

The Study of Africa

Volume 2: Global and Transnational Engagements

Edited by
Paul Tiyambe Zeleza



Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgement	v
Notes on Contributors	vi
Introduction: The Internationalisation of African Knowledges	1
<i>Paul Tiyambe Zeleza</i>	

Part I: Globalisation Studies and African Studies

1. Globalisation: An Ascendant Paradigm? Implications for African Studies	27
<i>James H. Mittelman</i>	
2. If You Are Part of the Solution, You Are Likely Part of the Problem: Transboundary Formations and Africa	45
<i>Ronald Kassimir</i>	
3. Economic Liberalisation and Development in Africa	62
<i>Jomo Kwame Sundaram</i>	
4. African Diasporas and Academics: The Struggle for a Global Epistemic Presence	86
<i>Paul Tiyambe Zeleza</i>	
5. The Problem of Translation in African Studies: The Case of French ...	112
<i>Jean-Pierre Dedieu</i>	

Part II: African Studies in Regional Contexts

6. African Studies: France and the United States	127
<i>Bogumil Jewsiewicki</i>	
7. New Directions in African Studies in the United Kingdom	146
<i>John McCracken</i>	
8. Betwixt and Between: African Studies in Germany	157
<i>Peter Probst</i>	
9. Research on Africa: A Swedish Perspective	188
<i>Ann Schlyter</i>	

10. Anti-Colonialism in Soviet African Studies (1920s–1960)	203
<i>Irina Filatova</i>	
11. Area Studies in Search of Africa: The Case of the United States	235
<i>Pearl T. Robinson</i>	
12. ‘Returning to the Caribbean by Way of Africa’: African Studies in the Caribbean in Historical Perspective	277
<i>Alan Cobley</i>	
13. Let the Drums Sound: The Teaching of African History and the History of Africans in Brazil	295
<i>Mônica Lima</i>	
14. African Studies in India	305
<i>Aparajita Biswas</i>	
15. The State of African Studies in Australia	315
<i>Tanya Lyons and Elizabeth Dimock</i>	
16. African Studies in China in the Twentieth-Century: A Historiographical Survey	336
<i>Li Anshan</i>	
17. African Studies in Recent Years in Japan	369
<i>Masao Yoshida</i>	
Index	385

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Introduction

The Internationalisation of African Knowledges

Paul Tiyambe Zeleza

Almost invariably, the construction and conceptualisation of knowledge have social, spatial and temporal contexts and referents. Few would disagree that knowledge, whatever the prevailing disciplinary labels, is produced through specific paradigms that are developed by certain groups of people in particular places and periods. Knowledge production is, in this fundamental sense, a social practice marked by period and place, notwithstanding the vigorous, but often vain, attempts by some scholars to free their disciplines, specialties, theories and models from the supposedly suffocating confines of time and space. As even a cursory glance at the history of any discipline will show, and as was demonstrated in the previous volume, the disciplines and interdisciplines are rather porous and changing branches of knowledge; they are epistemic and social constructs whose intellectual, institutional, and ideological configurations are mediated and mapped by the unyielding demands of historical geography.

In the academies of Euro-America, I would like to submit, the argument between the interdiscipline of area studies, in which African studies is located, and the disciplines of the academic departments is essentially about the territoriality and temporality of knowledge and knowledge production: universality is claimed for the disciplines and contextuality for the area studies. And 'area' itself is parsed further: the disciplines are a preserve of the 'West' and 'area studies' of the 'Rest'. It is a hierarchical division of academic labour that is powerful and appealing to many, one that is institutionally sanctified in the Euro-American academy in the relatively low positioning of area studies faculty and programmes. It is reproduced in the perennial debates between the disciplines and the area studies, which are praised or pilloried for their propensity for descriptiveness and detail, local knowledge and exoticism, or complicity with imperialist impulses or multiculturalist political correctness. These characterisations, as will be demonstrated in the next section, are simplistic and seriously flawed.

As argued in the previous volume, African studies has both disciplinary and interdisciplinary dimensions, disciplinary in so far as it is the object of research, study, teaching and publications in specific disciplines and interdisciplinary in situations where these activities are institutionally organized in specific African studies units whether called—the administrative nomenclature varies—programmes, centres, institutes, or departments. These tendencies have a territorial dimension: within Africa itself there are few African studies programmes as such because Africa is lodged within the disciplines,¹ unlike what prevails in Euro-America where the area studies model was invented and African studies programmes provide a crucial institutional base. This parallels the relatively weak position in the American academy of American studies as an interdiscipline compared to the incorporation of American studies in the disciplines. In both cases, ‘area studies’ refers to, by and large, an ‘outside’ study, in the case of Africa study of the hegemonic imperial ‘other’, in the case of Euro-America the study of the colonial or postcolonial dependent ‘other’.

There are other crucial differences in the organisation of ‘area studies’ in Africa and Euro-America: the latter’s overdetermination of African knowledge systems remains palpable, while the African influence on Euro-American scholarship is quite negligible, notwithstanding the wistful claims made by the authors of *Africa and the Disciplines* (Bates, Mudimbe and O’Barr 1993). This situation points to the uneven and unequal ways in which the disciplines and interdisciplines are internationalised between the global North and much of the global South, including Africa. It suggests that the terms of global intellectual exchange, like the terms of trade for the so-called developed and developing economies, are decidedly unequal: African studies in the North is a peripheral part of the academy, whereas the Euro-American epistemological order remains central in the African academy. Since the colonial encounter, the construction of scholarly knowledge about Africa has been internationalised both in the sense of it being an activity involving scholars in various parts of the world and the inordinate influence of externally generated models on African scholarship.

More often than not the scholars who have tended to set the terms of debate and discourse in African studies, prescribing much of what is deemed authoritative knowledge, framing the methodological and theoretical terrain of the field, and shaping the infrastructures of scholarly knowledge production, are Euro-American rather than African. There is perhaps no other region in the world that has suffered more from what Paulin Hountondji (1997) calls ‘theoretical extraversion’ than Africa, where imported intellectual perspectives, preoccupations, and perversions play such a powerful role in scholarship, not to mention policy formulation and even popular discourse. This is a subject on which I have written extensively (Zezele 1997, 2003, 2004, 2005). It would not be far-fetched to argue that the ‘area studies’ model, through which many African scholars educated in the global North were themselves trained, and through which academic relations between Euro-American universities and African universities are often organised, mediated or reproduced, played a critical role.

The chapters in this volume explore these issues: the ways in which Africa has been engaged in international studies and in international contexts, characterised by shifting analytical fads and different national tendencies. It is divided into three parts. The first part briefly explores the possibilities and perils of the area studies model as developed in the United States, a country with the largest academic system in the world and one of the largest African studies establishments outside of Africa itself, by examining some of the debates about area studies. In the second and third parts the introduction summarises and comments on the chapters in the volume. Part two looks at the study of Africa in international studies, that is, the state of African studies as seen through the paradigms of globalisation (Mittelman), transborder formations (Kassimir), and diaspora studies (Zeleza), as well as the implications of some of these paradigms for actual development processes in Africa (Sundaram), and the challenges of translation in transnational African studies scholarship (Dedieu). This is followed in the last part by analyses of African studies in different global regions: Europe—Britain (McCracken), France (Jewsiewicki), Germany (Probst), Sweden (Schlyter), and the former Soviet Union (Filatova); the Americas—the United States (Robinson), the Caribbean (Cobley), and Brazil (Lima); and finally the Asia-Pacific region—India (Biswas), Australia (Lyons and Dimock), China (Anshan) and Japan (Yoshida). Space simply does not allow for a more systematic analysis of African studies within Africa itself, a subject implied in some of the remarks that follow but which deserves an extended treatment in its own right.

