarify the issue of the model of development more suitable for the reconstruction and socio-economic development of African economies and societies: productive model and the finalities of production; strategies and models for industrialization at sub-regional and continental level; strategies and modalities of integration of various economic sectors; strategies and modalities for the organization of an intra-African economic market and trading system; consumption models in Africa, etc.

2.2. Cultural dimension of African Renaissance

2.2.1. “African Africa” as a key element for a new paradigm for viable statehood, nation building and sustainable development

2.2.1.1. Image awareness and image building and challenges in Social sciences

In the analysis of the reasons which account for the current state of affairs in Africa, particularly as regards its historical setbacks and ongoing marginalization on the world scene, one should take full consideration of and adequately address the issue of the negative image forged and disseminated over centuries, about our continent and its peoples.

How to get rid of the distortion and “ghettoization” of the all Africa image in the dominant discourses, textbooks and world mainstream media, by way of monopolistic confiscation and manipulation of information and knowledge systems, particularly through curricular contents, textbooks and research in Social sciences, through its approaches, methodologies and operative tools?

The task consisting of undoing the bad image of Africa and replacing it with a positive one, based on a more adequate, less biased assessment of the historical experience and operational value of the cultural patrimony of the African People as a factor of development should, in our view, constitute one of the priorities of the NEPAD Communication Strategy. This task represents a multidimensional endeavour, whose success shall depend, to a great extent, on the way in which are addressed the variety of factors which account for the prevalence of such a negative image, among African peoples themselves and elsewhere on the world stage.

Obviously, the success for the cultural initiative in order to win back the minds and hearts of African people – especially youth and women – back into self-knowledge, self esteem and self confidence, supposes the production of an alternative scientific discourse with the capacity to uproot what Kwame Nkrumah calls the « social effects of imperialist domination », and in the first place, the many ideological myths and mystifications deeply rooted, under the disguise of « scientific truths », in the minds of African people, by means of distortion of their historical reality, culture and image.

In that process, two major issues have to be addressed :

- the need to adequately picture in its entirety and various sequences, the whole African historical process, from the Nile Valley civilizations through to the remaining post-pharaonic areas of civilization, including the experience of the African Diaspora in the “New World”, Africa’s contribution to world History, not only as the cradle of humankind and human Civilization, but also through our contribution to Western economic wealth, since the Atlantic slave trade, the phase of primitive accumulation and the pre-mercantile period through to the industrial revolution, colonialism and the current post-colonial situation; and, above all,
- the necessity for a clear and convincing explanation on reasons behind Africa’s historical and cultural decline, as a result of confiscation and subversion, through foreign domination, of its historical process and cultural personality. The importance of the Slave trade should be stressed here, considering its pivotal role in the whole process and in the discourses of denigration against our continent as well as the psychologically negative impact of both the said process and discourses on most Africans, to-day.

At a subjective level, emphasis should also be laid on the unity of African peoples and cultures and on the African resistance, in the dissemination of a positive image and the bid to shape common references, values and principles, as a driving force, for implementation of NEPAD and the AU. As a matter of fact, to be successful, NEPAD and the AU shall be implemented neither by Mozambicans, Senegalese, nor Algerians, but by healthy, well trained,

conscious and genuinely committed African citizens. Therefore, given the role still played in the present context, by ignorance and opportunistic manipulation of narrow nationalistic feelings and symbols by certain African politicians, a major role should be devoted to information and education, for the emergence and consolidation of an African conscience and identity, based on the cognizance of the profound cultural, historical and linguistic unity of African peoples, despite their specificities and differences.

Institutions such as UNISA and the Centre for African Renaissance Studies could also bring a valuable contribution to that, using available publishing facilities, NTIC, cartoons, etc., and in close collaboration with NEPAD's and the African Union's information-communication services.

