

## Historical Writing in Postcolonial Africa: The Institutional Context

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The most voluminous and most influential publications in African history appear in North America and Europe, though a significant portion of this literature is authored by scholars born in Africa, whose outlooks and preoccupations draw both on their African upbringing and their expatriate experience.<sup>1</sup> But this scholarship should not eclipse that historical writing in sub-Saharan Africa, after decades of apparent decline, is now expanding and articulating new and influential approaches to the African past. A new era is opening, and to assess its direction, significance, and context, we need to assess its trajectory in the *longue durée*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The authors express appreciation to IJAHs editor Michael DiBlasi for support in editing of this study, and to anonymous reviewers, one of whom provided especially extensive and insightful comments.

<sup>2</sup> For work that in part or in whole covers the work of African historians working in Africa, see Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Historiographie et histoire de l'Afrique en Afrique: de l'enseignement à la recherche," in *La recherche en histoire et l'enseignement de l'histoire en Afrique centrale francophone* (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 1997); William G. Martin and Michael West, eds., *Out of One, Many Africas: Reconstructing the Study and Meaning of Africa* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); E. S. Atieno-Odhiambo, "From African Historiographies to an African Philosophy of History," in Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings, *Africanizing Knowledge: African Studies across the Disciplines* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2002), 13–64; Ebiegberi Joe Alagoa, *The Practice of History in Africa: A History of African Historiography* (Port Harcourt, Nigeria: Onyoma Research Publications, 2006); Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Afrique noire: À l'origine de l'historiographie africaine de langue française," *Présence africaine* 173 (2006); Joseph K. Adjaye, "Perspectives on Fifty Years of Ghanaian Historiography," *History in Africa* 35, 1 (2008); Sophie Dulucq, *Écrire l'histoire de l'Afrique à l'époque coloniale (XIXe-XXe siècles)* (Paris: Karthala, 2009); Bethwell A. Ogot, "Rereading the History and Historiography of Epistemic Domination and Resistance in Africa," *African Studies Review* 52, 1 (2009); Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, "L'historiographie africaine en Afrique," *Revue tiers monde* 216, 4 (2013); Andrew Zimmerman, "Africa in Imperial and Transnational History: Multi-Sited Historiography and the Necessity of Theory," *Journal of African History* 54, 3 (2013); René Lemarchand, "Reflections on the Recent Historiography of Eastern Congo," *Journal of African History* 54, 3 (2013); Nicoué Lodjou Gayibor, D. Juhe-Beaulaton, and Moustapha Gomgnimbou, eds., *L'écriture de l'histoire en Afrique: L'oralité toujours en question* (Paris: Karthala, 2013); Ghislaine Lydon, "Saharan Oceans and Bridges, Barriers and Divides in Africa's Historiographical Landscape," *Journal of African History* 56, 1 (2015). For an interesting perspective on scholarship in Kenya through Ogot's experiences, see Bethwell A. Ogot, *My Footprints on the Sands of Time: An Autobiography* (Kisumu Kenya: Anyange Press Limited, 2011).

Historical scholarship in Sub-Saharan Africa, having launched itself as part of a wave of decolonization, and having struggled ahead through a long period of neocolonialism, is now experiencing a wave of scholarly advance that reaffirms the initial effort to decolonize African history, yet balances it with multiple perspectives in critical studies of the African past. Relationships with Africanist scholarship outside the continent, ranging from supportive to dismissive, are becoming more mutually constructive. Work moves ahead in the institutional context of creating path-breaking analysis within under-funded institutions.

This essay argues that while there are no sharp distinctions or continuing debates separating scholars in Africa from those abroad, there are distinctive interests and approaches among scholars on the African continent. These are closely tied to changes in the context in which scholars in Africa are working: what is distinctive about history written in Africa is not a shared cultural “Africanness,” but the context of writing in post-colonial Africa—with all that entails.<sup>3</sup> This article therefore assesses the trajectory of historical scholarship in Africa in a broad chronological perspective in the context of the broader social, economic, and political factors influencing the production of that scholarship.

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<sup>3</sup> In this regard, the analysis here historicizes and reinforces the conclusions in Cylia Nyamweru, “How to Put the ‘African’ Back into African Studies,” *African Arguments* 2 (November 2016), at <http://africanarguments.org/2016/11/02/how-to-put-the-african-back-into-african-studies/>. Authors writing on the conditions for intellectual work in African universities have been critical of the shortage of resources, the lack of support for humanities and social sciences, limitations on free speech and democratic rights, and limits on appointments of national citizens or support for students. We reaffirm the call for stronger institutional support of wide-ranging historical study in Africa; we believe that current and past scholarship in Africa is worthy of greater recognition worldwide. For work on the institutional context for African history written in Africa, see Sherman Mary Antoinette Brown, “The University in Modern Africa: Toward the Twenty-First Century,” *Journal of Higher Education* 61, 4 (1990); Ali A. Mazrui, “Towards Diagnosing and Treating Cultural Dependency: The Case of the African University,” *International Journal of Educational Development* 12, 2 (1992); A. Kom, “Intellectuels africains et enjeux de la démocratie: misère, repression et exil,” *Politique Africaine* 51 (1993); O.O. Onyejekwe, “Some Disturbing Trends in Tertiary Education in Africa,” in I. de Villiers, ed., *Southern African Conference on the Restructuring of Education* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1993); Zygmunt Bauman, “The Present Crisis of the Universities,” in Jerzy Brzezinski and Leszek Nowak, eds., *The Idea of the University* (Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1997); Thandika Mkandawire, “The Social Sciences in Africa: Breaking Local Barriers and Negotiating International Presence,” *African Studies Review* 40, 2 (1997), 15–36; Dominic Boyer, “The African Crisis in Context: Comparative Encounters with Educational Rationalization,” *African Studies Review* 45, 2 (2002); Francis B. Nyamnjoh and Nantang B. Jua, “African Universities in Crisis and the Promotion of a Democratic Culture: The Political Economy of Violence in African Educational Systems,” *African Studies Review* 45, 2 (2002); Joel Samoff and Bidemi Carrol, “The Promise of Partnership and Continuities of Dependence: External Support to Higher Education in Africa,” *African Studies Review* 47, 1 (2004); Akilagpa Sawyerr, “Challenges Facing African Universities: Selected Issues,” *African Studies Review* 47, 1 (2004); Paul Tiyambe Zeleza and Adebayo Olukoshi, eds., *African Universities in the Twenty-First Century*, 2 vols. (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2004), 2: 595–617.

### Historical Studies, 1950–1970

The professional writing of history in Africa—that is, the work of university-based scholars—began in earnest during the 1950s.<sup>4</sup> In the aftermath of World War Two, the British Empire began to transform many of its local technical colleges into more wide-ranging tertiary institutions. Known as the “Asquith Colleges,” these included Gordon College, Khartoum (1946); University College, Ibadan (1947); University College of the Gold Coast (1949); University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (1949); and Makerere College (1949).<sup>5</sup> Chairs in African history were simultaneously created at the renamed School of Oriental and African Studies in London and the University of Ghana at Legon in 1947 and 1948 respectively. Due to its more centralized imperial model of governance, francophone Africa did not mimic this move until after the *loi cadre* of 1956, with institutes in Dakar and Tananarive (as well as Tunis) upgraded to university status from 1957. But what France lacked in institutions of bricks and mortar, it replaced with the unique cultural engine of Paris. *Présence africaine* was founded in 1947 by a group of African and Caribbean intellectuals, and under the direction of Sénégalaise Alioune Diop became a forum for white and black scholars to explore the new world of African history. The journal bridged French intellectual circles with the emerging African intelligentsia and was, at least in its early years, bilingual too. *Présence africaine* continues as a cultural review and a publishing house, with a pan-African approach based among francophone Africans.

The first generation of professional historians of Africa drew on several traditions in developing their interpretations: colonial history written by European authors, precolonial history written by African authors, and popular history as told by griots.<sup>6</sup> They also took inspiration from educated Africans of the moment of European

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<sup>4</sup> This is not to overlook or ignore other forms of history, such as oral traditions or non-professional work. In the Gold Coast alone, see J.E. Casely Hayford, *Gold Coast Native Institutions* (London: Sweet and Maxwell, 1903); J. Mensah Sarbah, *Fanti National Constitution* (London: W. Clowes, 1906); Asantehene Agyeman Prempe I, *The History of the Ashanti Kings and the Whole Country Itself, and Other Writings*, ed. A. Adu Boahen et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003; first published 1907–13); Carl Christian Reindorf, *History of the Gold Coast and Asante, Based on Traditions and Historical Facts, Comprising a Period of More Than Three Centuries from about 1500 to 1860* (Basel: Misionsbuchhandlung, 1895).

<sup>5</sup> In addition, Fourah Bay College, in Freetown, Sierra Leone, was founded in 1827 and was affiliated with Durham University from 1876 to 1967.

