# The Rise of African Studies (USA) and the Transnational Study of Africa

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Abstract: Among Africanists, one of the remarkable events of 1957 was the founding of the African Studies Association. Commentaries on the association's history are slight and understandably celebratory. Exploration of archival and related sources, however, reveals considerable uncertainty and struggle over the construction of the field in the 1950s and 1960s. Those sources range across changing continental, colonial, and racial boundaries and reveal racialized relationships among U.S. scholars and especially foundation officials, British scholars and colonial officials, and, in unexpected ways, scholars in Africa and particularly South Africa. This essay traces the interplay of these forces and the demise of the transnational study of Africa in this period—and points briefly toward today's uncertain future for the study of Africa.

Résumé: Pour les spécialistes de l'Afrique, l'un des évènements remarquables de 1957 a été la création de l'Association des Études Africaines. Les commentaires sur l'histoire de l'association sont limités et naturellement élogieux. Une exploration des archives et sources reliées révèle cependant une incertitude et de difficultés considérables rencontrées lors de l'établissement de ce domaine d'étude dans les années 50 et 60. Ces sources s'étendent sur le changement des frontières continentales, coloniales, et raciales, et elles révèlent des relations racialisées entre les chercheurs et en particulier les officiels américains, les chercheurs anglais et les officiels coloniaux. Ces relations impliquent de manières inattendues les chercheurs en Afrique et en particulier en Afrique du sud. Cet essai retrace les interactions entre ces différents protagonistes et la désintégration de ce projet d'étude transnational de l'Afrique à cette période. Il soulève également de manière brève la question présente sur l'avenir incertain des études africaines.

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It began with a cocktail party at the Hotel Roosevelt in New York City. After almost five years of preparation, a small group of scholars and government, foundation, and corporate officials gathered on March 22-24, 1927, to launch a new professional organization for the study of Africa, the Africa Studies Association (ASA). It was not a meeting of luminaries; there was no media coverage. Participants nevertheless felt the future favored them, for national interest in Africa was growing rapidly. Far south of New York, pan-Africanists and Ghanaian nationalists had just celebrated Ghana's independence two weeks earlier, inaugurating a geostrategic upheaval as European colonizers were rapidly to be pushed out of continental Africa. From the East came an equally propulsive event six months later: the launch of Sputnik, triggering an anticommunist scramble on the part of the U.S. government to win over the hearts and minds of the new nations emerging in Africa and Asia. Pushed from below and above, the study of Africa moved from the far margins of academia toward center stage. The ASA and its members, now known as "Africanists," would come to dominate the study of Africa in the United States and, to a significant extent, the world. Yet in the 1950s and 1960s, as colonial empires were shaken and the Cold War erupted, this outcome was most uncertain. Contrary to existing accounts, which remain restricted to the U.S. and its leading research universities, the study of Africa even in the U.S. in the early post-World War II decades involved a large and diverse cast of scholars and officials reaching across continental, colonial, and racial boundaries.

# The Founding of the African Studies Association (USA)

For those most directly involved, the creation of the African Studies enterprise was an effort without precedent in American higher education. As Philip Curtin, the ASA's president, claimed in 1970, "At the end of the Second World War North America had no real community of scholars specializing on Africa" (1971:358). In the early 1980s Immanuel Wallerstein, another former ASA president, similarly recalled that "scholars in the United States, who prior to 1945, had virtually been one man—Melville Herskovits [the ASA's first president]—now began to invade every remote corner of the continent" (1983:12).

By almost any measure these invasions had impressive results: between 1957 and the mid-1970s hundreds of new students of Africa were dispatched to Africa, received advanced degrees in North America, and found employment at leading universities. The number of full fellows of the ASA increased from thirty-five in 1957 to 291 fellows and 866 total members in 1960, to 1400 members in 1970 (Bay 1991:3). By the early 1970s major programs in the U.S. numbered well over thirty (Lambert 1973:5). New journals blossomed as well, with the first issues of African Historical Studies (later the International Journal of African Historical Studies), the African Studies Bulletin (later the African Studies Review), and Research in African Literatures appearing in 1958, 1968, and 1970, respectively.