The Possibilities and Perils of the Areas Studies Model

Histories of area studies, like academic histories in general, are revealing for what they say and leave out, what they seek to remember and to forget. They serve as weapons in the perennial institutional and intellectual struggles among disciplines and interdisciplines for material resources and reputational capital. These histories seek to mark boundaries, to stake positions, to confer authority, and in the case of area studies, to define the alleged contemporary crisis of the field and devise solutions appropriate to the protagonists. In areas studies histories written in the United States in the 1990s it is commonly assumed that the Second World War gave birth to ‘area studies’ in the American academy, and the cold war nurtured the interdiscipline, in response to the gruelling demands of global confrontation spawned by the two wars.² It followed that since the Cold War was now over, area studies had lost their *raison d’être*. Moreover, since much of the world was politically democratising and economically liberalising, knowledge of the world outside Euro-America could be inferred from the universal models of the disciplines, or the homogenising imperatives of globalisation.³

This narrative was quite appealing to right-wing ideologues who thought history was over; fiscally minded university administrators seeking programmes to cut; and social scientists desperate to acquire the analytical credentials of the natural sciences. However, it was a narrative that silenced other histories of area studies in the United States itself and in other world regions, as the contributions in this volume

make abundantly clear. Writing about African studies, Pearl Robinson (1997: 169) eloquently contests the standard Cold War history of area studies:

Debates about the future of African Studies seem to have little to do with the past as I know or have come to understand it. What I discern is a profusion of arguments linked to differing standpoints and designed to privilege new hierarchies of access to resources. Virtually all the prevailing reconstructions of African Studies begin with the Cold War and focus on the legacies of government- and foundation-funded Area Studies programs. Curiously, such accounts generally omit any reference to the long-standing tradition of African Studies at historically black colleges and universities, only rarely give a nod to African American professional and lay scholars of Africa, and seldom acknowledge the existence of epistemic communities based in Africa.

Robinson's contestation was echoed in a comprehensive compendium of area studies written at the height of the American 'area studies wars'.⁴ Holzner and Harmon (1998) traced the roots of the area studies tradition to the nineteenth century. They explain:

Prior to 1900, US 'research' about other parts of the world consisted of four traditions: the 'classical' tradition, which studied the ancient civilizations of Greece, Rome, and Egypt; the missionary movement, whose proponents traveled to other nations with the intent of encouraging conversion, but who were often anti-intellectual and explicitly limited the scope of inquiry into their host societies; a 'scientific racism' tradition that attempted to demonstrate the superiority of whites through comparison with and systematic examination of other races; and, finally, an anecdotal 'tradition' of relying on information about non-Western cultures from potentially unreliable travelers (Holzner and Harmon (1998:7).

During the late 1940s and 1950s when area studies became institutionalised, Gilbert Merx (1995) contends that Cold War concerns were often used to achieve long-sought support for higher education in general and long-standing research on the non-Western world in particular.

There is no doubt that the Second World War and the Cold War had a profound impact on the development of area studies, and that the end of the cold war brought new contexts. But area studies, certainly African studies, antedated both wars. The area studies movement was bolstered by the need to overcome the isolationist and parochial tendencies of the American public and academy, increasingly seen as unbecoming and perilous for a superpower. The American public was woefully uninformed about the rest of the world, especially the newly independent countries of Africa and Asia, where the United States and the Soviet Union were locked in fierce combat to win hearts and minds. The need for information about these countries, including America's turbulent backyard, Latin America, as well as the Soviet bloc, was seen as essential in the struggle for global supremacy between the USA and USSR.

Reinforcing the national security imperative was the epistemological imperative to internationalise knowledge in the academy. While the link between social science and area knowledge goes back to the origins of some social science disciplines, such as sociology and anthropology, most of the disciplines remained resolutely ethnocentric, an intellectual deficiency syndrome that worsened as they aspired to 'scientific' status and concocted, from American experience, universal models and theories that magically transcended the realities and diversities of global histories and geographies, cultures and societies, politics and economies. The theoretical conceit and parochialism of the disciplines reflected the imperial provincialism and ethnocentrism of the American public. Area studies were expected to overcome these deficiencies and to provide the public and academy with information about the non-Western world.

The interdiscipline was, therefore, infused with the twists and turns of American foreign policy, the projection of imperial power, in which knowledge of America and allied Europe more broadly was lodged within the disciplines, and that of the rest of the world was relegated to the area studies ghetto and inscribed with the pathologies of otherness. Consequently, the United States and Euro-America more generally were not considered an 'area,' which they obviously are, but at the very core of disciplinary knowledges, its experiences—rendered into stylised facts—and the epistemologies derived from them elevated into manifestations of the universal. So the pernicious fictions were born and bred that area studies were concerned with the parochial and the particular, while American studies, and their civilisational cousins, European studies, were disciplinary parables of the human condition. As Michael Chege (1997: 136-137) once admonished:

It is also time for North America and Western Europe to be designated as "Area Studies" as well ... To that extent, calls for methodological rigor should not be dismissed offhand. The same applies to Western-based scholarship, to the extent that it is prepared to see itself objectively as one more "area" in which theory is validated or rejected. Such an approach would help short-circuit the sterile polemical debate on the relevance, or lack thereof, of Area Studies and still adopt a stridently critical demeanor concerning the reigning concepts of social science.

Often forgotten in the fictions of disciplinary superiority and the interdisciplinary lack of area studies was the simple fact that area studies faculty were both disciplinarians and interdisciplinarians: they were trained and held appointments in the disciplines. I discovered I was an area studies specialist only when I went to the United States to take up a job as director of the Center for African Studies at the University of Illinois (but my tenure home was in History). Before that in my previous appointments in Canada, Kenya, Jamaica, and Malawi I had been known as a historian or a dilettante given the breadth of my intellectual interests. In short, area studies people in the American academy are far less parochial than the Americanists or Europeanists who wear monolithic disciplinary identities. An American can be a professor in most disciplines in the social sciences and humanities without knowing

anything about non-western societies and countries; what is almost unheard of is an Africanist or an African professor who only knows the society she studies or comes from. Thus, it is not area studies people who need the rigour that comes from intellectual breadth and depth, but those in the ethnocentric disciplines.