<sup>6</sup> We have divided the professional historians of Africa into four generations, corresponding to the four sections of this essay. Many historians have lived long professional lives, but we place them by generation according to the year of their first major publication. On colonial history, see Sophie Dulucq, “Décoloniser l’histoire de l’Afrique: Une impossible entreprise ? L’exemple de l’école d’Ibadan (Nigeria) (1950–1980),” in Sophie Dulucq and Colette Zytnicki, eds., *Décoloniser l’histoire?* (Paris: SFHOM, 2003), 109–22; on the inspiration of precolonial African authors, see Joseph Ki-Zerbo, ed., *General History of Africa*, vol. 1, *Methodology and African Prehistory* (Paris: UNESCO, 1981); on oral tradition, see Jan Vansina, *De la tradition orale: Essai de méthode historique* (Tervuren, Belgium: Musée royale de l’Afrique centrale, 1961). The best known example of the last is Djibril Tamsir Niane, *Sundiata: An Epic*

conquest, including l'Abbé Boilat (Senegal), Edward Blyden (Liberia), Samuel Johnson (Nigeria), John Mensah Sarbah (Gold Coast), and Solomon Plaatje (South Africa).<sup>7</sup> The international collaboration of the early postcolonial period linked African academics with those historians of European origin who similarly devoted themselves to the historical study of African society. Thus, a pioneering historical conference in Dakar resulted in a volume, *The Historian in Tropical Africa* (1964), published in English and French, edited by three Europeans, and with several chapters authored by African scholars.<sup>8</sup> Cheikh-Anta Diop had his laboratory at IFAN under the leadership of Théodore Monod of France; a whole generation of Senegalese scholars studied with Yves Person at the Université Paris I; and Joseph Ki-Zerbo, who produced the first major synthesis of African history in 1972, worked shoulder-to-shoulder with Fernand Braudel.<sup>9</sup> Africa and Europe became twin poles for the exploration of African history. The *Cahiers d'Etudes africaines* in France and the *Journal of African History* in England appeared in 1960, while two new chairs of African history were founded at the Sorbonne shortly thereafter.

The institutionalization of African history in Africa was sudden and widespread, with numerous urban centers offering autonomous universities with active history faculties. West Africa soon became home to vibrant historical work, as scholars like Kenneth Dike, Saburi Buobaku, I.A. Akinjogbin, Ade Ajayi, and Adu Boahen, among others, received their doctorates at British institutions before returning to teach at continental institutions. Studies like Boahen's *Britain, the Sahara and the Western Sudan, 1788–1861* and *Topics in West African History*, as well as Dike's *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830–1885*, quickly became seminal texts for West Africanists.<sup>10</sup> Florence Mahoney, a Gambian, became the first African woman to earn a Ph.D. in history at the same time. The journals of the historical societies of the Gold Coast (Ghana) and Nigeria appeared in 1952 and 1956 respectively. The University of Ghana hosted a wide-ranging program of colloquia and seminars, while

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*of Old Mali* (London: Longmans, 1965); it was first published in French as *Soundjata: Ou l'épopée mandingue* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1960).

<sup>7</sup> L'Abbé David Boilat, *Esquisses sénégalaises* (Paris: Karthala, 1984); Edward W. Blyden, *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race* (London: W.B. Whittingham, 1887); Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas* (London: G. Routledge, 1921); John Mensah Sarbah, *Fanti Customary Laws* (London: W. Clowes, 1897); Sol T. Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa* (London: P. S. King and Son, 1915); Toyin Falola and Saheed Aderinto, *Nigeria, Nationalism, and Writing History* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2010), 3–26.

<sup>8</sup> Jan Vansina, Raymond Mauny, L.V. Thomas, eds., *L'Historien en Afrique tropicale* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

<sup>9</sup> Jean Suret-Canale, *Afrique noire, occidentale et centrale* (Paris: Editions sociales, 1958); Joseph Ki-Zerbo, *Histoire de l'Afrique noire, d'hier à demain* (Paris: Hatier, 1972).

<sup>10</sup> A. Adu Boahen, *Britain, the Sahara, and the Western Sudan, 1788–1861* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964); Boahen, *Topics in West African History* (London: Longmans, 1966); K. Onwuka Dike, *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta, 1830–1885: An Introduction to the Economic and Political History of Nigeria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956).

also hosting the *The Encyclopaedia Africana Dictionary of African Biography* project, headed up by L.H. Ofofu-Appiah.<sup>11</sup> The historical school of Ibadan University, led initially by Dike, flourished from 1955 to 1975. The focus lay largely on recapturing the political and social history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; much of the work served—more or less explicitly, depending on the author—to bolster the new Nigerian nationalism. Major themes included trade and economic history, Christianity in southern Nigeria, Islamic revolutions, and missionaries. Much of the groundwork for the use of oral traditions in West African history was laid. A key feature of the school was its cosmopolitan composition: Nigerians such as Saburi Biobaku, Ade Ajayi, Adiele Afigbo, and E.A. Ayandele worked alongside expatriate scholars, including Michael Crowder, Robert Smith, and John Omer-Cooper.<sup>12</sup> Another major center of historical studies in West Africa developed at the University of Dakar. There, Abdoulaye Ly provided important insights into the then little-studied eighteenth-century slave trade, while Cheikh-Anta Diop's early work, shunned in France, laid the foundation for a career-long articulation of a unitary "Africanness."<sup>13</sup> Both were as deeply involved in politics as they were in historical research, though their perspectives on the Senghor regime differed. Yet even after the late 1960s, when Paris relinquished control over faculty staffing, curricula, pay, and university bureaucracies generally, still the extremely lengthy training times for the French *doctorat d'état* caused Dakar's production to lag behind that of its anglophone counterparts. (S.M. Cissoko became the first Dakar scholar to defend his thesis, which happened only in 1979.) The work of Mbaye Guèye on the Wolof of Kajoor and Ousmane Kane on the Tokolor of Fuuta Toro soon laid the foundation for a strong tradition of ethnographic work.<sup>14</sup>

East Africa likewise became a hub for vibrant historical enquiry. Scholars like Bethwell Allan Ogot and Ali Mazrui soon became regarded as major figures in the field. Ogot's studies of the Luo of Kenya and Mazrui's wide-ranging early work on colonial resistance, Kenyan nationalism, and much more besides, established global reputations that lasted for decades.<sup>15</sup> Until political developments intervened in the

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<sup>11</sup> The project was a continuation of W.E.B. Du Bois's *Encyclopaedia Africana* project. L.H. Ofofu-Appiah, ed., *The Encyclopaedia Africana Dictionary of African Biography*, vol. 1, *Ethiopia-Ghana* (Algonac, MI: Reference Publications, 1977). Volume 2 (1979) addressed Sierra Leone and Zaire; vol. 3 (1995) addressed South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland.

<sup>12</sup> For subsequent commentaries on the Ibadan School, see especially Paul E. Lovejoy, "Nigeria: The Ibadan School and Its Critics," in Bogumil Jewsiewicki and David S. Newbury, eds., *African Historiographies: What History for Which Africa?* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1986), 197–206.

<sup>13</sup> Abdoulaye Ly, *La Compagnie du Sénégal* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1958); Cheikh Anta Diop, *L'Afrique noire pré-coloniale; Étude comparée des systèmes politiques et sociaux de l'Europe et de l'Afrique noire, de l'antiquité à la formation des états modernes* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1960).

<sup>14</sup> For more, see I. Thioub, "L'école de Dakar et la production d'une écriture académique de l'histoire," in Moumar-Coumba Diop, ed., *Le Sénégal contemporain* (Paris: Karthala, 2002). With the death of Cheikh-Anta Diop in 1986, the University of Dakar became the Université Cheikh-Anta Diop.

<sup>15</sup> Bethwell Allan Ogot, *History of the Southern Luo*, vol. 1, *Migration and Settlement, 1500–1900* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967).

late 1970s, a generation of historians—professional or student—was inspired by Ogot’s efforts to reconstruct ethnic pasts of their own, using oral interviews to access diverse topics ranging from peasant life to intellectual history. By the 1970s, the University of Dar es Salaam boasted a faculty that readily spanned the frontiers separating history from the social sciences, and waded into current political debates. Overlapping with John Lonsdale, A.D. Roberts, and John Iliffe, scholars like Abdul Sheriff, Issa Shivji, Walter Rodney, and (later) Ernest Wamba dia-Wamba continued to give the institution a distinctly internationalist outlook in both its intellectual scope and the perspectives of its scholars.

The first generation of African historians launched a replacement of colonial and imperial history with a history of African peoples.<sup>16</sup> The driving notion was that African history could not be reconstituted if it continued to be dominated by Western approaches, lenses, and personnel. From the outset, therefore, the project of recapturing African history was closely tied to the political agenda of African independence in a number of ways. First, as post-colonial elites, politicians, labor leaders, and more advocated the construction of new societies and states, historians scrambled to uncover and articulate the historical bases for those states as a foundation for the new claims to legitimacy. In 1969, Isaria Kimambo and Arnold Temu published their much anticipated *A History of Tanzania*. As the title suggests, the geographical framework of analysis was quite a projection back in time for an entity established only five years prior.<sup>17</sup> Similar projects across the continent either explicitly or implicitly took the new nation-state as their point of departure. Economic historian Castor Osendé Afana took his nationalist politics in a radical direction, and died fighting a guerrilla campaign against the Ahidjo regime in Cameroon.<sup>18</sup> Yet this was not always a unidirectional or monolithic trend. In Ghana, in particular, it was the study of historic local states and empires which proliferated, including work by K.Y. Daaku on the coastal states, J.K. Fynn on the Fante, and M.A. Kwamena-Poh on Akwapem.<sup>19</sup> These studies constituted, at least implicitly, challenges to the core idea that the new nation-state of Ghana had a national origin and essence at all. Other works, like Diop’s *Nations Nègres et Cultures* (1955), were grounded in (and reproduced) what would today be called transnational commonalities among Africans,

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<sup>16</sup> Esperanza Brizuela-Garcia, “African Historiography and the Crisis of Institutions,” in Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, ed., *The Study of Africa*, vol. 1, *Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Encounters* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2006), 135–67.