These initiatives were not without precedent, however. As U.S. power expanded worldwide during World War II, the need for trusted and dedicated analysts of areas outside the Americas—of which Africa was but one grew rapidly, especially in the military and intelligence services. Early postwar commissions tackled this problem by making the case for the creation of new units within universities dedicated to "non-European" areas of the world (see Fenton 1947; Hall 1947). These calls fell upon deaf academic cars: neither faculty in the traditional disciplines nor university administrators saw any reason to construct new "area studies" units. Colonized Africa, in particular, offered little that qualified as history in the eyes of history departments, had no modern states in the eyes of political scientists, and lacked the modern social-psychological characteristics that formed the subject matter of sociologists. There was one exception: anthropology, to which had been relegated the study of native peoples and cultures (see Stoler 1989). Yet even here, there was little concern with Africa in leading U.S. universities during the 1920s, 1930s, and even 1940s.

Against this background, the initiative to nurture a cohort of scholars of Africa fell to forces outside the university and even the U.S. government. First and foremost was the Carnegie Corporation foundation, which in 1925 had begun to fund projects in Africa under its British Dominions and Colonies program. By World War II grants had totaled over \$1.5 million (well over \$21 million in 2009 dollars). As noted by E. Jefferson Murphy, the official historian of Carnegie's Africa program, at least two-thirds of this money went to the Union of South Africa, and "most of the grants to South Africa benefited whites" (1973:20). Where programs for Africans were established, these followed Andrew Carnegie's personal belief that Africans would benefit most from vocational training-following in the footsteps of Carnegie's support for the Tuskegee and Hampton Institutes in the United States. This drew from the prevailing view, as Murphy blithely notes, that black advancement, in Africa and America, was to take the path of "the acquisition of white, western culture," a path which "was expected to be vocationally oriented and gradual" (1973:20). The colonial paradigm, stressing tutelage for Africans and support for Europeans in Africa, was dominant on both sides of the North Atlantic.

As African nationalists swept aside colonial powers in the 1950s, the major U.S. foundations woke up to new conditions—and they responded, eventually, in ways that broke with the formal colonial paradigm. In 1953 Alan Pifer and Stephen H. Stackpole assumed the leadership of Carnegie's British Dominions and Colonies Program. Pifer, who advanced to become Carnegie's president from 1967 to 1982, had come to Carnegie after a five-year stint as head of the U.S. Fulbright office in London, and he would soon prove to be a driving force in the U.S. Africanist endeavor. In 1948 Carnegie had awarded a grant of \$130,000 (\$1.2 million in 2009 dollars) to Melville Herskovits at Northwestern University to establish courses and a lecture program related to Africa; in 1954 Pifer awarded the first Dominions and Colonies Program grant to Herskovits's program. By 1955 he had

formed an ad-hoc committee on Africa, drawn from scholars on the eastern seaboard, that met regularly in his office. From this group came the March 1957 meeting, funded with a discretionary grant of \$6,500 (\$50,000 in 2009 dollars) that created the ASA, with Herskovits as president. Pifer was pleased with this outcome. As he recorded in a private memorandum to his staff, "After 12 years of discussion and several abortive attempts, a scholarly organization has been formed at last for the African field."

The Ford Foundation, with larger funds at its disposal and fewer ties to London and Europe's colonial network, shortly took a more aggressive stance. In contrast to Carnegie's early funding of the academically focused Herskovits, Ford in 1953 commissioned William O. Brown to survey the state of African studies in the United States. Brown had served in the Office of Strategic Services (the predecessor of the CIA) during the war, and had just left government service to take up a post as a professor of sociology at Boston University, He quickly created an African studies program at Boston (and would become the ASA's third president). His private report to Ford in November 1953 sketched the case for Africa's accelerating importance to the United States, and ended with the forthright conclusion that "the United States might be termed the backward area in the field of African studies." The analysis of Africa was an area, however, where the U.S. could quickly assume the leadership role, for existing centers, he assured Ford, "both in Europe and Africa, are poorly financed and practically all face uncertain futures."3 Even in the United Kingdom, there were "not more than thirty-five professionals" working primarily on Africa, and these were "confined predominantly to anthropological studies." Brown subsequently argued for the support of a small number of programs, primarily at the graduate level, and primarily in the underrepresented social sciences. In 1954 his program at Boston University received a grant for \$200,000 (\$1.6 million in 2009 dollars).