The development of area studies was also tied to the fate of ethnic minorities in the United States. The ‘scientific racism’ that coloured much of the earlier work on non-Western societies was rooted in racist and discriminatory policies at home against the Native Americans, African Americans, and others. The exclusion of these populations from political and cultural citizenship, from the American mainstream, necessitated the separation of their ancestral cultures and continents from disciplinary narratives. In short, given the centrality of race in American society and politics, the eternal solitudes between blacks and whites rooted in slavery and segregation, it meant that the privileges and pathologies of the wider American social and intellectual order were reflected and reproduced with a ferocious investment of patronage, passions, and pain in African studies in a manner that was unusual even among the area studies programmes. More often than not, definitions and defamations of Africa were projections of attitudes to African Americans. The vocabulary used to depict the otherness and failed promises of Africa was often the same as that used for African Americans. This congruence of constructions and condemnations lay at the heart of the periodic contestations, often bitter, between Africans, African Americans, and European Americans in the study of Africa.

The shifting contexts, justifications, compositions, contents and predilections of area studies were neither peculiar to the area studies movement, nor to the United States. As shown in the previous volume, during the same period that area studies as an interdiscipline was developing, the disciplines were also undergoing important shifts, desperately seeking to redefine and differentiate themselves from each other and to gain ascendancy on the academic totem pole, to stake superior claims of the cognitive authority of science in a world so conscious of its modernity and dazzled by science and technology. Studies of knowledge production in other parts of the world would reveal, as is shown in this volume in the case of African studies in various world regions, similar tendencies, that the changing disciplinary and interdisciplinary architecture of knowledge occurs as much in the context of, and sometimes in response to, transformations in the epistemic and conceptual orders of knowledge as in the changing socioeconomic and political conditions of the wider society. In the case of the United States, the area studies movement has undergone five phases each characterised by its own dynamics, orientations, and dominant perspectives and shifting engagements between the interdiscipline and the disciplines and other interdisciplines, such as ethnic studies and women’s studies, and interdisciplinary paradigms like cultural studies, postcolonial studies and diaspora studies.

The first phase was in the late nineteenth century and was characterised by competing racist Euro-American and vindicationist Afro-American traditions. The early twentieth century marked the second phase when African studies was dominated by African American scholar activists and the historically black colleges and

universities whose work centred on the question of Africa's civilisational presence in the global concert of cultures. The Cold War era marked the third phase when the gravity of African studies shifted to European American scholars and the historically white universities. The foundations bankrolled the field together with the federal government's Title VI programmes of the US Department of Education and its analytical focus shifted to modernisation prescriptions. This phase was dominated at first by anthropology, the principal colonial science. History briefly took over from anthropology in the anti-colonialist wrath of decolonisation, and then political science and economics—yes the queen and aspiring king of the social sciences before their mathematical turn—assumed prominence in the great developmentalist drama of the early and euphoric postcolonial years. The turn of the 1990s ushered in the fourth phase—the post-Cold War era when area studies were deemed to be in crisis, a period that coincided with the ascendancy of the anti-foundationalist and representational discourses of postmodernism, postcolonial scholarship and cultural studies, which questioned the integrity of regional and cultural boundaries and identities and privileged hybrid, immigrant, and diasporic identities.

Four major critiques were advanced against area studies, each of which was vigorously and sometimes effectively rebutted by area studies practitioners. First, it was argued that area studies were a Cold War political project that had now outlived its usefulness. Second, area studies were 'merely "ideographic", primarily concerned with description, as opposed to the "nomothetic" or theory building and generalizing character of the core social science disciplines' (Szantzon 2004: 20-21). Third, some maintained that area studies scholars uncritically propagated the universalising or localising categories, perspectives, commitments, and theories of their imperialist interlocutors in the metropolises or their nativist informants in the postcolonies. Fourth, champions of globalisation contended that the apparently new world order of enhanced transnational economic, cultural, information, and demographic flows rendered the old structures of organising and producing knowledge in bounded regions increasingly obsolete. What was now required, in the place of old-fashioned area studies, it was argued, were international or global studies, or at the very least comparative regional studies.⁵ The Social Science Research Council abolished its area studies committees and the foundations duly withdrew their area studies funding support and launched new initiatives on cross-regional and globalisation issues.⁶ But the American triumphalism of the 1990s was brought to a sudden halt by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. History was not over after all, and foreign cultures still existed that demanded understanding—translation—on their own terms. This ushered the fifth phase, marked by a return to the future of the national security imperative in area studies. The scientific pretensions of political science with its rational choice models, and the turgid postmodernist and postcolonial theorising of literary studies suddenly looked rather self-indulgent and unproductive.

Africa in International Studies

The chapters in the first part of the collection examine the engagements between African studies and various international studies constructs. This part opens with James Mittelman's fascinating interrogation of the implications for African studies of globalisation as a conceptual paradigm. From the 1990s there was an explosion in the literature on globalisation, seen both as a historical process of intensified transnational economic and cultural flows and interconnectedness and as an ideological project of global capitalism advancing the neoliberal agenda of liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation. Mittelman distinguishes between what he calls the para-keepers who contest the theoretical claims and policy aims of the globalisation paradigm and the para-makers who support them. As much else in scholarship, these divergences reflect not only different intellectual investments—ontological, methodological, and epistemological commitments—but also varied ideological, institutional, and even individual inclinations.

In the field of international studies the former include proponents of the realist, interdependence, and world systems perspectives and social democrats, for whom the processes associated with globalisation are not new, while the latter consist of an eclectic group of scholars who believe globalisation does constitute a new conceptual framework of examining the world and a new consciousness of experiencing the world. Whether or not globalisation represents a Kuhnian paradigm shift, there can be little doubt that it has reinforced the discontents and opened new analytical directions within international studies, a field traditionally focused on relations between nations and states as discrete entities and spaces. Mittelman highlights some of the major themes and traps of the globalisation paradigm, which is concerned with global problems, challenges and actors, transformations in global structures and the territorial configurations of power, and continuities and discontinuities with the past in the world order. But it suffers from conceptual promiscuity and lack of precision, tends to be overdetermined, reductive and insufficiently attentive to agency, and spawns new binaries as it simultaneously explodes the old dichotomies of international studies.

Nevertheless, the breadth of the globalisation paradigm's thematic and theoretical concerns—from economy to ecology, popular culture to transnational politics, cultural studies to political economy—is a potential source of critical strength, which gives it a transdisciplinary edge, the capacity to combat the fragmentation of knowledge. If the potential of globalisation studies is to be realised, Mittelman argues, there is need for more systematic conceptualisation of the varieties of globalisation and classification of globalisation schools, investigation into the implications of globalisation for disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transnational studies including development and area studies, and for curricular programming, as well as examination of its ethics in terms of what and whose values are being inscribed in globalisation as a process, a project, and a paradigm, and its structures of production as far as the locational and institutional inequalities in the construction of globalisation studies are concerned. African studies, Mittelman concludes, needs to interrogate and

incorporate the globalisation paradigm more vigorously than it has so far; Africanist scholars have a responsibility to retell and remake the story of globalisation.

One of the fundamental issues raised by the globalisation problematic is the relationship, or rather the intersections between the local and the global, the external and the internal, the inside and the outside. Ron Kassimir argues in his chapter that globalisation is a very blunt instrument for conceptualising the global-local nexus, for disaggregating the various kinds of external-internal connections, and showing how they relate to one another. He reminds us of the central insight of dependency theory, that ever since the emergence of the world system the external is always already implicated in the local, although many dependency writers were wont to overemphasise external forces and underestimate local agency, and to depict the structural forces largely in materialist and economic terms at the expense of their ideational, political, and cultural dimensions. He proposes the concept of transboundary formations as an analytical device to transcend the external-internal divide and capture the dynamics created by the intersection of forces emanating from various spatial, social, structural, and sectoral levels.