<sup>17</sup> I.N. Kimambo and A.J. Temu, *A History of Tanzania* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969).

<sup>18</sup> Osendé Afana, *L’économie de l’ouest-africain: Perspectives de développement* (Paris: François Maspero, 1966).

<sup>19</sup> K.Y. Daaku, *Trade and Politics on the Gold Coast, 1600–1720: A Study of the African Reaction to European Trade* (London: Clarendon, 1970); John Kofi Fynn, *Asante and Its Neighbours, 1700–1807* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1971); M.A. Kwamena-Poh, *Government and Politics in the Akuapem State, 1730–1850* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

which ran counter to the state-based identity projects of the day.<sup>20</sup> Though primarily concerned with elevating Africanness through an association with ancient Egypt and thus displacing European knowledge and history from the summit of human experience, Diop's scholarly and political advocacy of a common African identity that transcended the nation-state framework posed a major challenge to the Senghor government (and ultimately landed him in prison).<sup>21</sup> Second, institutions of higher education were seen as central to representing, as well as articulating, the value of the new postcolonial societies. The Department of History at the University College, Dar es Salaam, held a 1965 International Congress of African Historians, including scholars from the continent and overseas, that advanced a continental research agenda.<sup>22</sup> As Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere said in 1967, "The role of a university in a developing country is to contribute; to give ideas, man-power, and service for the furtherance of human equality, human dignity, and human development."<sup>23</sup> Finally, and not unrelatedly, the fortunes and direction of institutions were related to those of their host governments. The University of East Africa serves as a case in point. Its creation, from 1963, reflected the federalizing trends in British decolonizing plans in the region; likewise, its dissolution in 1970 into separately governed and funded institutions as the University of Nairobi, Makerere University, and University of Dar es Salaam represented the final triumph of a nation-state framework for East Africa's future.

Among the first generation of African scholars, there existed a fairly sharp distinction between historical studies and research into current affairs and contemporary policy.<sup>24</sup> Technical experts in newly independent Africa—especially those visiting from overseas—could see almost no useful continuity in African life. As seen from the social sciences, the colonial conquest and the establishment of independent nations severed Africans from all previous historical experience. The goal was to make anew; that was the whole point of postcolonial state-building. Consequently, historians were often cut off from the social sciences and pursued their work of interpreting the past and linking it to the present separately.

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<sup>20</sup> Cheikh Anta Diop, *Nations nègres et cultures* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1955).

<sup>21</sup> These ideas were further developed and more explicitly set out in Cheikh-Anta Diop, *Les Fondements culturels techniques et industriels d'un future état fédéral d'Afrique noire* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1960). The book was later translated as *Black Africa: The Economic and Cultural Basis for a Federated State*, trans. Harold J. Salemson (Westport, CT: L. Hill, 1987).

<sup>22</sup> T.O. Ranger, ed., *Emerging Themes of African History* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1968).

<sup>23</sup> Julius Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism/Uhuru Na Ujamaa* (Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1968), 186.

<sup>24</sup> This was in contradistinction to Africanist scholarship elsewhere. When African Studies Associations were founded in 1958 in the United States and 1963 in the United Kingdom, for instance, they provided common homes for historians, ethnographers, anthropologists, linguists, political scientists, and more.

Yet even among this first generation, differences of approach were emerging. While *négritude* exerted a deep influence on the scholarship of francophone scholars, particularly within the Dakar school, it was widely rejected by English-speaking African scholars. In *The African Image* (1962), Ezekiel Mphahlele identified *négritude* as a form of “reverse racism” that could perpetuate the subjugation of Africans.<sup>25</sup> Subaltern studies were in turn spurned en masse by francophone Africanists.<sup>26</sup> These divides were a harbinger of the sharp differences that would plague the next generation of African historians.

### Society and History, 1970–1990

In the second generation of historical studies in Africa, academic organizations at the continental level—that is, pan-African in scope—took form in the 1970s, and they did so with substantive political support. The Association of African Historians (AAH), led by Sékéné Mody Cissoko of the University of Dakar, formed in 1972 at a conference in Dakar; the President of the Republic of Senegal, Léopold Sédar Senghor, attended. The second congress of the AAH, which met in Yaoundé in 1975, similarly included the participation of the Cameroonian president, Ahmadou Ahidjo.<sup>27</sup> The association launched a bilingual journal, *Afrika Zamani*, published in Yaoundé. In 1973 a more general association of researchers took form: the Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA). Central to its foundation were the efforts of Samir Amin, an Egyptian-born economist who in the 1960s had worked with the Malian government in Bamako and then at the Institut Africain de Développement Économique et de Planification at Dakar. Amin served as the first Executive Secretary of CODESRIA from 1973 to 1975. This was to be a pan-African research organization—independent, multilingual, with an emphasis on the social sciences in broad terms.

Although postcolonial African universities successfully staffed their history departments with Africans and focused on local topics and actors, faculties largely ended up mirroring and replicating European pedagogical norms and institutional forms.<sup>28</sup> There was no sustained emergence of a distinctly African epistemology or

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<sup>25</sup> Ogot, “Rereading the History,” 7. In much the same vein, Wole Soyinka regarded *négritude* as the intellectual luxury of a small Francophone elite. See Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

<sup>26</sup> Coquery-Vidrovitch, “L’historiographie africaine en Afrique,” 117.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph Ki-Zerbo became president of the AAH, a position he held until 2005, when Doulaye Konaté took over.

<sup>28</sup> Amina Mama, “Is It Ethical to Study Africa? Preliminary Thoughts on Scholarship and Freedom,” *African Studies Review* 50, 1 (2007); P. Crossman and R. Devisch, *Endogenisation and African Universities: Initiatives and Issues in the Quest for Plurality in the Human Sciences* (Leuven, Belgium: Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 1999); Adjaye, “Perspectives on Fifty Years of Ghanaian Historiography.”

methodology, as some hoped.<sup>29</sup> Instead the practice of African history became a new geographical subset of established forms of knowledge production. (Concerns that this development inherently perpetuated the devaluing of African culture and history that characterized colonialism has re-emerged in the last few years in the form of the decolonization of history campaign, which will be discussed later.)

The issue of “Africanising” history soon intersected with debates over the emergence of Marxist-influenced approaches in the 1970s. Critics had attacked the first generation of African historians for prioritizing a national framework over a focus on class, capitalism, and theory. From a liberal perspective, Donald Denoon and Adam Kuper laid out and challenged the nationalist stakes for the Dar es Salaam school. This conflict unfolded much as predicted by Terence Ranger before he left the faculty at Dar es Salaam in 1969, with his old department as the epicenter.<sup>30</sup> This was a debate conducted as much over politics as history, notably on the shifting balance between national solidarity and class division in African societies: the emotions on both side were keenly felt, and the language used pointed. Some years after Henry Bernstein and Jacques Depelchin, from within that same institution, described this output as little more than “bourgeois social thought.”<sup>31</sup> Most notably, Issa Shivji launched a trenchant critique of Julius Nyerere’s *ujamaa* campaign, arguing that when one looked beyond ideology at the actual experiences of the working and peasant classes, there was little evidence that any of the much-vaunted transformation of society was in fact happening.<sup>32</sup> Ultimately, the older guard responded that the newcomers’ panacea of Marxist analysis amounted to little more than the introduction of frameworks “that ultimately represented only the Western culture from which they originated.”<sup>33</sup>

A not entirely dissimilar process occurred in Nigeria. As the African post-independence project stagnated, the nationalist narratives generated by the Ibadan school (and reproduced at many other Nigerian institutions) came under sustained challenges. This time the fight was on two fronts: both against Marxian revisionists, and against an Islamist-inspired revisionism pioneered by scholars like Abdullahi Smith.<sup>34</sup> Again, current issues were important to the course of these debates: as

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<sup>29</sup> Bethwell A. Ogot, “Three Decades of Historical Studies in East Africa, 1949–1977,” *Kenya Historical Review* 6, 1–2 (1978).

<sup>30</sup> Ranger, *Emerging Themes in African History*, xxi; Donald Denoon and Adam Kuper, “Nationalist Historians in Search of a Nation: The ‘New Historiography’ in Dar es Salaam,” *African Affairs* 79 (1970), 329–49. It bears noting that Ranger vociferously rejected the idea that a school existed; see Terence Ranger, “The ‘New Historiography’ in Dar es Salaam: An Answer,” *African Affairs* 70, 278 (Jan. 1971), 50–61.

<sup>31</sup> Henry Bernstein and Jacques Depelchin, “The Object of African History: A Materialist Perspective: II,” *History in Africa* 6 (1979), 17. For a more extensive overview of the tensions and shifts in the Dar es Salaam school, see Henry Slater, “Dar Es Salaam and the Postnationalist Historiography of Africa,” in Jewsiewicki and Newbury, *African Historiographies*.

<sup>32</sup> Issa G. Shivji, *Class Struggles in Tanzania* (London: Heinemann, 1976).

<sup>33</sup> Ogot, “Rereading the History,” 17.

<sup>34</sup> Paul E. Lovejoy, “Nigeria: The Ibadan School and Its Critics.”