Brown's assessment was clearly pitched against Melville Herskovits at Northwestern, his major competitor. Herskovits had begun his career as an anthropologist studying and measuring Native Americans and African Americans (see Martin & West 1999:85-122). In 1927 he was hired by Northwestern and became the first chair of its anthropology department, and by the 1940s, with the support from the Carnegie Foundation, he had turned to the study of Africa. Among the historically white universities, Northwestern stood alone in such efforts, a fact that Herskovits pressed whenever expanded support for the study of Africa was mentioned nationally. Learning in 1947 that the Conference Board of Associated Research Councils had recommended that support for centers for the study of Africa be delayed until there was a "strong institution of African studies at some University," he wrote to the National Research Council (and circulated to others) a letter arguing that such a center was already "a fait accompli here at Northwestern, and I feel the fact should be made clear to all interested in development of the Africanist field."<sup>4</sup> As he proudly noted, Northwestern was not only offering courses and training students, it was also recognized as a legitimate center by "Africanists in other countries," from the International African Institute of London (IAI) to the Rhodes-Livingston Institute of Northern Rhodesia, for whom Northwestern screened American candidates for research fellowships. Besides the Carnegie money, his program had received a grant of \$235,000 (\$1.9 million in 2009 dollars) from the Ford Foundation in 1954. In private correspondence Herskovits reached out ambitiously even to the CIA, writing to John Foster Dulles in 1957 that "The [African Studies] Association, through its Committee on Research, would be happy to aid you in any way it can." Little apparently came directly from this appeal; the rise of public federal funding, most notably Title VI of the National Defense of Education Act of 1959, would prove far more important in the years to come.

Herskovits, however, was not part of the core group from the northeast that would subsequently forge the expansion of African studies programs across the country. Anti-Semitism lurked in the background; so too did a growing distrust of the domination of anthropology at Northwestern and in the study of Africa generally. In 1958 Herskovits's Presidential Address was carefully pitched to this broader audience, leading Pifer to note privately to his staff that "[Herskovits's] address was marked by an objectivity not always characteristic of him in the past."

In the end Herskovits failed to defend his construction of African studies as a study of traditional African societies, which anthropology was uniquely qualified to do, as opposed to a field of study distributed across the wider social sciences and humanities disciplines. By 1960 the split between Herskovits and other Africanists at Northwestern was open knowledge; the Ford Foundation was itself confronted by Northwestern Africanists organizing separately from Herskovits's operation. But if the growing body of Africanists agreed on the necessity of anchoring and tenuring scholars in the disciplines, this did not prevent competition and conflict among these scholars and their home disciplines. Indeed, in these early years the ways in which "Africa" might be conceived, and how scholars would form an intellectual community, were yet to be worked out. Decolonization, in both its material and intellectual senses, meant and offered very different things to American, European, and African scholars and institutions.

# Confronting the Colonial Paradigm and the Anglo-American Relationship

African nationalist victories would prove critical in opening the space for the elite, academic study of Africa. The rapid pace of decolonization in the late 1950s and early 1960s quickly raised the geostrategic importance of Africa for the U.S., especially given deepening Cold War rivalries. But in comparison to the European colonial powers, whose scholarship remained quite strong in the 1940s, 1950s, and even into the 1960s, work on Africa

in the United States remained in the shadows. At the founding of the ASA in 1957, U.S. scholars recognized their junior status. Indeed, as Gwendolen Carter recalled, there was "vigorous" and "heated" debate at the New York meeting over "whether American Africanists were sufficiently developed to run their own organization or whether it should be attached... to an already functioning British association like the International African Institute in London" (1983:6).