It is a framework that can yield useful hypothesis and provide insights in analysing concrete events and processes in which different institutions operate and intersect, where networks of people form and through which ideas and commodities are trafficked. Kassimir proceeds to illustrate this by looking at two sets of transboundary formations, first, the operations of the international aid regime, and second the illicit flows of so-called conflict diamonds. In the case of international aid, it is clear that as a mechanism of intervention, aid is already deeply implicated in the domestic development crises it seeks to alleviate, which are constituted and reproduced through the ongoing intersections between the providers, architects and advocates of aid and a range of other actors, including local government officials and business interests. As for the seemingly local political disorders that are often attributed to Africa's alleged affliction with primordial hatreds, the case of conflict diamonds bears testimony to the critical role played by the global demand and markets for commodities, cross-border smuggling of commodities and arms, and recruitment of mercenary forces in engendering and sustaining many a civil war and regional conflict.

The involvement of African studies and African scholars in setting the conceptual and methodological architecture of globalisation or international studies remains minimal. This is troubling enough for intellectual reasons: it is important for Africanists to inscribe their intellectual insights and interests in this ascending paradigm. But the matter goes beyond intellectual bragging rights. As a discursive project of neoliberalism globalisation has inspired policy interventions that have profoundly transformed Africa's development processes and prospects, whose costs for the continent have been truly horrendous. It is important for us to be reminded of this, that the struggle over ideas, over academic paradigms, involves competing visions, priorities, and policies on how best to organise society for specific social interests and projects. The chapter by Jomo Kwame Sundaram offers a sobering reminder of the heavy costs exacted on Africa's development by globalisation, specifically the

doctrine of economic liberalisation espoused by the infamous ‘Washington Consensus’. The neoliberal assault began at the turn of the 1980s with an escalating battery of serial and doctrinaire conditionalities—‘getting prices right’, ‘getting good governance’, and ‘getting good institutions’—whose apparent absence was blamed for the increasingly evident failures of the structural adjustment programmes.

More than two and half decades after praying faithfully at the altar of neoliberalism, in much of Africa (and indeed the world as a whole) growth levels are slower than in the pre-adjustment days, poverty levels are higher, real wages have fallen, import substitution industrialisation has been replaced by de-industrialisation, exports and Africa’s share of world trade have declined, capital inflows remain low and are dominated by speculative portfolio investment and capital flight continues unabated so that Africa has become a net exporter of capital. Structural maladjustment and its deflationary policies have weakened domestic capacities and put Africa on the low-productivity, low-growth path. The Washington Consensus is now largely discredited, certainly in Africa and in academic circles, as a strategy for development, let alone accelerated development as was originally promised in the notorious Berg report of 1981 and subsequent encyclicals from the international financial institutions. The epistemological delegitimation and the loss of certainty by the international financial institutions, as reflected in the adoption of an ever more eclectic assortment of new growth theories, offer a window of opportunity for new forms of economic research and policy-making in Africa based on a long term vision of sustainable development rooted in a comprehensive understanding of Africa’s histories, political economies, institutions, challenges and needs.

Neoliberal globalisation has had more direct and contradictory consequences on African knowledge production systems. As is well known, structural adjustment programmes devastated African universities, which led to the massive migration of academics to other sectors at home or to institutions abroad (Zeze and Olukoshi 2004). The growth of the African academic diaspora and of diaspora studies, especially in the countries of the global North, is the subject of Paul Tiyaambe Zeze’s chapter. He argues that the African diaspora in general and its intelligentsia in particular has demonstrated the potential, which it has exercised during some key moments of modern African history, through the Pan-African movement for example, for a productive engagement with Africa. Africa’s academic diaspora, itself a product of various cycles of capitalist globalisation including the current one, offers African academic systems a way of mitigating their peripherality, of negotiating new terms of engagement with the powerful research and publishing establishments that control international knowledge production, of minimising the negative and maximising the positive impacts of academic liberalisation, of modifying Africa’s lopsided academic relations with external donors and scholarly gatekeepers, of mediating Africa’s globalisation. The challenge for the contemporary African academic diaspora is to mediate continental Africa and diasporic Africa, the political and economic projects of Pan-Africanism and the cultural and discursive paradigms of diaspora and global studies.

Zeleza's chapter begins by trying to redefine African diaspora studies, suggesting the need for a global perspective that transcends the Atlantic framework, then it maps out the institutional, intellectual, and ideological dynamics of diasporic knowledge production, which is followed by an effort to historicise diasporic academic production and linkages with Africa during two crucial periods, the colonial and early post-independence eras. The final part of the chapter focuses on current trends and interrogates some of the typologies that have been advanced to characterise the orientations of the contemporary African academic diaspora based on their ideological inclinations, disciplinary affiliations, or research and publication preferences. A forceful case is made that the contemporary African academic diaspora is a critical mediator in the transmission of knowledges between Africa and the West, essential to the globalisation of African knowledges and Africanisation of global knowledges. As part of the new diaspora they are also a bridge between Africa and its historic diasporas, through whom Africa made enormous contributions to the very foundations of capitalist globalisation.

The epistemic communities in African studies are often divided by nationality, location and language. In this context the question of translation poses evident challenges; translation in the sense of cross-cultural access, reading and interpretation of scholarship on areas of mutual interest produced in different national intellectual traditions. Scholarship across national boundaries or epistemic communities, however constructed, especially in the human sciences, can be conceived as acts of translation, in which scholars grapple with foreign textual and lived experiences—languages, materials, and perspectives—and strive, if they are scrupulous, to understand them on their own terms and in terms that are also meaningful to their own cognitive universe and training. Translation is embedded in the very logic of area studies. Indeed, area studies can be seen, Alan Tansman (2004: 184) has argued persuasively, as a form of translation, 'an enterprise seeking to know, analyze, and interpret foreign cultures through multidisciplinary lens'. The question of the transnational translation of area studies textual products is the subject of Jean-Philippe Dedieu's captivating chapter that explores the problems of translation in France of work produced outside the Francophone world and in English by Francophone scholars resident in Anglophone countries. He shows that the reluctance to translate and engage foreign works, including Africanist texts, in France is rooted in a long and complex history.

Dedieu argues that French national identity consolidated itself, in part, through the selective domestication and consecration of foreign texts, as well as the imperial process of discursive colonisation, which created the 'translated men' of the colonies and the postcolonies who have increasingly found themselves excluded from France as a space of both territorial and linguistic sovereignty. More and more the Francophone scholars have migrated to the Anglophone world, especially to the United States because of restrictive French immigration policies and institutional racism. The relocated Francophone scholars are forced to produce works in English, which are not readily translated in France. The politics of translation reveals the

methods of hospitality for the populations and the publications that are differentially allowed to cross the territorial and literary borders of France. This exclusion has not been confined to Francophone scholars, but also applies to American Africanist texts, and British authors in general. The disregard for American Africanist research, especially that connected with black studies, postcolonial studies and cultural studies, notwithstanding the inspiration some of these interdisciplinary perspectives have drawn from French theory, is based on a perceived epistemological divide between French republicanism and American multiculturalism, and French insularity and suspicion of US hegemony. The problems of the publishing industry in France simply reinforce the political logic of exclusion. The result is that major works produced in the United States, including those from Francophone scholars, tend to be ignored, dismissed, or take too long to be translated.