Nigerian politics became more polarized around issues of nation and faith, the traditions of the Ibadan school generally persisted in southern institutions while the Islamists took hold in the north of the country.<sup>35</sup>

African economic growth declined during the 1970s, as the African debt crisis emerged out of the wreckage of the oil shocks of 1973. To guarantee the repayment of state debt, the World Bank imposed Structural Adjustment Programs on many African countries, thus greatly limiting public services and investment. This was the beginning of Africa's steady shift towards neoliberalism. Within higher education in sub-Saharan Africa, public expenditure per tertiary student fell from \$6,461 in 1975 to \$2,365 in 1983 (in constant 1983 dollars).<sup>36</sup> Student financial awards were restricted or suppressed; the purchase of books and research equipment was limited; buildings were left to deteriorate; hostels overflowed; library budgets and resources were slashed; and professors were forced into early retirement. Conditions further deteriorated throughout the 1980s.<sup>37</sup> By 1990, faculty at Makerere University were being paid just US\$30 a month.<sup>38</sup> In real terms, the University of Dar es Salaam saw its budget slashed by a whopping 76 percent between 1987 and 1989.<sup>39</sup>

This state of affairs was the result of political choices as well as a byproduct of economic contraction. As a rule, as African states became less democratic, "second generation" regimes were more worried about universities' potential as hotbeds of resistance than they were enticed by the prospect of co-opting their intellectual resources, gravitas, and respectability. Spiraling protests like those that unfolded in the mid-1970s at the University of Zambia, a treasured institution in President Kenneth Kaunda's vision of Zambia's future, left a deep impression on his counterparts across the continent. Consequently, even as they were usually successful in encouraging academics to avoid hot-button issues and self-censor, political leaders used reduced funding, denigration, and (if needed) open harassment to neutralize the political dynamism of campuses. To cite just one example, feminist historian Bolanle Awe was appointed to head the National Women's Commission in Nigeria but then subsequently detained and intimidated for refusing to toe the line.<sup>40</sup> Other politically active scholars, like Diop, met with similar fates. Others, like William Ochieng in Kenya,

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<sup>35</sup> Atieno-Odhiambo, "From African Historiographies to an African Philosophy of History," 23.

<sup>36</sup> World Bank, "Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Strategies for Adjustment, Revitalization, and Expansion" (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1988), 143.

<sup>37</sup> For more see *African Studies Review*, Vol. 45, 2, Special Issue: "African Universities in Crisis and the Promotion of a Democratic Culture" (2002); Onyejekwe, "Some Disturbing Trends in Tertiary Education in Africa," p. 5.

<sup>38</sup> Samoff and Carrol, "Promise of Partnership," 70.

<sup>39</sup> Kapepwa I. Tambila, "In Search of Relevance: A History of the University of Dar Es Salaam," in Isaria N. Kimambo, Bertram Baltasar Mapunda, and Yusufu Qwaray Lawi, eds., *In Search of Relevance: A History of the University of Dar Es Salaam* (Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press, 2008), 235.

<sup>40</sup> Amina Mama, "Feminism or Femocracy: State Feminism and Democratisation in Nigeria," *Africa Development* 20, 1 (1995), 53.

took a different path, and worked closely with postcolonial regimes.<sup>41</sup> Overall, African universities came to occupy a paradoxical space in providing homes to both authoritarian ideas and forces, as well as progressive and liberating ones.<sup>42</sup> There was no single story here.

These two factors—a dramatic reduction in the funding of tertiary education, and a sharp increase in the political pressure on independent research—drove a widespread brain drain of academic talent out of Africa.<sup>43</sup> Many African scholars, no less than doctors, engineers, or public servants, resorted to emigration in an effort to find viable working conditions, particularly as the scholarly environment in African universities calcified. Even as their output declined, older professors clung to their privileges and obstructed the emergence of younger, more productive talent.<sup>44</sup> Departments became strictly hierarchical. Promotion metrics did not reward the production of ambitious, far-reaching studies. The tragic result was that more than a few of the landmark historical studies of this era, most notably V.Y. Mudimbe's *The Invention of Africa*, ended up being produced out of the American university system rather than in Africa, where much of the formative thinking had occurred.<sup>45</sup> The list of African scholars who have published much of their work abroad, from Mahmood Mamdani to Mazrui and Toyin Falola, is a long one.

Even in this context, many historians on the continent continued to advance their studies and their publications. The Dakar school entered a new phase in which scholars like Abdoulaye Bathily, Mamadou Diouf, and Cissé Moody Cissoko borrowed theoretical frameworks from the social sciences to understand the ongoing dependence afflicting sub-Saharan Africa. Meanwhile, Boubacar Barry's work illuminated the Atlantic slave trade as a key driver of state formation and Islamist reaction.<sup>46</sup> In its distancing from the postcolonial Senegalese state and an identification instead with a geographically and temporally broader Senegambia, Barry's work reflected a distinctly post-post-independence aesthetic, one shaped by disillusionment with the modern African state. Elsewhere on the continent, A.I. Asiwaju of the University of Lagos added another volume to his list of studies on the social experience of frontiers in Africa in the form of a comparison with frontiers elsewhere.<sup>47</sup> At the same institution, E.J. Alagoa pioneered the study of the societies of

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<sup>41</sup> Ochieng worked as a speechwriter for Daniel Arap Moi.

<sup>42</sup> Nyamnjoh and Jua, "African Universities in Crisis."

<sup>43</sup> Kom, "Intellectuels africains et enjeux de la démocratie."

<sup>44</sup> Coquery-Vidrovitch, "L'historiographie africaine en Afrique," 118.

<sup>45</sup> V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

<sup>46</sup> Boubacar Barry, *Le royaume du Waalo: Le Sénégal avant la conquête* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1972); *La Sénégambie du XVe au XIXe siècle* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1988); Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998).

<sup>47</sup> A.I. Asiwaju, *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations across Africa's International Boundaries, 1884–1984* (London: C. Hurst, 1985).

the Niger delta, particularly the Ijo, and kept oral methodologies at the heart of Nigerian history.<sup>48</sup>

Pioneering historiographical critiques were also advanced by African scholars. In a book-length review of African historiography, Tanzanian historians Arnold Temu and Bonaventure Swai linked European historical literature to debates in African history. While advocating a fresh path for African history, they in fact hewed closely to neo-Marxist lines, rejecting imperial, “bourgeois,” and nationalist approaches. Positivism itself was termed a “cult of facts.”<sup>49</sup> This was emblematic of the trajectory of the Dar department that produced the book, which by the 1980s increasingly focused on underdevelopment debates and politics at the expense of primary research. The impact of the volume was, nevertheless, substantive. A second volume of historiographical review appeared four years later, edited by Bogumil Jewsiewicki and David Newbury. It addressed similar concerns, emphasizing the historiographical analysis of African-born researchers including Ndaywel E. Nziem and Christophe Wondji and featuring historical writing from Nigeria, Senegal, Congo, and South Africa.<sup>50</sup> The tone of both works was one of existential angst. Reading them together today provides the reader with much discomfiture.

Meanwhile, some African departments and university faculties published occasional journals, with little continuity but adding greatly to the total value of scholarship. The Department of Anthropology and History at the l’Université Marien Ngouabi in Brazzaville, lacking almost totally in resources during the 1970s and 1980s, relied on the efforts of Professor Abraham Ndinga-Mbo to publish ten slim volumes of their research results.<sup>51</sup> Up until the 1980s, especially if one includes graduate theses, far more African history was written by Africans in Africa than by French, British, or American-based scholars. Numerous university deposit systems, from Conakry to Dakar to Paris, hold sections of this material, which could prove invaluable for future research.<sup>52</sup>

Benefits for scholars also came through the emergence of external collaboration. African history had now become recognized overseas as well as on the

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<sup>48</sup> Ebiegberi Joe Alagoa, F.N. Anozie, Nwanna Nzewunwa, eds., *The Early History of the Niger Delta* (Hamburg: Buske, 1988).

<sup>49</sup> Arnold Temu and Bonaventure Swai, *Historians and Africanist History: A Critique. Post-Colonial Historiography Examined* (London: Zed, 1981), 111.

<sup>50</sup> Jewsiewicki and Newbury, *African Historiographies*.

<sup>51</sup> *Cahiers congolais d’anthropologie et d’histoire*, vols. 1–20 (Université Marien Ngouabi, Brazzaville, 1977–1985). See also *Annales de la faculté des lettres, arts et sciences humaines, Université nationale du Bénin; Sociétés, espaces, temps; Annales de la faculté des lettres et sciences humaines, Université de Yaoundé; Cahiers ivoiriens de recherche économique et sociale*.

<sup>52</sup> The value of this early work can be seen in the use of the Dossiers du CRISP, published jointly by the Centre de recherche et d’information socio-politiques and the Institut d’études politiques in Kinshasa, recently deployed to great effect in Emizet Francois Kisangani, *Civil Wars in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 1960–2010* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2012). See also Coquery-Vidrovitch, “L’historiographie africaine en Afrique,” 117.

continent. Additional support for scholarship came, for instance, from the publication of the eight volumes of the *General History of Africa*, supported and published by UNESCO. Although publication of the volumes met with significant delays, the project brought together work from many of the continent's top historians in a single forum for the first time.<sup>53</sup> Meanwhile, student scholarships and positions for professors in Europe and North America allowed the continuation and the expansion of African historical studies. In France, scholars like Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch and Elikia M'Bokolo directed numerous theses on African history and sustained contact with former students. In England, numerous universities joined the School of Oriental and African Studies in preparing doctoral students. In the United States, the universities of Wisconsin, Michigan, Northwestern, Boston, UCLA, and other universities attracted young African historians to their vibrant centers of African studies. Numerous of these émigrés were central to sustaining links with scholarly communities on the continent and bolstering their profile. Mazrui, of Kenyan birth, had fled Idi Amin's Uganda in 1974 to become a professor at the University of Michigan, but remained intimately engaged in Ugandan politics. In the aftermath of Nigeria's civil war, Dike had moved to take a position at Harvard University from 1971 to 1978, but then returned to Nigeria.