Carter was a member of the ASA's founding group, became its second president, and eventually replaced Herskovits at Northwestern. She also was one of the very few women to participate in the early, highly gendered U.S. Africanist narrative. As late as the early 1970s, no more than 10 percent of U.S. Africanists were women (Lambert 1973:43). There were clear barriers, although they were rarely recorded. As one sympathetic male professor from Columbia put it privately in reviewing an early grant proposal of Carter's to Carnegie, gender should not be held against her: "I strongly favor support for Miss Carter's project... Miss Carter is a cripple, but, one would say, completely unaffected by this, for she moves about in her car and elsewhere on crutches with complete good nature. She gets along easily with men." Despite such a sterling endorsement, Carter did not get the grant. Much later she would comment publicly on the unpredictability of foundation support, which Ford Foundation officials derisively termed as "whining" on her part. 9

Carter shared at least one key attribute with many of the younger men who became leading Africanists: she came to the study of Africa not from the study of native tribes, but from an interest in the study of nation-states in her case as a student of international and Commonwealth affairs. In its original interwar and early postwar formulation, the Dominions, and then the Commonwealth, were naturally civilized, white affairs, including only England, Ireland, and the white settler communities of Australia, New Zealand, and, always somewhat tentatively, South Africa. Independence in Africa and Asia broke up this club by forcing the issue of how to retain imperial networks and, in turn, how to study colonial subjects who were becoming rulers and citizens of independent states. In the end, the desire for imperial connections trumped colonial subject frames: India and Pakistan became members of the Commonwealth in 1947, followed by Ceylon in 1948. For the leaders of the older Dominions, steeped in the historically white Anglo-American alliance, this was all too much. As Jan Smuts-confidante of Winston Churchill, prime minister of South Africa, and writer of the preamble to the U.N. Charter—put it at the time, "Ceylon a Dominion this year? Am I mad or is the World mad?" (cited by Barber 1973:34).

But the feared madness spread, and both Britain and the United States were forced to confront the need to train new Western experts while responding to African nationalist demands for the building of African universities. In the interwar period Carnegie regularly had vetted its projects through the Colonial Office in London, and this continued after the war. As the African nationalist tide swelled, Carnegie sought to draw the new American interests into this network, organizing in 1958, for example, the first of several conferences that brought together American foundations, U.S. university and government officials, and British aid officials. Following colonial traditions, no Africans were invited (see Murphy 1973:62).

Successive conferences and meetings never succeeded in institutionalizing this new network. For the brash Americans, the British were too committed to defending the outdated colonial system and outdated conceptions of Africa, while the Americans appeared to the self-assured British as too rich, too aggressive, too impractical, and too uninformed about the realities of Africa. As a declining Britain withdrew from Africa, and U.S. interest in Africa accelerated, the study and funding of Africa passed into U.S. hands—leading even to U.S. funding of key British journals, scholars, and projects. With this went a sharp transition to the study of modernizing nation-states and peoples, as opposed to a British-centered paradigm formulated around the study of tribal societies or even ex-colonial societies. Decolonization in Africa had led to the decolonization of knowledge production about Africa—or so it seemed.

### **Decolonization and U.S.-Settler Relationships**

Among the legacies of the relationship with Great Britain was a much greater attention to "Anglophone" as opposed to "Francophone" areas—terms which indicated the continuing colonial heritage. Very few U.S. scholars had links to the French academic establishment and even fewer studied Francophone Africa. And among Anglophone areas one area stood out: South Africa. Befitting their status as citizens of an ex-colonial, white settler society with a large black population, U.S. scholars and higher education officials had long debated the correspondence between their situation and that of other white members of the European diaspora. Among these areas South Africa was the inescapable case for comparison.

This was not just a post-World War II phenomenon. Felicitous ties had long linked the Carnegie Corporation, the Phelps-Stokes Fund, and other U.S. organizations with settler officials and educators in southern Africa. Indeed, one might award the title of "world's first African Studies Center" not to the U.S. claimant, Northwestern (founded in 1948), or even to the British contender, the IAI (founded in 1926), but to the Center for African Studies at the University of Cape Town (established in 1920; see van der Merwe 1979:62). As African studies emerged in the United States, white scholars and institutions in South Africa provided an attractive network with which to link.

Carnegie had longstanding ties with liberal white South Africa, and Ford would follow in its wake. In the 1920s Carnegie funded a historic commission into the "poor white" problem (see Bell 2000), and it was a primary underwriter of social science research in South Africa, from the

South African government's own National Bureau for Educational and Social Research (led by a Columbia University graduate, E. II. Malherbe; see Fleisch 1995) to the more enduring and celebrated South African Institution of Race Relations (SAIRR), which received its first Carnegie Grant in 1929 for "research into the native problem and non-political activities" (Race Relations News, June 1973). From the 1920s onward Carnegie was a consistent supporter of the SAIRR (and even earlier support had come from the smaller, black-oriented Phelps-Stokes fund).