African Studies in Regional Contexts

The study of Africa has become increasingly global. There is now hardly a region where Africa is not taught in one way or another, where Africanist research is not conducted, where Africa does not feature in academic, popular, or political discourses. But there are enormous variations in the levels of regional and national expertise and commitment to African studies, partly predicated on different histories of economic, political, and cultural engagements with Africa, as well as the relative presence or absence of African diasporas. Also, the production and consumption of knowledges of Africa are filtered through the exceedingly complex, diverse and shifting prisms of local intellectual traditions, ideological tendencies, and institutional cultures. The result is that it is quite difficult to make valid generalisations about the state of or trends in African studies globally, except to say that nowhere does the field constitute a major area of scholarly attention. African studies and Africanists remain at the bottom of the academic ladder, even if in various countries they may stand on different rungs from the floor. This mirrors the position of Africa itself, whose international presence remains rather low save for moments of spectacular disasters, such as during the Rwanda genocide, or the periodic invocations of global panic as is the case with the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The oldest African studies traditions tend to be found in countries with long colonial histories or large African diasporas or both. Knowledge of Africa, however distorted or self-serving it may have been, was an essential part of the colonial project. Similarly, knowledge of Africans, however deficient or stereotypical, was a constituent element of the emerging intellectual fabric of the settler societies based on African slave labour in the Americas. The chapters in this collection examine the development of African studies in some of these countries, including France and Britain, representing the old colonial superpowers, and Germany that lost its colonial empire after the First World War, and the United States, the Caribbean and Brazil, which contain large African diaspora populations. But as already noted, African studies has become a global enterprise, and some of the most dynamic centres can be found in European countries that have no colonial connections with Africa,

such as Sweden and Russia, or Asian countries that have a shared history of European colonialism, such as India and Australia, and others that do not like China and Japan.

In his fascinating contribution, Bogumil Jewsiewicki offers a comparative trans-Atlantic, trans-linguistic mapping of the disciplinary evolution of African studies and its divergent trajectories in France and the United States. While the political and ideological inflatus for African studies is marked by the divergent historical relationship of each country to its African/Black Other, Jewsiewicki contends that a homology exists in terms of generational patterns and shifts in the development of African studies in both countries. These shifts, phases and generations in the United States saw the study of Africa informed successively by developments in Area Studies and Black Studies, while in the French situation, an early colonialist pedigree eventually gave way to a more centralised approach to African studies in various research units and clusters in the academy. Central to Jewsiewicki's explorations of the peculiarities of the development for African studies in the two countries is the existence of what he sees as a certain mnemonic function of Africa in each country. African studies developed and was disciplinarised in both contexts because of the existence of an Africa of memory for the two countries. This Africa harks back to slavery in the case of the United States and colonialism in the case of France.

If African Studies in the US was inspired and sustained by the political imperatives of superpower status and the presence of African Americans, in France it was initially stimulated by the aesthetic influences of African art on modernism whose global capital was Paris and later upheld by the ideology of anti-colonialism on the French left. Theory had greater import in French than in American African studies. It was only from the late 1960s that theory gained currency in the latter as anti-establishment students and faculty sought a new language of protest which they found initially in Latin American dependency theory and later in 'French theory'. In France, the prominence given to theory not only resonated with the tenor of French intellectual discourse, it also served as a means of differentiating French Africanists from colonial officials who launched the field of African studies. The investment in theory, largely Marxist, was facilitated by the absence of a recognised African political base in France, and theory functioned as an ideological expression of solidarity with Africa. While the events of September 11 in the United States promised to reinvigorate area studies, including African studies, in France the riots of November 2005 and attempts to sanitise or positivise the memory of colonisation have forced France to reckon with the place of Africa and Black people in its national imaginary which has implications for African studies in the country. One manifestation of this is the rediscovery, by the French academy, of cosmopolitan, migrant African intellectuals—the Manthia Diawaras, Mamadou Dioufs and Achille Mbembes.

The chapter by John McCracken outlines the broad changes that have taken place in African studies in recent decades in Britain. He recalls the perilous state of the field in the 1980s as the number of Africanist faculty dwindled and resources declined and Britain lost its pre-eminent position in African studies to other countries,

especially the United States. Now looking back more than ten years after he delivered the 1992 presidential address at the biennial conference of the African Studies Association of the United Kingdom, McCracken happily finds that the pronouncements of the impending death of the field were greatly exaggerated. New programmes have been established and a spate of young faculty appointments made, student enrolments have risen, and high quality research is being produced. He singles out for illustration research in three areas: the Christian encounter with Africa, Africa and the environment, and African nationalism revisited. Particularly vibrant has been the expansion of African studies in the related fields of cultural and diaspora studies and in the new universities converted from polytechnics in the 1980s. Much of the energy propelling the growth of African studies, which also poses a challenge to the interdiscipline as conceived historically in Britain, is the expansion of the country's African and Afro-Caribbean communities. Among the challenges he identifies in addition to the perennial inadequacy of resources, is the need to develop more equitable and productive relations between the white and black British Africanists, as well between them and the African academics who have migrated to Britain since the 1990s and are part of new transnational African scholarly networks. He concludes on a cautious but hopeful note about the future.

In the annals of colonial history and European-African relations Germany is a little unique in that it was a colonial power but it lost its African empire after the First World War. It therefore occupies a peculiar position in European African studies lying between the colonial superpowers, Britain and France, and the smaller European powers like the Nordic countries that did not have African colonies. The history of African studies in Germany is as long as it is in Britain and France, but it lost its colonial scaffolding much earlier. Peter Probst's chapter presents a fascinating account of the ebbs and flows in the development of African studies in Germany. It has undergone several phases from its beginnings in the mid-nineteenth century when the field was founded by a small group of scholars and travellers. Although not yet institutionalised, African studies in Germany then was much more international and interdisciplinary than it became later. It was dominated by linguistics, a discipline that retained its supremacy until the early 1970s. During colonialism the growing band of German Africanists, many of whom were former missionaries, focussed largely on deciphering migration and diffusion among African cultural areas, themes that echoed scholarly preoccupations within Germany itself on German migrations and cultural formation. The field became institutionalised in the academy after the colonial period and became quite vibrant in the interwar years, during which anthropology and its functionalist approaches gained ground.

The first two decades after the Second World War was a period of restoration, reorganisation, continuation, and transformation, which saw the emergence of new disciplines especially literature and the arts, and politicisation of the field fuelled by the political pressures of decolonisation and anti-imperialist struggles in Africa and the rivalries between the two communist and capitalist Germany's. In 1969, the German Association of African Studies was formed at the instigation of young

linguists seeking to transform their discipline by exposing it to other fields in African studies. Ironically, this ushered the demise of the dominance of linguistics, and the increasing 'social sciencing' of German African studies as history, law and political science gained prominence. Since unification in the 1990s, African studies in Germany has become both more differentiated and concentrated, thanks in part to funding formulas that favour the institutionalisation of thematic collaborative research centres. One result is that the disciplines are losing ground to interdisciplinary research. Another recent development whose impact on German African studies is likely to rise concerns the entanglement of national and supranational research agendas driven by the growing importance of the European Union project and the creation of EU-wide African studies networks, foreshadowed by the establishment of the Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies in 1991.