In two important respects, history production in apartheid South Africa was not entirely dissimilar from that in the institutions to the north. First, universities provided both important support for the political order of the day and housed sharp critics.<sup>54</sup> Until the late 1970s, the "nationalist" school of historiography, comprised of Afrikaners, provided plenty of intellectual buttressing for the ruling myths of the National Party regime.<sup>55</sup> In later years, as the government ideology shifted from Afrikaner exceptionalism to anti-communism, historians at Afrikaans institutions followed suit. The foundation in 1977 of the Institute of Strategic Studies at the University of Pretoria was followed by the Institute for the Study of Marxism at Stellenbosch, as well as the Centre for Investigation into Revolutionary Activities and the Institute on the Total Onslaught, both at the Rand Afrikaans University. All were important ideological props for the P.W. Botha regime; all produced work of very limited global intellectual merit. At the same time, other history departments featured scholars looking to challenge the regime's claim to truth and power, both in scholarship and politics. From the 1970s onwards, sharp historiographical schisms developed over the central issue of why racial segregation in South Africa had developed into the extreme form of apartheid. "Liberal" historians cited frontier racism and its incubation in Afrikaner nationalism, while neo-Marxist "revisionists" followed Harold Wolpe and Martin Legassick in focusing on racial capitalism as the key to unlocking the distinctive South African past. Rarely has politics weighed so

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<sup>53</sup> The project was launched in 1964, and volumes appeared from 1980 to 1999. The other main collection in this space was the *Cambridge History of Africa*, which was initiated later but published eight volumes from 1975 to 1986.

<sup>54</sup> Non-white universities were, of course, deliberately starved of funding and resources.

<sup>55</sup> Pierre Hugo, "The Politics of Untruth: Afrikaner Academics for Apartheid," *Politikon* 25, 1 (1998).

heavy on ostensibly historiographical differences. Both schools, in their own ways, developed important bodies of knowledge that provided major counterweights to the regime's relentless efforts to shape South Africa's history as a basis for reshaping its future.<sup>56</sup> In particular, the revisionist school sponsored an important surge, even among non-adherents, towards social history as a means of recovering the experience of non-white communities in South Africa. This not only produced much exciting and rich scholarship, it had an enduring impact in helping lecturers expose sheltered white university students to a much broader perspective on the country's past than had been available just a few years before.<sup>57</sup>

A second similarity with the experience of African universities to the north was in the widespread emigration of scholars and the importance of transnational networks. In the training of doctoral students and the production of high-level South Africanist scholarship, research networks in the United Kingdom centered in institutions like Oxford University were very important. Through the 1980s, the revisionist workshops led by Shula Marks at the Institute for Commonwealth Studies at the University of London and Belinda Bozzoli at the University of the Witwatersrand were in direct conversation (or competition) with each other, despite the vast distances between them. In the aftermath of the Soweto protests of 1976, American universities jumped on the South Africa bandwagon, headhunting prominent scholars and funding important centers of research, like Yale University's Southern African Research Program.

### Writings and Debates in History, 1990–2005

Throughout Africa, the transformative geopolitical events beginning in 1989 reinforced interest in contemporary history—if not in that of earlier times. The end of the Cold War, the political transition in South Africa, the succession of National Conferences across francophone Africa—accompanied by a great expansion of the press throughout the continent—reflected a reinvigorated political participation

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<sup>56</sup> For different views on the differences between these schools, see Merle Lipton, *Liberals, Marxists and Nationalists: Competing Interpretations of South African History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Dan O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948–94* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996); *Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital, and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1934–1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>57</sup> Charles van Onselen, *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand 1886–1914*, 2 vols. (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1982); Belinda Bozzoli and Mmantho Nkotsoe, *Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, Life Strategy, and Migrancy in South Africa, 1900–1983* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991); Keletso E. Atkins, *The Moon is Dead! Give Us Our Money!: The Cultural Origins of an African Work Ethic, Natal, South Africa, 1843–1900* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1993); Isabel Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years as a Tale That Is Told": Oral Historical Narrative in a South African Chieftdom (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1994); Charles Van Onselen, *The Seed is Mine: The Life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper, 1894–1985* (Oxford: James Currey, 1996); Peter Delius, *A Lion Amongst the Cattle: Reconstruction and Resistance in the Northern Transvaal* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996).

among urban civil society.<sup>58</sup> With such expanding debates and discussions, popular memory entered into more direct contact with academic history. Nevertheless, for the third generation of historians, the years of structural adjustment had restricted support for graduate study on the continent, thereby restricting their numbers—though this reduced number included major new figures.

The experience of Benin demonstrates the connections among political renewal, popular history, and academic history. Members of a Department of History employing nearly twenty scholars, along with other academic personnel of the Université nationale du Bénin, played a central role in the organization of the Conférence nationale des forces vives du pays which brought to an end the dictatorship of Mathieu Kérékou. The post-conference government of Nicéphore Soglo, seeking to address the history of division within the country, sought to collaborate with UNESCO to organize an international colloquium on “The Slave Route” in Ouidah, a major port for the dispatch of captives during the slave-trade era. International tourism developed modestly in Ouidah, while for the people of Benin generally, the event brought some recognition of their past difficulties.<sup>59</sup> Another case of such ties between history and the contemporary unfolded in Mali, where Alpha Oumar Konaré, professor of history at the teachers’ college in Bamako, became a political activist. Even while serving as president of the International Council of Museums (1989–1992), he criticized the military regime of Moussa Traoré. After the popular overthrow of the Traoré regime and the succeeding national conference in 1991, Konaré was elected president of the Republic of Mali in 1992. With the support of CODESRIA, *Afrika Zamani*, and UNESCO, Konaré hosted important meetings of African historians in Bamako in 1994 and 1999.<sup>60</sup>

Two important collections of critical historical analysis also appeared in these years: *History from South Africa* (1991) and *African Historiography* (1993).<sup>61</sup> (Most of the authors were based in Africa, although the works were published in the United States.) The first was a mélange of academic and popular history that grew out of a *Radical History Review* special issue and was responsive to the surge in global interest in South Africa in the late apartheid era. The second was a celebration of the academic tradition of Ade Ajayi, a veteran of the Ibadan school. At the monographic level, Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, born in Malawi, published an economic history of nineteenth-century Africa. This work, published in 1994 by CODESRIA and awarded the Noma Prize for Publishing in Africa, demonstrated in detail the energy in African economies even in

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<sup>58</sup> Joshua Brown, Patrick Manning, Karin Shapiro, and Jon Wiener, eds., “History from South Africa,” special edition of *Radical History Review*, 46–47 (1990).

<sup>59</sup> The Slave Route program continues within UNESCO, with global implications. See <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/dialogue/the-slave-route/transatlantic-slave-trade/>.

<sup>60</sup> Konaré was elected for a second term in 1997, left office in 2002, and became chair of the African Union Commission in 2003.

<sup>61</sup> Joshua Brown, Patrick Manning, Karin Shapiro, and Jon Wiener, eds., *History from South Africa: Alternative Visions and Practices* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1991); Toyin Falola, ed., *African Historiography: Essays in Honour of Jacob Ade Ajayi* (Harlow, England: Longman, 1993).

the era of European imperial expansion.<sup>62</sup> At the same time, *Afrika Zamani*, after some lapses in publication, began publication of a new series, still published in Yaoundé but now supported by CODESRIA.

The 1990s thus brought something of an intellectual and academic renaissance to the study of history in Africa. Perhaps because of these scholarly advances, a vigorous debate emerged on how best to organize the pursuit of African social sciences. In 1996, Thandika Mkandawire, departing Executive Secretary of CODESRIA, delivered an address at the African Studies Association of the United Kingdom in which he indicated interest in alliances with researchers beyond the existing Africa-centric network of CODESRIA.<sup>63</sup> He pointed to a possible “opening” toward South Africa (where universities were slowly beginning to diversify) and toward the United States, where the African Studies Association had been seeking to ally with African-Americanists—possibly at the expense of scholars in Africa. At the same time, he reaffirmed that such openings were to remain within the basic priorities of CODESRIA, which focused on the specificities of African situations and needs.

Soon thereafter, the appointment to replace Mkandawire went to Achille Mbembe, a francophone Cameroonian who had worked since 1988 in the United States. Mbembe focused on expanding CODESRIA’s openings to the point where he elicited resistance from others. Tension and division grew within the organization: at one point Mbembe responded to his detractors by saying that they preferred an intellectual “ghetto” in which they could maintain Marxist preconceptions.<sup>64</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, a Ugandan-born political scientist who was also teaching in the United States, became one of the most formidable opponents of the Executive Secretary after he was elected president of CODESRIA in 1998; among those sharing his position were Paul Tiyambe Zeleza and Adebayo Olukoshi.<sup>65</sup>

The debate was resolved in favor of the latter faction, who sought “limited opening” rather than greatly expanded opening. In 2000 Mbembe completed his term as Executive Secretary and moved to the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg; he continued to write but cut most ties to CODESRIA.<sup>66</sup> While elements of the debate are set forth in the pages of the *Bulletin du CODESRIA*, it can be argued that neither side chose to articulate all the differences publicly; one can still hope for

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<sup>62</sup> Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, *A Modern Economic History of Africa* (Dakar, Senegal: Codesria, 1993).