While the SAIRR concentrated on supplying liberal English solutions to the racial "problem" posed by subject Africans and Afrikaner governments, the rise of U.S. funding focused attention on two broader and intertwined scholarly traditions in southern Africa: the study of native subjects and the comparative study of the development of the white Dominions. These reflected a central concern of South Africa's rulers: to claim membership among the white Dominions despite their large African population. It was thus hardly surprising that groups centered in different disciplines and institutes in South Africa came to have quite strong ties to scholars in the U.S. who were increasingly concerned with the problems of national development and were familiar with internal native and racial populations themselves.

The dominant tradition in South Africa was anchored in the colonial concern with native tribes and their customs. This subject posed particular problems in areas of white settlement, and as colleges and universities were created for white students, departments dedicated to the study of local "native," "Bantu," or "African" life and languages emerged. The Center for African Studies at the University of Cape Town (UCT) would become the most prominent of these. Its early directors reveal its foundations in social anthropology: A. R. Radcliffe Brown (1920-25), Isaac Schapera (1935-50), and Monica Wilson (1952-73). Accounts of the Center's history trace its origins back to the 1903-05 Milner Native Affairs Commission (Levy 1971:1), which fostered calls for the "scientific" study of the "natives" of South Africa. Post-World War I presentations by the Royal Anthropological Institute to the local Coleman Committee on education led to the committee's recommendation that a school be established to tackle the "problems whose solution is necessary for the future safe development of a country in which white and black live side by side" (cited in Levy 1971:4). In 1920 the Smuts government notified UCT that £3000 (approximately \$180,000 in 2009 dollars) had been budgeted for 1920-21, leading to the university's establishment of the School of African Life and Languages. "The establishment of the school," noted the University Prospectus for 1921, "now provides the necessary correlation between University work and preparation for native administration" (University of Cape Town 1921).

If the British connection laid the foundation for local studies and institutes, separate channels to the United States opened up during the interwar and early post-World War II period. Between 1927 and 1959 Carnegie alone funded more than two hundred visitors from South Africa to

the United States. This endeavor was reforged and expanded in 1959 by Melvin Fox of the Ford Foundation. Fox deputized Vernon McKay, who had recently left his position as chief of the Political Section of the African Research Bureau at the State Department for Johns Hopkins University, to investigate and organize a conference in South Africa on the subject. From these efforts would emerge the U.S.-South Africa Leader Exchange Program (USSALEP), which was administered by the African-American Institute (AAI).

These visits deepened the U.S.-South African network, as well as appeals from South African scholars for closer ties and financial support. On several visits to the U.S. in the late 1940s Isaac Schapera, for example, engaged Carnegie's William Stackpole "at length" about upgrading the University of Cape Town's School into an "African area institute." In 1948 Stackpole in return pressed the prospect of merging UCT's efforts with those of Stellenbosch University—something UCT did not pursue. 11 Schapera's successor, Monica Wilson, had similar ties to the Carnegie Corporation and other U.S. foundations reaching back to the time when her husband, Godfrey Wilson, was the first director of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute in Northern Rhodesia in the late 1930s. The Rhodes-Livingstone Institute was an even more direct colonial product: created and funded with government and mining company support, its stated purpose was to follow up on the work of "administrators, compound managers, and missionaries" who had "always made some study of the people among whom they work." 12 By the mid-1960s Wilson herself would be pursued by a U.S. university for a distinguished professor post at Binghamton University. 13 UCT, for its part, reciprocated Carnegie's largesse by giving Pifer an honorary doctorate in 1984.

These ties solidified as U.S. spending on African studies accelerated. A key role was played by white South African scholars who had settled in the U.S., from C. T. Loram, the first Chair of the SAIRR who later left South Africa for Yale, to most notably C. W. de Kiewiet, who played a pivotal, senior role in the early construction of African studies in the United States. C. W. de Kiewiet had received his B.A. from the University of the Witwatersrand and his Ph.D. at the University of London under William Macmillan, and became known for his economic histories of South Africa that were solidly rooted in the comparative Dominion tradition (see Saunders 1986). In 1929 he left England for a post at the University of Iowa, and after World War II became a university administrator, eventually leaving Cornell University in 1951 to become president of Rochester University. From Rochester he worked closely with southern African scholars and U.S. foundations, particularly with Melvin Fox at the Ford Foundation. When the Ford Foundation funded a critical committee to review the state of African studies, in preparation for a series of major grants by Ford and other foundations, de Kiewiet chaired it (although Gray Cowan apparently wrote the final report).