The Nordic countries had limited contacts with Africa before and during the colonial period, which were confined to church missions and sporadic trade adventures. Not surprisingly, Nordic researchers were on the periphery in European academic discourses on Africa dominated by scholars in the major European countries. The development of African studies in the Nordic countries largely coincided with African decolonisation and was marked by the formation of the Nordic Africa Institute in 1962 by the five Nordic ministries of foreign affairs. This is the subject of Ann Schlyter's chapter examining the development of African studies in Sweden. She argues that Swedish interest in Africa and African studies was motivated by the imperatives of small power global diplomacy, specifically political solidarity with the liberation movements in Southern Africa and economic support for development cooperation that was spawned by the ideological correspondence between the Swedish social welfare state project with the developmentalist state projects in the new states in Africa. Thus, Africanist research in Swedish universities and other institutions has had unusually strong financial support from the state, which is channelled through the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation, originally an independent governmental body, but now a department within the Swedish development cooperation agency, Sida.

The close ties between research and development cooperation that has driven African studies in Sweden can be seen in the priority given to research on issues related to national resources, the environment and production of food, themes that received almost a third of Sida's funds in the second half of the 1990s. Also featuring high are health and medical research—they received a fifth of the funds. Thus, while African studies in Sweden is spread across a wide range of disciplines, the dominant fields tend to be those whose findings can be consumed by the development cooperation organisations, the main market of knowledge about Africa. The developmentalist thrust of Swedish research funding also means a premium is placed on capacity building in Africa and research cooperation with African scholars on the continent rather than encouraging African scholars to work and settle in Sweden. But Swedish Africanists have not been entirely confined to development-oriented research. Schlyter notes the growth of critical feminist and urban studies, and more

recently work on human rights, conflict and democratisation, a clear indication that research in Sweden, despite its unique features, is responsive to political developments in Africa and theoretical tendencies elsewhere.

African studies has a long, fascinating history in the former Soviet Union. Before the Revolution of 1917 Russia's African scholarship consisted of translations and writings on Ethiopia and South Africa and was strongly anti-British and pro-African (Davidson and Filatova 2001). Soviet African studies started in earnest in the 1920s and underwent several phases that are delineated in comprehensive and insightful detail in the chapter by Irina Filatova. She argues that until the 1980s the field was dominated by the Soviet theory of anti-colonialism first formulated by Lenin and later revised by Stalin, which divided the world into oppressing and oppressed nations and sought to conceptualise the stages and revolutionary potential of the national liberation movement. Official theory framed all academic debates and political battles in Soviet African studies, a field that was controlled in the inter-war years by the Comintern, where representatives from several African countries, beginning with South Africa, participated. The Comintern established the University of Eastern Toilers and other institutions that enrolled students from Africa. Much of the work of the early Soviet Africanists focussed on working class movements and activities, in which South Africa featured high, and debated in a highly ideological and scholastic manner whether or not an African bourgeoisie existed.

The writings of the Soviet Africanists in the 1920s and 1930s were inspired less by academic analyses of African realities than by theoretical and ideological concerns, so that African countries were often not differentiated from one another, a tendency that was reinforced by the fact that the Africanists did not travel to Africa unlike their western counterparts. But out of these very concerns and tendencies, Filatova shows, Soviet Africanists promoted comparative studies of Africa and pioneered the study of topics that did not interest western Africanists until the 1960s, such as the social structure of African societies, the social basis of African nationalism, the nature and possibilities of the postcolonial state, and other topics that were to characterise western Marxist writing on Africa. Soviet African studies entered a new phase in the 1940s and 1950s, thanks to decolonisation and the Cold War. The first generated debate about the nature of real and 'illusory' independence; the former was supposedly engendered by armed struggle and led by the proletariat and followed by reforms, especially nationalisation. The second inspired the need for allies among the newly independent states whose independence was increasingly portrayed as a progressive development and the working class was no longer accorded a leading role, but an active one, in the national liberation movements.

As the need for concrete information rose to inform Soviet policy towards the emerging African states, the work of Soviet Africanists became more empirical and theoretical generalisations gave way to more concrete analyses, a turn marked by the publication, in 1954, of *Peoples of Africa*, a huge study co-edited by the veteran Africanist Ivan Potekhin and Dimtrii Olderogge, in which ethnographic data occupied more space than political history. The work offered the first comprehensive

history of African anti-colonialism published anywhere in the world. The trend established by 1960, Filatova informs us, lasted until the 1980s during which African studies boomed, with the establishment of African departments at several universities and institutes, and expansion to the study of languages, history, politics, economies, literature and cultures, areas in which Soviet academics made some original contributions. Since the mid-1980s African studies has felt the winds of liberalisation and the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was marked by the removal of ideological controls, freer travel to Africa, but there were also severe reductions in state funding. From the late 1990s, Davidson and Filatova (2006) observe, there has been a new momentum in Russian African studies and a revisiting of old and foray into new themes and topics of research.

As noted in the first part of this introduction, the United States boasts the largest concentration of African studies specialists outside of Africa itself. Consequently, the development of African studies in the US is unusually complex. The field has been marked by competing intellectual and ideological traditions, changing disciplinary and interdisciplinary configurations, shifting state mandates for area studies and civic engagements for African causes, and highly racialised contestations over resources, scholarly authority and the very boundaries of African studies among its main practitioners, European Americans, African Americans, and recent African immigrants. Pearl Robinson provides an exhaustive analysis of this rich, varied and tumultuous field. The construction of knowledge about Africa and the power to define and interpret it have been inextricably linked with American history, race relations, and the precarious status of African Americans. Robinson demonstrates that the Africanist enterprise has been characterised by the uneasy co-existence of at least three spatially-differentiated spheres of endeavour, what she calls the world of American research universities that typically focuses on sub-Saharan Africa, the world of diasporic Pan-African scholars, a polyglot realm that includes the historically black colleges and universities that engages the whole continent as well as the diaspora, and the world of African universities and research networks that generally defines Africa in continental terms.

African studies in the United States was pioneered by the scholar-activists belonging to the second tradition, who were ensconced at the HBCUs, especially Howard and Lincoln universities, from W.L. Hansberry to W.E.B. Du Bois to Ralph Bunche. It was not until the post-war era, during the Cold War, that the first tradition gained supremacy, supported by the federal government and foundation funding for area studies for US national security reasons and for the modernisation and internationalisation of the ethnocentric US disciplines. African studies centres and programmes were established at the historically white universities, beginning with Northwestern University in 1948, whose programme was headed by the anthropologist Merville Herskovits. In 1957 the African Studies Association was established. The division between the two traditions was loudly racial and epistemological, which was symbolised by the celebrated clash at the ASA Annual meeting in Montreal in 1969 over the racial composition and research content of white Africanist work. From the

1970s the third tradition began to assert itself as the traffic of African students to the US increased, and especially as the brain drain from Africa gathered momentum during Africa's 'lost decades' of the 1980s and 1990s when African universities were devastated by ill-conceived neoliberal divestments and deflations. This made the contestations within African studies even more complex and fierce, at the same time as significant disciplinary and theoretical transformations were occurring as exemplified by the rise of feminist studies and the 'posts'. A particularly critical development has been the return of diaspora studies, or rather the growing incorporation of diaspora in the research frameworks of white Africanist and immigrant African scholars, which Robinson believes bodes well for the future.