<sup>63</sup> Mkandawire, “The Social Sciences in Africa.”

<sup>64</sup> Achille Mbembe, “Getting Out of the Ghetto: The Challenge of Internationalization,” *CODESRIA Bulletin*, 3–4 (1999).

<sup>65</sup> Mamdani had moved from the United States to the University of Cape Town in 1996; he then returned to the U.S. in 1999 to a position at Columbia University.

<sup>66</sup> Achille Mbembe, *De la postcolonie: Essai sur l’imagination politique dans l’Afrique contemporaine* (Paris: Karthala, 2000). In contrast to his earlier critique of Frantz Fanon and Marxism, Mbembe recently wrote an appreciation, “l’Universalité de Frantz Fanon” as a preface to a book on the works of Fanon: Achille Mbembe, “Préface,” in Frantz Fanon, *Oeuvres* (Paris: Editions la découverte, 2011).

clarification of the issues.<sup>67</sup> Somewhat later, French anthropologist Jean-Loup Amselle commented dismissively on the debate, treating the opponents to Mbembe as an “indigenist” parallel to postcolonial intellectuals in other regions of the global South.<sup>68</sup>

Even in this time of difficulty, a perspective from the diaspora revealed continuing strengths in African-based scholarship. In a 1999 review of the difficulties of sustaining Africanist scholarship in the United States, editors Michael West and William G. Martin argued that only what they called an African cultural renaissance—the “burgeoning presence of black artists in literature, music and film who often express a relation to the ancestral continent”—could sustain African studies. The chapters of the volume confirm their reliance on guidance from African intellectuals such as Zenebeworke Tadesse, Micere Mugo, and Mahmood Mamdani.<sup>69</sup>

Since the beginning of the new millennium, historical study on the African continent has been bolstered by the gradual return of economic growth. As an emblematic example, the *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* resumed annual publication in 2003 after publishing no more than sporadically since the early 1980s. The discipline revitalized across the board. The Agence universitaire de la francophonie in particular has supported universities using French as the principal language of instruction. CODESRIA took on the publication of *Afrika Zamani*, which moved from Yaoundé to Dakar beginning with publication of the 2001–2002 volume. The Third Congress of the AAH met in Bamako in 2001, after a hiatus of twenty-six years. The proceedings of that meeting were published in an impressive 2006 volume focusing on the last two centuries.<sup>70</sup>

### Since 2005

The fourth generation of professional historians in Africa, entering the field in the twenty-first century, was able to draw on the continuing work of senior colleagues and on institutions and personal networks that had stood the test of time, though their work would be challenging in new ways. The Association of African Historians was able to arrange for the first session on Africa at the international congress of the Comité international des sciences historiques (CISH), which met in Sydney in 2005. The organizer, A.I. Asiwaju of the University of Lagos, focused the session on comparing the histories of African regions with those of other regions of Africa and overseas.<sup>71</sup> The continuity of the AAH seemed established, as a fourth congress met in

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<sup>67</sup> See Ebrima Sall, “The Social Sciences in Africa: Trends, Issues, Capacities and Constraints,” *SSRC Working Paper Series* No. 8 (New York, 2003). Sall was appointed Executive Secretary in 2008 and served until 2017.

<sup>68</sup> Amselle, who was not a participant in the debate, suggested that their position was yet another break from Europe—and thus from mainstream academic knowledge—by African scholars. Jean-Loup Amselle, *L'occident décroché: Enquête sur les postcolonialismes* (Paris: Stock 2008), 65–110.

<sup>69</sup> Martin and West, *Out of One, Many Africas*, 8.

<sup>70</sup> Issiaka Mandé, ed., *Les historiens africains et la mondialisation* (Paris: Karthala, 2006).

<sup>71</sup> Published in *Afrika Zamani* Nos. 11–12 (Dakar, 2003–2004). Asiwaju’s previous work in critical analysis of colonial-era borders provided a solid basis for comparisons throughout the continent.

Addis Ababa in 2007.<sup>72</sup> The African Gender Institute and its projects on Mapping African Sexualities, as well as the Gender and Institutional Culture in African Universities project, supported by the Association of African Universities (AAU), are just two examples of how these networks are facilitating research and weakening the traditional regionalism of African history.<sup>73</sup> This strengthening of collaborative networks and ties between Africa and abroad has begun to result in rich collaborations, few more so than *L'Écriture de l'histoire en Afrique*, edited by Nicoué Ladjou Gayibor, Dominique Juhé-Beaulaton, and Moustapha Gomgnimbou. This volume emerged out of a 2011 conference held in Togo to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Jan Vansina's *De la tradition orale: Essai de méthode historique*. Bringing together local scholars like Jérôme C. Alladaye, Roger N'Tia, and Rokhaya Fall with French specialists Claude-Hélène Perrot, Gérard Chouin and Jean Boulègue, the Gayibor volume both served to underscore the enduring centrality of oral methodologies to the field and represented a guiding light to Africanists seeking real, broad-based collaboration across geographical boundaries.<sup>74</sup> In another major publication, Mamadou Fall published a millennium-long interpretation of Senegambia and its surroundings, focusing on the social and ecological concept of *le terroir*.<sup>75</sup>

At the same time, the dynamics of the twenty-first century global economy continued to exert pressure on the study of history in Africa. There has been a new brain drain, but this one has been largely driven by “pull” rather than “push” factors. As American history departments have sought to provide African history offerings and prove their commitment to “diversity,” recruiting African historians has emerged as an attractive solution to both challenges. However, the preference is still overwhelmingly for those who have completed their doctoral training in North America; it is European universities that have generally been more open to those with African PhDs.

The result of this process has been a huge expansion in resources and opportunities for some historians, but few benefits have trickled down to the departments in Africa nurturing the next generation of future historians. Scholars like Nicoué Ladjou Gayibor, Félix Iroko, and Ibrahima Thioub in West Africa, and Isaria N. Kimambo, Hamza Njozi, and Eric Masinde Aseka in East Africa have established global reputations in the field, but they have done so often in spite of, not because of, the impact of the modern economy on higher education in Africa. The proportion of articles featuring in the top African history journals authored by scholars in Africa remains low, and most of these are contributed by scholars working at South African

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<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, AAH did not meet again until the fifth congress, in Yamoussoukro in 2018, the fifth congress did however welcome a record number of participants.

<sup>73</sup> The Association of African Universities ([www.aau.org](http://www.aau.org)), established in 1967, has its home office in Accra.

<sup>74</sup> Gayibor et al., *L'écriture de l'histoire en Afrique*.

<sup>75</sup> Mamadou Fall, *Les terroirs de la Sénégambie entre l'épée et le croissant: Xème–XXème siècles* (Paris: Karthala, 2016).

institutions.<sup>76</sup> Very few non-Africans enroll at African institutions for doctoral training in history. No institution has emerged as the recognized heir to the celebrated schools of Ibadan and Dakar in earlier decades, the political history written at Dar es Salaam and Makerere, or the pan-African cultural projects at the University of Ghana's Institute of African Studies and the University of Ile-Ife.

All of this has occurred even though tertiary education itself is booming on the continent. Africa now has hundreds of higher education institutions. But the prestige that the historical discipline had earlier enjoyed in the era of decolonization has diminished: the preponderance of new universities offers vocations that are technical or confessional rather than humanistic.<sup>77</sup> Many do not offer history at all. Today's African governments are just as wary as their forbears of the potential of scholars to challenge their ideologies.<sup>78</sup> Important archives like the Chama Cha Mapinduzi Party Archives in Dodoma have become less accessible over time, rather than more, reflecting the postcolonial state's ongoing suspicion that researchers might uncover ideas that would undermine their own legitimacy.<sup>79</sup> States like Ethiopia have constructed an increasingly inhospitable atmosphere for independent historical research; the quality and range of work like that published in a special edition of *Northeast African Studies* in 2016 is testimony to the determination and resilience of scholars there.<sup>80</sup> In the long-term, what may be even more damaging to historical scholarship is the ability of Africa's *nouveau riche* elite to send its children abroad for undergraduate study. This phenomenon may forever undermine support among major stakeholder classes for real investment in public universities, and the research that investment sustains. In a cruel development, the monopolization of credentialization

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<sup>76</sup> The survey conducted for this article was of the *Journal of African History*, the *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, *History in Africa*, and the *African Studies Review*. Since 2000, on average fewer than six articles per year have been published in these four journals cumulatively by historians working in African institutions. Some scholars see this situation as pointing to a quite different conclusion. "Because the leading journals and publishers are based in the West and controlled by Western academics, African debates and perspectives find it very difficult to get fair and adequate representation. When manuscripts by Africans are not simply dismissed for being 'uninformed by current debates and related literature,' they may be turned down for challenging conventional wisdom and traditional assumptions about the continent." See Nyamnjoh and Jua, "African Universities in Crisis," 18. See also Mkandawire, "The Social Sciences in Africa: Breaking Local Barriers and Negotiating International Presence."

<sup>77</sup> Adebayo Olukoshi and Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Conclusion: The African University in the Twenty-First Century: Future Challenges and a Research Agenda," in Zeleza and Olukoshi, *African Universities in the Twenty-First Century*, 2: 595–617.

<sup>78</sup> Richard Reid, "States of Anxiety: History and Nation in Modern Africa," *Past & Present* 229, 1 (2015).