The "Report on African Studies," presented just before the first annual meeting of the African Studies Association in 1958, caused a major stir when it recommended that one major national center be established. While this proposal to create a U.S. analogue to the IAI in England was defeated, the recommendation matched the report's underlying Anglo-South African colonial orientation in suggesting that "every Africanist should, of course... have a modicum of anthropological training." Scholars should nevertheless be trained, it argued, in multiple disciplines, and be rooted in the disciplines rather than receive a degree from and work in a African studies program or department (Cowan et al. 1958:3). In the report's view, "the established disciplines can provide standards of scholarship which are particularly valuable in a new field which otherwise might easily come to be dominated by charlatans and dilettantes" (Cowan et al.1958:32). This was of course a gate-keeping measure, designed to exclude those with links to more popular African educational efforts, particularly in the black community and colleges, as discussed below. The triumph of African nationalism and independence meant an even greater need for new scholars and programs, it argued, since "after all, right now Africans have to recognize the realities of their own continent. To do this the best Western minds must still continue to serve them" (Cowan et al. 1958:36).

The twin surge in the 1950s of the civil rights movement in the U.S. and African nationalist movements in apartheid South Africa threatened to destabilize old affinities among white government and white scholars on both sides of the Atlantic. This did not worry the authors of the report. South Africa, after all, was the home to African studies on the continent, and while the South African government was "in some disfavor," this was "somewhat natural, yet not altogether sound. The distaste with which South African policies are regarded should not lead to a scholarly boycott." In the Committee's view the real problem was instead the possibility of "a fatal unrest amongst the Africans" (Cowan et al. 1958:51). This reflected the influence of de Kiewiet, who from his position as president of Rochester University would continue to work for and through the large U.S. foundations, while corresponding on the side with British and especially South African colleagues, most notably Leo Marquard in Cape Town.<sup>14</sup>

In the end, "unrest amongst the Africans" did prove fatal. South Africa was increasingly isolated, particularly after the Sharpeville massacre in March 1960. When foundations recommended de Kiewet for a commission in Ghana, they were told he was "politically unacceptable." Foundations began to close down their South African operations as they came under pressure, on the one hand, from protestors in the United States, and on the other hand, from a recalcitrant South African regime that began to deny visas, for example, to even the most carefully chosen candidates for the USSALEP. As a confidential internal review of USSALEP operations up to 1961 reported, "For some time the AAI had been under fire from leftists because of its moderate approach to the problems of Africa." It then cited

as typical an attack in the black press on a new form of "gentle imperialism," which denounced the AAI as "an organization, which, for all intents and purposes, had decided for itself what the American people should know about Africa and what Africans should know about America. By sending to Africa as part of the exchange program only white Americans... the Institute appears to have documented charges against it of being 'a white folks' organization to teach white folks about Africa in as safe a manner as white folks are prepared to learn." 16

After the 1960 Sharpeville massacre in South Africa, funders pulled the USSALEP from the hands of the African-American Institute, only to have the South African government stop issuing visas to many exchange candidates. The program officers professed puzzlement since, as they stated, "we have not exchanged a single person whose visit to South Africa (or to America in the case of South African non-whites [sic]) has caused the South African Government the slightest embarrassment." Indeed, "if care is taken to guide carefully selected Non-White exchangees... Non-Whites can be trusted to visit the United States, and to remain tactful and discreet in their public utterances."17 While the white Americans sent to South Africa to consult their counterparts ranged from scholars to police brigadiers (from the U.S. South no less), black South Africans were invariably secondary school teachers, ministers, or agriculturalists. Even such careful attention, however, could not salvage the legitimacy of such programs as the antiapartheid movement grew in strength. As these pressures accelerated, and as U.S. Africanists grew in number and stature, the advice and opinions of persons like de Kiewiet inexorably waned. This marked not simply the end of the effort on the part of British (and South African) scholars to tutor U.S. Africanists, but also the end of any attempt to revise and revive older colonial networks in the wake of war and decolonization.