The development of African studies in the United States shares some parallels with the Caribbean. In fact, some of the scholar activists who pioneered African studies in the US were Caribbean immigrants. But as societies in which the African diasporas have historically constituted the majority of the population, the politics of African studies has been different, lacking the racial overtones of the American experience, and premised more on different degrees of identification with Africa. This is the subject of Alan Copley's informative chapter, which traces the different tendencies in the development of African studies in the Caribbean. African studies were rooted in the inscription of Africa in Caribbean cultures and society from religion and diet to music and language, and from the creation of back to Africa imaginaries and movements to the construction of Afrocentric identities. Alongside this popular, organic African presence developed an intellectual tradition, the work of Caribbean intellectuals on African societies, cultures, and histories and their impact on Caribbean modernities and identities. Most of these intellectuals were activists as well, ranging from Marcus Garvey and George Padmore to C.L.R. James, Frantz Fanon and Arthur Lewis, who made significant contributions to the praxis of Pan-Africanism.

But the establishment of African studies as an academic discipline came relatively late during the era of decolonisation. The University of the West Indies was established in 1948 and nearly twenty years later the first academic programme in African history was established by Walter Rodney (1982), whose book, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* became the bible of European indictment for a whole generation of radicalised African and diaspora students, including mine. Gradually African studies courses were introduced in other disciplines and today Africa is taught in disciplines as diverse as history, literature, philosophy, education, French, economics and law. Moreover, the faculty include a growing number of African scholars who have migrated to the Caribbean in the last two decades. My first teaching job when I completed my doctorate in 1982 was at the Mona campus of the University of the West Indies in Jamaica. Copley shows that the development of African studies has been uneven within the region. It is more advanced in the Anglophone than the Hispanic and Francophone Caribbean. In the Hispanic Caribbean research into the African heritage and connections was until recently actively discouraged because of

myths of racial *créolité*—the term used in the French Caribbean—or because it was seen as a threat to the construction of new, post-revolutionary societies as in Cuba.

The country with the largest African diaspora in the Americas is of course Brazil. It is also the country with the most refined national myth of ‘racial democracy’, an ideology that seeks to sanitise and silence Brazil’s immense African demographic presence and cultural heritage. The chapter by Mônica Lima explores the teaching of African history and the history of Africans in Brazil. She notes that for a long time Brazilian historiography concealed and ignored the enormous contributions of African cultures and societies in the formation of Brazil. This was rooted in pervasive racism and attempts to whiten Brazilian society. When Africans and Afro-Brazilians appeared in the more progressive histories, they lost their specificity and disappeared into hapless objects of capitalist accumulation and pillage. They were reduced to helpless victims of foreign greed, a pitiable people subject to exploitation, domination, destruction, slavery, and oppression, rather than as historical subjects, active agents in the making and remaking of their own history and the history of Brazil as a whole. Protracted struggles against marginalisation—epistemic and economic, paradigmatic and political, conceptual and cultural, scholarly and social—finally led to the passage of a law in 2003 making the teaching of Afro-Brazilian history and culture as well as African history compulsory in the country’s public and private schools. The rest of her chapter examines the challenges of turning this mandate into reality, the need to produce and disseminate complex, critical, and empowering histories of Africa and Brazil, in which the historicity and humanity of Africans and Afro-Brazilians are fully recognised, and that incorporate Afro-Brazilian connections to both Africa and the other Afro-American diasporas.

The global reach of African studies includes Asia and the Pacific, where several countries share varying degrees of historical and contemporary connections with Africa. One of these is India, which has had a long history of precolonial trading links and demographic and cultural flows with Eastern Africa and with Africa more generally through the circuits of British colonialism and anti-colonial struggles and the postcolonial solidarities of non-alignment and developmentalism. The chapter by Aparajita Biswas examines the development of African studies in India from the mid-1950s, whose growth owed much to the internationalist vision of India’s leaders, especially Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, both of whom were Africanists in their own right. India’s independence leaders believed fervently in Afro-Asian liberation and resurgence and stressed the need for a clear and critical understanding of the world and the imperative to develop a cadre of academic specialists on various world regions.

Thus from the outset African studies in India had strong state support. It was built on the success of the Indian Council of World Affairs and under the auspices of the Indian School of International Studies. A number of African studies centres were established at various universities with funding from the University Grants Commission, a statutory body for funding university education. Biswas briefly examines three of these centres (at the University of Delhi, Jawaharlal Nehru Univer-

sity, and Mumbai University), noting their considerable successes and continuing challenges. The constraints faced by African studies include bureaucratic and infrastructural impediments, insufficiency of funds, inadequate facilities for libraries and documentation, problems relating to teaching and student enrolment, the lack of coordination between the area studies centres and the Ministry of External Affairs, and the preponderance of political science and international relations at the expense of other disciplines.

Australia is another country in the Asia-Pacific region that shares close imperial ties with settler colonies in Africa, especially South Africa. In fact, as shown in the chapter by Tanya Lyons and Elizabeth Dimock, Australia's engagement with Africa began during the Anglo-Boer War when Australian troops fought on the British side. Events in South Africa have also had a direct academic impact: the years of the anti-apartheid struggles constituted the heyday of African studies in Australia and African migration to Australia has been dominated by waves of South African-born immigrants and others from the other former white settler colonies in the region—Zimbabwe and Namibia. It is also in South Africa that Australian universities have sought to establish a significant institutional presence in Africa. Unlike India and as we shall see below, China, African studies in Australia has never enjoyed state support. In fact, the rise of neoliberalism and Australia's embrace of Asia has drained official funding for Africa.

Lyons and Dimock discuss the development of African studies in Australia by looking at the role of the African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific formed in 1977, the results from a recent survey of the country's 38 public universities, two case studies of African studies centres at La Trobe University and the University of Western Australia, and relations between Africanists and NGOs and other interest groups. The picture is rather disquieting, notwithstanding the heroic efforts of the Africanists and the high quality of their work. The survey showed that only fourteen had any African studies in their teaching programmes, and Africa was more often treated in a comparative context than on its own. History has been the dominant discipline, but the study of African literatures has grown. The rise of the 'posts' in the 1990s invigorated cultural studies, media studies, and musicology. NGOs and African immigrants and students provide potentially valuable constituencies for the field. But the Africanist community remains small and rather beleaguered; it has lost members who have shifted to Asian studies or to the more favourable Africanist markets of the US and Britain.