<sup>79</sup> The authors are grateful to George Roberts for this information. State archives in South Africa, too, are generally becoming less accessible over time.

<sup>80</sup> Lee Cassanelli, ed., Special issue on the Ethiopian Revolution, *Northeast African Studies* 16, 1 (2016).

by universities in the global north may make it impossible for African countries to ever establish world-leading universities.<sup>81</sup> Time will tell.

Meanwhile, a 2016 festschrift for Henry Chakava, publisher of the East African Educational Books since 1992, argues for an expansion in the scale of publication on the continent.<sup>82</sup> In a parallel instance, Toyin Falola, who began as a historian of national politics in Nigeria but moved in 1991 to Canada and then to the University of Texas-Austin, became a prolific publisher while simultaneously maintaining ties to colleagues in Nigeria by organizing conferences there. His many co-edited volumes gave high visibility platforms to scholars born and trained in Africa and fostered new kinds of diasporan networks. Another network within African scholarship, one founded in the days of Abdoulaye Ly, links scholars of Islamic faith and culture, publishing in French, English, Arabic, and Swahili: Mazrui and Mamdani from East Africa, Ibrahim Thioub and Alpha Oumar Konaré from West Africa, and others throughout the continent. Their work addresses a gamut of issues, so that they form a significant subgroup but not a faction within African historical scholarship.<sup>83</sup>

The maturation of professional history in Africa is most evident through the expansion of historiographical critique. The most incisive review of African historiography yet to appear came in 2002 from E.S. Atieno-Odhiambo, a Kenyan-born scholar working in the United States, in which he set forth the priorities of an “African philosophy of history.”<sup>84</sup> There has also been a long overdue effort to reach out from African history to other sub-fields. Africa-based historians have since expanded their interpretive perspective. A conference at Ilorin University in Nigeria, in 2009, gathered researchers from Africa and overseas to discuss the place of Africa in world history; the participants created the African Network in Global History / Réseau africain d’histoire mondiale (ANGH/RAHM) and joined it to a global federation of world historians.<sup>85</sup> This connection to world history offers exciting possibilities in a field in which very few scholars had previously followed the lead of Sam Nolutshungu or Peter Dumbuya in studying events outside their own locale or region on the continent.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> For more on credentialisation, see Boyer, “The African Crisis in Context”; Bauman, “The Present Crisis of the Universities.”

<sup>82</sup> Kiarie Kamau and Kirimi Mitambo, eds., *Coming of Age: Strides in African Publishing. Essays in Honour of Dr. Henry Chakava at 70* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 2016).

<sup>83</sup> In a recent work in this tradition, Ousmane Oumar Kane surveys Islamic higher education in Africa. Ousmane Oumar Kane, *Beyond Timbuktu: An Intellectual History of Muslim Africa* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

<sup>84</sup> Atieno-Odhiambo, “From African Historiographies to an African Philosophy of History.” See also Toyin Falola, “Writing and Teaching National History in Africa in the Era of Global History,” in Zeleza, *The Study of Africa* 1: 168–86.

<sup>85</sup> The ANGH/RAHM met for a second time in Ouagadougou in 2013.

<sup>86</sup> See the articles by Patrick Manning, Andrew Zimmerman, and Isabel Hofmeyr in “JAH Forum: Africa and Global History,” *Journal of African History* 54, 3 (November 2013), 317–49.

Most scholars continue to stay close to home in their geographic areas of focus, but the twenty-first century has seen a notable chronological and methodological openness. In just the past few years, work in environmental history, at the nexus of economic and political history, on religious history, in ethnic history, on borderland issues, into Muslim communities in East Africa and the colonial state, and urban segregation has all been published in the very most prominent African history forums.<sup>87</sup> It is also notable how much relevant historical work is being carried out outside or on the fringes of local institutions, or by non-historians.<sup>88</sup>

Confirming the arrival of a fourth generation of historians of Africa, South African institutions have been more productive still—not least because they are attracting leading scholars from elsewhere on the continent, like Mbembe. In a 2004 historiographical review, Wessel Visser noted that South African history was “not a growth industry.”<sup>89</sup> Few would be quite as pessimistic today, as the field continues to diversify and push in exciting new directions. Recent major work on gender, oral history, trauma and memory, African Christianity, Afrikaner social history, the South African state, urban history, art and memory, to name just a sample of the a broad array of approaches and methodologies utilized, has reinvigorated the field.<sup>90</sup> This research has been complemented by the work of a younger generation; the future does not look as bleak as some may have it. As examples, Hlonipha Mokoena’s study of

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<sup>87</sup> To cite just some of this important recent work, see Yusufu Qwaray Lawi, “Tanzania’s Operation Vijiji and Local Ecological Consciousness: The Case of Eastern Iraqwland, 1974–1976,” *Journal of African History* 48, 1 (2007); Chibuikwe Uche, “British Petroleum vs. the Nigerian Government: The Capital Gains Tax Dispute, 1972–9,” *Journal of African History* 51, 2 (2010); Olufunke Adebayo, “‘A Church in a Cinema Hall?’ Pentecostal Appropriation of Public Space in Nigeria,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 42 (2012); Olukoya Ogen, “Exploring the Potential of Praise Poems for Historical Reconstruction among the Idepe-Ikale in Southeastern Yorubaland,” *History in Africa* 39 (2013); Peter Wafula Wekesa, “Old Issues and New Challenges: The Migingo Island Controversy and the Kenya-Uganda Borderland,” *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 4, 2 (2010); Hassan Mwakimako, “The Historical Development of Muslim Courts: The Kadhi, Mudir and Liwali Courts and the Civil Procedure Code and Criminal Procedure Ordinance, c. 1963,” *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 5, 2 (2011); Godwin Rapando Murunga, “The Cosmopolitan Tradition and Fissures in Segregationist Town Planning in Nairobi, 1915–23,” *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 6, 3 (2012). The broadening of methodologies here mirrors the broadening of Africanist scholars more generally.

<sup>88</sup> For the first category, see the work of such scholars as Parselelo Kantai and Frederick Golooba-Mutebi; for the second, see Samson S. Wassara, Tefsa Bihonegn, Asnake Kefale, Godfrey Asiimwe, Fekadu Adugna, and Mediatrice Kagaba.

<sup>89</sup> Wessel Visser, “Trends in South African Historiography and the Present State of Historical Research,” (unpublished paper, *Nordic Africa Institute*, Uppsala, Sweden, 2004), 16.

<sup>90</sup> See Ann Mager, *Beer, Sociability and Masculinity in South Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); Sean Field, *Oral History, Community and Displacement: Imagining Memories in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Thembisa Waetjen, “Poppies and Gold: Opium and Law-Making on the Witwatersrand, 1904–10,” *Journal of African History* 57, 3 (2016); and Keith Breckenridge, *Biometric State: The Global Politics of Identification and Surveillance in South Africa, 1850 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Magama Fuze, author of a 1922 Zulu-language volume, advanced intellectual history, while Thula Simpson's 600-page study chronicles anti-apartheid armed struggle in its world-wide dimensions.<sup>91</sup> And as South Africanists have finally pushed their field beyond the grip of anti-apartheidism, they have also gained much from connecting South Africa's past to broader African and world currents.<sup>92</sup> The well-known Tomboctou Manuscript Project, which seeks to preserve existing archives against militant groups in the Sahel belt trying to destroy them, includes scholars trained in Egypt, Ethiopia, and Zanzibar. But the funding, initiative, and support from South Africa is central to its existence.

The profile and range of the "new" South African history has to an extent obscured the vibrancy of sub-fields elsewhere in the broader Southern African region. In Zambian history, a new generation has built on the foundations established by Samuel Chipungu in the 1990s.<sup>93</sup> Zimbabwean history has also experienced a purple patch, with the work of a number of scholars inside Zimbabwe being complemented by the substantial number of Zimbabweanists working at South African institutions.<sup>94</sup> Both fields have substantial representation in British and American universities too, and there is a degree of real transcontinental integration that other sub-fields can only talk about. Thus Alois Mlambo taught history in Zimbabwe from 1981 to 2000, yet completed his Ph.D. at Duke University in 1989. He was professor of history at the University of Pretoria from 2004 until his retirement in 2017; his 2014 *History of Zimbabwe* is a comprehensive if reserved overview emphasizing a two-century trajectory of colonial and postcolonial history.<sup>95</sup>

Throughout the continent, celebrations of popular history and investigations into memory have grown. Museums have been built in homage to ethnic and national patrimony, to commemorate the history of slave trade, and to celebrate regime

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<sup>91</sup> Mokoena completed her Ph.D. at University of Cape Town and taught for some years at Columbia University before joining the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research; Simpson completed his degree at the University of London and has since been employed at the University of Pretoria. Hlonipha Mokoena, *Magama Fuze: The Making of a Kholwai Intellectual* (Scottsville, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2011); Thula Simpson, *Umkhonto We Sizwe: The ANC's Armed Struggle* (Cape Town: Penguin, 2016). As a further sampling, see Nafisa Essop Sheik, "African Marriage Regulation and the Remaking of Gendered Authority in Colonial Natal, 1843–1875," *African Studies Review* 57, 2 (2014); Glen Ncube, "'The Problem of the Health of the Native': Colonial Rule and the Rural African Healthcare Question in Zimbabwe, 1890s–1930," *South African Historical Journal* 64, 4 (2012); Stephen Sparks, "Apartheid Modern: South Africa's Oil from Coal Project and the History of a South African Company Town," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 2012).