# Back Home: African Studies and the African American Study of Africa

The forging of African studies through consultations across British, South African, and U.S. Africanist networks involved, by all official accounts, very few women and very, very few Africans or African Americans. Existing histories of the period also make invisible the struggle by Africanists to usurp rival black traditions and institutions dedicated to the study of Africa. Africanists would succeed in displacing an earlier, transnational black scholarly tradition in the U.S., putting in its place a narrower intellectual endeavor carried out at historically white universities. The political decolonization of Africa in this period did not lead in this sense to any easy deracialization of knowledge production.

The study of Africa had been part of black intellectual life long before 1957. Redemptionist, vindicationist, and popular in its early orientation—and propelled from below by black student demands at historically black colleges and universities—the black study of an international Africa became

steadily more widespread and sophisticated in the United States in the early part of the twentieth century as self-trained historians gave way to university-educated scholars. Carter G. Woodson, a professional historian located outside the formal academy, led the way, and in 1915 he established the Association for the Study of Negro (now Afro-American) Life and History. The Association soon became the premier U. S. organization concerned with the study of the African American and other African-related experiences (see Meier & Rudwick 1986; Shepperson 1974). Journals published by these and other black intellectual networks, such as The Journal of Negro History, The Journal of Negro Education, Phylon, and the more popular Negro History Bulletin, became the leading outlets for scholarly research on Africa in the United States.

It was the unheralded William Leo Hansberry, however, who led the charge inside the university. As Kwame Alford recounts, Hansberry arrived at Howard University in 1922 and against great odds, and with support of African American students inspired by the 1920s "New Negro" revolt, established an extraordinarily popular set of pan-African courses (see Alford 1998; Harris 1974). Howard quickly became a center for such work, with Fisk and other historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) moving down a similar road. Indeed, to study and teach about Africa in the first half of the twentieth century invariably meant working at black colleges and universities-even Melville Herskovits and William O. Brown, to mention but two of the most influential early Africanists, found early employment at Howard.

In the 1930s Hansberry became increasingly isolated within the university, however, having come under attack by scholars with better links to the historically white universities, foundations, and increasingly powerful scholars like Herskovits and Brown. Even more pragmatic and credentialed scholars, most notably the celebrated Ralph Bunche, who chaired the political science department at Howard after receiving his Ph.D. from Harvard, found themselves forced to enter uncomfortable apprenticeships to scholars at historically white institutions in the U.S., Britain, and South Africa who controlled access to research funds, foundations, and fieldwork opportunities (see Anthony 2010:20; Edgar 2010:26-27). In Bunche's case there was an alternative: after working for the OSS during the war, he fully departed the academy for a celebrated career working for the U.S. government and then the United Nations.

By the postwar period, life for pan-Africanists like Hansberry and his supporter, W.E.B. Du Bois, became much harder, particularly as the Cold War intensified and increasingly came to shape academic life and especially funding. <sup>18</sup> Both came under fierce attack even at Howard (see Alford 1998:59-101). By the early 1950s E. Franklin Frazier dominated the Howard environment, and he struggled to present his best case to private and public funders. Frazier was well known for his commitment to the separation of continental Africa and Africa-America; there was literally no room for Hansberry in the new African studies program being constructed at Howard. When Hansberry applied for a Ford Foundation fellowship in 1954 Frazier, his campus colleague, was scathing in his evaluation as part of the Ford screening committee. Frazier summarily rejected the proposal, writing that "the project is manifestly too broad" and that "at his age the applicant should be able to produce some solid indications of real scholarship in the form of articles in scientific publications." Indeed, when Howard's African program was established, Hansberry heard of it from his students while he was in Liberia—finding upon his return to the university that the grant had been made under "arrangements which excluded my courses in African Studies from the program and therefore from any of the benefits accruing from the grant" (cited in Harris 1974:16–17).