2.2.1.2. The African legacy and the regulatory framework

Many African legal and judiciary systems of to-day, are still grappling with serious problems of accessibility and effectiveness, some of which being closely related to socio-cultural factors, encountered in the contexts of their implementation. But, according to many analysts, the primary causes of some of these problems are of a structural nature and should, therefore, be sought after at the very core of the same legal and judicial systems, i.e. in their own make-up, most of whom are exclusive of principles, values, mechanisms enshrined in the pre-colonial African institutional and political legacy and best practices, as revealed, beyond any possible scientific doubt or contestation, by authors pertaining to the African school of scientific research and thought founded by the late Pr. Cheikh Anta Diop.

Another challenge facing the African legislator lies in the difficulty to reconcile and merge, notably at national level and within the African Parliament, different sources such as the British common Law and the Napoleonic legacy.

In order to overcome such a problem together with the often referred to *structural dualism* of many African legal or judiciary systems, there is, therefore, the need, to (re) discover, recapture and re-actualize the principles underlying those discourses and practices, including in the shaping of modern institutions and definition of their functional modalities. Through its research activities and publications, the CARS (Centre for African Renaissance Studies) can also contribute to this process.

2.2. 2. Irreplaceable role of African national languages

History has taught us that no people has ever achieved real freedom, democracy or social progress, using exclusively or predominantly, languages understood by a minority of their members. Of course, the solution to this crucial problem does not reside in the exclusion of foreign languages, but rather, in the establishment of concrete institutions and mechanisms with adequate powers and resources to qualitatively transform the global

sociolinguistic picture of our continent, from a situation of vertical (or unequal) pluri-linguism to that of coordinated or horizontal (equitable) pluri-linguism. Consequently, the linguistic issue should be addressed without delay, in order to guarantee ownership by African peoples at all levels, starting with the grassroots, of the NEPAD and African Union processes.

The adoption of Swahili as an official language for the AU, opens up promising perspectives for African global leadership to undertake the necessary measures for the generalization of political as well as scientific discourses in African national languages, at all levels. In this process, African universities and research centers such as UNISA and the CARS could bring a major contribution in designing a long term linguistic policy at continental level and in actions of promotion, through research activities, publications and other media, of the social use of those languages.

2.3. Reform, empowerment and involvement of African universities and research centres in the perspective of NEPAD and the AU

The following proposals and suggestions are only indicative of some of the priorities and challenges to be addressed in the area of research in social sciences, in order to achieve such objectives.

- **Taking science and research seriously**

In the first instance, African Governments, through competent bodies and instances in NEPAD and the AU, should start taking scientific research more seriously, by defining in that area, common policies and programs with respective operative strategies for their implementation, and by creating the institutional and infrastructural conditions and allocating, adequate financial and human resources, among others, for the same purpose. This includes addressing the need to consolidate or revive existing or former African centres of excellence such as Makerere, Legon, Fort Hare etc., and to establish new ones such as the University for Africa's Future in Senegal. Therein, shall be mobilized, in adequate living and working conditions, the best of African "brains", tasked with the production, in the areas of fundamental as well as applied research, of operational responses to major challenges facing our continent and its peoples.

- **Establishment of departments for African Civilization Studies** in all African universities and Higher education institutions (Africa and the Diaspora), with multidisciplinary and trans-disciplinary research teams and networks, organized and empowered at national, sub-regional, continental and African (including in the Diaspora), as well as provincial and local levels.
- **Close cooperation between African universities and research teams,** with institutions such as UNISA and the CARS acting as both catalysts and resource institutions, in the process for the establishment and coordination of African centres of excellence, particularly in the area of

research in social sciences: in fundamental as well as in applied research, in exact sciences as well as in humanities and other social sciences.

- **Reinforcement and dissemination, as cornerstone for an alternative intellectual paradigm for scientific research and thinking and for the education of African people, of the works of the African school of thought inspired by Pr. Cheikh Anta DIOP**, using all means available, including NTIC and translations, particularly in Swahili and other African National languages, including those in use throughout the Diaspora.