<sup>92</sup> For insightful musings on the end of the "old" South African history, see Stephen Sparks, "New Turks and Old Turks: The Historiographical Legacies of South African Social History," *Historia* 58, 1 (January 2013).

<sup>93</sup> See for instance Walima Kalusa, Bizeck Phiri, and the late Mwelwa C. Musambachime.

<sup>94</sup> For the former, see the work of Eric Makombe, Pius Nyambara, Gerald Mazarire, Joseph Mujere, and Kufakurinani Ushehweu; for the latter, see especially Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Alois Mlambo.

<sup>95</sup> Alois S. Mlambo, *A History of Zimbabwe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

change, especially in Southern Africa. The creation of the Ecole du patrimoine africain in 1998 in Porto-Novo, Benin, has done remarkable work in training staff to work in museums throughout Africa,<sup>96</sup> while the families of Timbuktu began to offer the historical books in their possession to scholars and conservation specialists.<sup>97</sup> Despite the costs and difficulties, the publication of new books has continued. CODESRIA became the principal African publisher of books in social sciences and history, publishing books in English, French, and Portuguese.<sup>98</sup> It also produced a two-volume study of African universities (2004) and a two-volume review of the academic study of Africa (2006), both highly relevant to historians.<sup>99</sup> In addition, the African Books Collective continues to distribute books written and published in Africa, both on the continent and overseas. These address contemporary affairs, history, and popular culture.<sup>100</sup> Other initiatives exist to encourage and subsidize publications by African authors.<sup>101</sup> The transcontinental alliances that have supported African historiography function much as before too. Yet there are well-founded concerns about the power and financial relationships inherent in such relationships. In an influential article from 2002, Cameroonian scholars Francis B. Nyamnjoh and Nantang B. Jua wrote that: "Cooperation takes the form of Western universities calling the tune for African pipers they have paid. Collaborative research has often worked in the interest of the Western partners, who, armed with theoretical sophistication and a fat wallet, have usually reduced their African collaborators to data collectors and research assistants."<sup>102</sup> This may or may not be a fair description of these relationships, rather than the practices of some, but the perception of the former state of affairs is evidently very real.

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<sup>96</sup> Ecole du patrimoine africain (<http://www.epa-prema.net/>).

<sup>97</sup> The principal documentation center is the Institut des hautes études et de recherches islamiques Ahmed Baba. On UNESCO world heritage work, see <http://whc.unesco.org/fr/list/119/>.

<sup>98</sup> See Roger Yele, Paul Doko, Abel Mazido, *Les défis de la centrafrique: Gouvernance et stabilisation du système économique* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2011); Jean Euloge Gbaguidi, Clémentine Lokonon, Maxime Ahotondji, Léa Yemadjiro, *Presse audiovisuelle et construction démocratique au Bénin: De la nécessité de deux niveaux de lecture des mutations en cours* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2011); Jean-Bernard Ouédraogo, Roseline Achieng, eds., *Global Exchanges and Gender Perspectives in Africa* (Dakar/Kampala: CODESRIA/Fountain Publishers, 2011); Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, *Politique africaine contemporaine: Le cas de la République démocratique du Congo* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2012).

<sup>99</sup> Zeleza and Olukoshi, *African Universities in the Twenty-First Century*; Zeleza, *The Study of Africa*, vol. 1.

<sup>100</sup> Akosua Adoma Perbi, *A History of Indigenous Slavery in Ghana: From the 15th to the 19th Century* (Accra, Ghana: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2004); Aloysius Ajab Amin, Jean-Luc Dubois, *Croissance et développement au Cameroun: D'une croissance équilibrée à un développement équitable* (Cameroun: Langaa RPCIG, 2008); Albert Azeveh, *Réussite scolaire, faillite Sociale: Généalogie mentale de la crise de l'Afrique noire francophone* (Bamenda, Cameroun: Langaa RPCIG, 2010). See <http://www.africanbookscollective.com/browse/humanities-social-sciences/history>.

<sup>101</sup> For instance, the African Studies series of Carolina Academic Press, directed by Toyin Falola, specifically looks to publish book-length studies by authors living and working in Africa.

<sup>102</sup> Nyamnjoh and Jua, "African Universities in Crisis," 18.

Acknowledgments in recent books highlight mentors overseas but also on the continent; one measure of the balance in this tension is the readiness of younger scholars to seek and maintain academic employment on the continent. Further, there are indications of continuities from the latest generation of African historians to founding figures of the field: the memorial service for historian Abdoulaye Ly (1919–2013) held in Dakar in August 2013, brought together hundreds of academics, teachers, and members of the general public.<sup>103</sup>

Another important issue affecting the production of African history is pressure to “decolonize” education. This campaign, most vibrant today in South African universities, has called for universities to not only transform the racial make-up of history departments, but to generate curricula that reflect the “African experience.” These demands contain more than faint echoes of the calls of the 1960s and 1970s to produce distinctly African epistemologies and methodologies, and appear to constitute the latest effort to exorcize what Mazrui has called the “ghost of African intellectual dependency.”<sup>104</sup> In South Africa, this campaign is as political as it is intellectual. It feeds off ongoing white economic power, the inability of the government to broaden opportunity for poor blacks (as opposed to the well-educated black middle class), economic stagnation, and the endurance of racist historical myths in the public sphere. None of these things appears to be going away soon and therefore, one suspects, neither will the call to decolonize the teaching of history as a means of reshaping society’s basic identity. Yet this project is intellectually problematic, rooted as it is in an unspecified “African” epistemology, and grounded as it is in a concept of “indigeneity” that blurs historical complexity.<sup>105</sup> Calls to “decolonize” the practice of *history* specifically (rather than, say, remove European classics from literature curricula) ignore the importance within the discipline of reproducing the various realities of South Africa’s past rather than simply portraying a version that (sometimes deliberately) obscures them. The job of historians is to explain the past, warts and all, and not to edit it under political pressure.

This unresolved controversy matters a great deal for the future of African history in Africa. South African faculties at Wits, Cape Town, and Stellenbosch, to name a few, dominate any list of sub-Saharan Africa’s top history departments and produce a large proportion of its internationally competitive historical scholarship. Efforts by non-specialists to alter curricula and reshape history are already corroding morale in these departments, as are the methods deployed by activists in order to get their message across. In 2016, activists shut down entire campuses, causing lectures to be cancelled and exams postponed. Two security guards were locked in a burning building at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology; the protagonists have been charged with attempted murder.

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<sup>103</sup> Ly’s first work was *La Compagnie du Sénégal* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1958).

<sup>104</sup> Mazrui, “Towards Diagnosing and Treating Cultural Dependency: The Case of the African University,” 100.

<sup>105</sup> It is difficult to explain intellectually, rather than politically, why African history should need to be decolonized, but not Asian history, for example.

## **Conclusion**

Historical writing in Africa has reproduced itself since the 1950s, just as historical writing overseas in Europe and North America has reproduced itself. The leading journals, book publishers, and graduate programs have been based overseas, yet individuals and institutions in Africa, if often overlooked, have been active and significant throughout. Historical writing has been dominated by, and usually bounded within, three main regions: West Africa (francophone and anglophone), South Africa, and East Africa. Most of the historiography has referred to these regions and to the states within them rather than interactions among them, much less continental dynamics. Continental meetings of African historians, if they can be supported, may be expected to reveal contrasts as well as parallels, yet may also reveal unexpected continental patterns that emerge out of the interplay of regional specificities. CODESRIA has provided important support to historical studies, yet its priority has been on contemporary social science. Perhaps a rededication of CODESRIA to historical studies, in alliance with the African Association of Universities, could provide needed resources for teaching, research, and publication on history in African tertiary institutions.

Calls for decolonization of history in Africa are weakened by their presumption of an inherent intellectual commonality among scholars on the continent. The dominant influence on African history written in Africa is not Africanness, but the range of local specifics in daily struggles of living and working in Africa, with poor resources, institutional weakness, and exclusion from the money and prestige of African studies elsewhere. Colonialism was indeed incapacitating, especially in its developmentalist claim that Africa's past was of no value in constructing its future. In contrast, the extraordinary diversity of social life and historical questions in Africa mean that there will be no quick fix or single solution for historical studies. The diversity of life, the diversity of perspectives among Africans as among others, and the diversity of topics and methods in historical studies, require a multi-pronged approach to building historical knowledge about Africa. Any distinctiveness of continental writings derives less from a contrasting philosophy than it does from similarities in the context for life—and therefore for academic work—on the continent. This distinctiveness should not be overdrawn: the variety in these contexts is very substantial across region, country, and institution.

The centrality and value of home-grown scholarship on African history have been confirmed; one has reason to expect that it will continue to develop important new insights. One must hope that the conditions for producing historical studies in Africa will improve, though this cannot yet be guaranteed.

Our review, focusing on the continental literature, leaves us with a paradoxical impression: despite the shortage of academic resources in Africa and the relative invisibility of African scholars abroad, the continental and diasporan projects of African historiography are and have been mutually dependent. The literature based in Euro-America, while better funded and apparently dominant, depends on the thinking, writing, and cultural output of the continent, as much as scholars in Africa depend on links to the diaspora and to Africa-linked scholars abroad. African scholars, far from

voicing a distinctively “African perspective,” have taken part in an interplay of Africa and diaspora in historical writing that includes a parallel interplay of different social groups in producing the scholarship. The result has led to a particularly rich dynamic of research and debate far more than it has contributed to contests among geographically discrete camps of historians.