The establishment of African studies in China from the late 1950s grew out of expanding ties between Africa and China in the aftermath of African decolonisation and the Chinese revolution and shared concerns against European imperialism and for rapid development. As in India, there was strong ideological and fiscal support from the state. Chinese intellectual interest in Africa started much earlier and has undergone important shifts since then as shown in Li Anshan's fine chapter. The history of African-Chinese contacts goes back to the frequent exchanges of products between China and Egypt in ancient times and through the first and second

millennia up to the nineteenth century. But systematic studies of Africa began in modern times and were strongly influenced or mediated through Europe's growing colonial expansion in both Africa and China. During the first half of the twentieth century Chinese publications on Africa consisted of translations or editions of world geography covering some parts of Africa, travel writings that described places in Africa, and books about Egypt long respected as a great and old civilisation equivalent to China's own. It was only after the 1949 Chinese Revolution that African studies was institutionalised and started to flourish with the establishment of African studies centres in various universities and research institutions. Much of the work focussed on African nationalism. The translation of foreign publications expanded, but now preference was given to works by African nationalist leaders, serious works by western or Russian scholars, and reports to government and popular readers.

Anshan argues that the work produced during this period was more pragmatic than academic, largely generated in government units and history departments, and was done collectively. The Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) gravely undermined intellectual life in China as universities were closed for several years and student enrolment and instruction became excessively politicised. But work on Africa including translations, in which support for liberation movements in Southern Africa featured high, did continue. The end of the Cultural Revolution ushered in the most productive period for African studies. Nationalism continued to be a dominant topic of research, but in the 1980s there was greater interest on specific countries and topics from the Atlantic slave trade to the national bourgeoisie. In the 1990s the range of topics expanded to include socialism, democratisation, ethnicity, international relations, cultural studies, economic studies, Sino-African relations—and South Africa received a lot of attention. In addition to the exploding volume of scholarly works, numerous textbooks and reference materials including a general history of Africa and encyclopaedic works on African geography were produced. Clearly, African studies in China has grown from a politically oriented to an academically oriented interdisciplinary and expanded the range of its thematic and topical focus and disciplinary coverage. But challenges remain, which include, according to Anshan, the need to improve contacts between Chinese and African scholars and communication between Chinese Africanists and the general public.

The development of African studies in Japan has been no less remarkable in recent years as shown in the chapter by Masao Yoshida, who notes that by 2001 membership of the Association of African Studies, which was established in 1964, had surpassed 700. This is attributed to the liberalisation of rules for establishing graduate courses in universities (previously regulated by the Ministry of Education) and the need for Africa-related expertise by the aid agencies. During a tour of several Japanese universities and research institutions in 2004 I was highly impressed by the quality and range of Japanese Africanist research. As elsewhere, African studies in Japan exhibits unique national features and preoccupations. One concerns the strong presence of natural scientists from zoology, primatology, botany, earth science, geology, and medical science. This rather unusual interdisciplinary engage-

ment of social and natural scientists is complimented by the growing breadth of fields of study in the social sciences and humanities encompassing political science, law, economics, history, sociology, cultural anthropology, geography, agricultural science, literature, linguistics, arts and crafts, and music.

Towards the end of the paper Yoshida outlines the thematic focus in recent Japanese African studies scholarship in the key areas of social science research. In political studies the work of Japanese Africanists has concentrated on the issues of democratisation, civil society, conflict, and human security. In economic studies economic history and the economic crisis and free-market reforms of the 1980s and 1990s feature prominently. Particularly strong is research on agriculture and rural sociology focussing on the livelihoods or subsistence activities of farmers, herders and fishermen, relations between peasants and the national economy, the internal relations of rural communities, and the development of agricultural technologies. He argues that the preoccupation with community by Japanese Africanists comes out of the fascination and ambivalence among many Japanese about the existence of communal relations in their own society. The rural bias of Africanist research in Japan has meant that relatively fewer scholars study urban societies, but urban sociology and industrialisation studies that examine the dynamics of urban life, rural-urban linkages, the informal sector, small-scale and large-scale enterprises are growing.

Conclusion

Clearly, today African studies or the study of Africa is a vast international enterprise encompassing Africa itself, the former colonial powers of Western Europe, countries with large African diasporas in the Americas, as well as countries in Europe and Asia that have had no overt imperial relations with Africa. As a house of many mansions, a field with diverse, complex and infinitely fascinating disciplinary, interdisciplinary and global dimensions, the days when one country, one centre or one paradigm for that matter dominated African studies are long gone. For some this apparent fragmentation is a source of deep concern, for others it represents scholarly pluralisation that is a cause for celebration. For me it is a sign of the field's maturation. The key pitfalls and possibilities of African studies in the twenty-first century, I would argue, lie in the crises and changes in the systems of knowledge production in Africa itself and the emergence of new African diasporas—including the academic diasporas—riding on the ravages of neoliberal globalisation and the age-old solidarities of Pan-Africanism.

Fundamental to the future of African studies, or rather African and Africanist scholarship, is the revitalisation of African universities and scholarly communities on the continent that have been devastated by more than two decades of misguided structural maladjustment policies. In short, African studies—the production of knowledges on and about Africa—will, ultimately, only be as strong as African scholarship on the continent is strong.⁷ For their part, the new academic diasporas are going to be crucial to the processes, however painful and difficult they may be, of

establishing new, perhaps more equitable, transnational intellectual relations between Africa and the rest of the world. Much is indeed in flux in the architecture of knowledge production, dissemination, and consumption. The disciplines are in as much of a 'crisis'—undergoing profound changes—as the interdiscipline of area studies. For those of us committed to the study of Africa in whatever institutional arrangement of the contemporary academy (disciplinary departments or interdisciplinary programmes), and for whatever reason—epistemic, existential, or even economic—we must pay close attention to these changes and ensure that our beloved Africa is fully integrated in whatever intellectual configurations emerge in the new century.

Notes

1. Among the ones I am familiar with are: the Centre for African Studies at the University of Cape Town and the Institute for African Studies at the University of Ghana. At a recent conference I attended in Pretoria (26–28 February 2006) on African Studies, the absence of stand-alone African studies programmes across the continent was widely noted and the point was made that the issue was the 'Africanisation' of the existing disciplines and interdisciplines.
2. For recent studies on the development and challenges of area studies in the United States see the edited collections by Newil Waters (2000), Masao Miyoshi and H. D. Harootunian (2002), Ali Mirsepassi et al. (2003) and David Szanton (2004).
3. I offer a more detailed analysis and critique of the development of African studies in the United States in Zeleza (2003: 179–227).
4. This is the title of the book by Neil Walters (2000).
5. For a rather sardonic commentary on the explosion of globalisation studies from a publisher, see Peter Dougherty (2004), group publisher for the social sciences and senior economics editor at Princeton University Press.
6. In 1993, the Ford and the MacArthur Foundations launched a joint programme on globalisation, and the Mellon Foundation one on cross-regional issues. A few years later Ford launched its 'Crossing-Borders: Revitalizing Area Studies' programme. For a short and sharp critique of these initiatives and the fluid notion of globalisation driving them, see Hall and Tarrow (1998).
7. It is instructive that there are no African countries that I know of that actively sponsor African studies programmes around the world the way that the major countries in Euro-America do, and some Asian countries such as Japan, Korea and Taiwan do through the Japan Foundation, the Korea Foundation, and the Chiang Ching Kuo Foundation respectively which sponsor programmes in the United States, see Miyoshi (2002).

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