Frazier was at this time the most prominent black scholar in the discipline of sociology and African studies; he would be elected to the presidencies of both the African Studies Association and the American Sociological Society. Still, Frazier—like Du Bois and others of his cohort—never held a permanent position in a white university (see Green & Driver 1978:44–45). With Frazier as head of Howard's African program—surely the most extensive of any in the country across the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s—Howard might have been expected to be a strong competitor for the outpouring of private and public funding for African studies. Despite his best efforts, however, even Frazier faced insurmountable difficulties.

The problem was not that Frazier was a radical pan-Africanist or black nationalist, championing Africa's heritage and need for self-reliance. Indeed, Ford Foundation officials recorded at the time quite strong impressions to the contrary. As one Ford consultant stated in a review of a modest Howard request (\$15,000 per year over three years, shortly reduced to \$10,000 per year), "Professor Frazier believes that a large proportion of the African students who come to Howard and a sizeable share of the American students there approach African problems on the basis of insufficient knowledge and from a biased emotional or political viewpoint. He deplores this approach." The aim clearly was to separate the new Howard proposal from Howard's pan-African and activist heritage represented by scholars like Hansberry and Chancellor Williams, among others. Thus "Professor Frazier declared firmly that Howard should eschew undertaking a flamboyant, highly publicized program under which it would loudly advertise itself as a great center of learning and research concerning Africa." <sup>21</sup>

In addition, such an aim could hardly threaten the ambitions of Brown at Boston or Herskovits at Northwestern, particularly after they effectively defined the new field of African studies as a graduate-level endeavor from which Howard, with its focus on undergraduate programs, would be excluded by definition. Thus even Brown (who had been a classmate of Frazier's at Chicago) could support a small grant, writing privately to Ford that Howard's request "is a modest proposal and realistically focused within the framework of Howard University's possibilities.... [T]he prospect is worth

the small investment."22

By the late 1950s this situation changed as multiple African studies centers were established in the north and Frazier retired. Evaluations of Howard by northern Africanists and foundation officials subsequently turned harsher. On the one hand, foundation officials like Alan Pifer could lecture on and promote African Americans' accelerating personal and professional interests in Africa. As he said in a lecture in Ibadan (1948),

The coming of independence to Ghana, has I believe, had a profound psychological effect on some American Negroes. It has stimulated in them a sense of pride in their Africa past. Among these individuals are intellectuals, professional men and women and business men. Their numbers are as yet small but perhaps no smaller relatively than the numbers of Americans of European descent who have a special interest in Africa.

On the other hand, at home and in private, there was no encouragement of such interests. In a confidential supplement to the 1958 de Kiewiet "Report on African Studies," the review committee of northern scholars laid out the white Africanist position straightforwardly. They noted that Howard University was "the largest Negro University in the United States and, therefore, should have, according to Staff members, some special interest in Africa." The report then proceeded step-by-step to refute any such claim. Thus "the members of the [Howard] staff, while evidently quite competent in their fields, particularly Frazier, did not appear to us to have any very strong drive nor were they particularly concerned with new fields." Overall, "the whole impression of the program is one lacking in both dynamism and the realization of what is precisely going on in the field of African studies in the United States." The work being done at Howard "could equally well be done at any other university." 23

This conclusion was never applied to any historically white university. It was, however, held to be true for all black universities: "the general conclusion about Howard would appear to resolve doubts in our mind about the prior claim of Negro universities to the preferred place in African studies in the United States." Indeed, "the very reason for the existence of Howard as a Negro university is slowly disappearing." With Frazier's death in 1962, Howard was effectively deleted from the Africanists' and foundations' landscape. There was to be little place in new African studies programs for the pan-African and transnational traditions that had been forged by black scholars like Du Bois, Hansberry, and Williams.

#### Reconstruction across the Atlantic

One of the difficulties that Howard and other black universities presented to the Africanist agenda was the historic role of historically black colleges and universities in hosting African students. The historically white universities welcomed very few African students throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Kwame Nkrumah, for example, was but one of many who attended and received a degree at a HBCU (in his case a B.A. from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania in 1939). In the mid-1950s Howard alone still attracted, as Ford Foundation officials noted in their own internal memoranda, "more native African students (50–60/yr) than any other American University." As African studies programs expanded, this flow was diverted to the historically white colleges and universities. It had long been felt by senior scholars at northern research universities that African visitors had little to learn at black colleges even in the days when they were excluded from historically white universities. Herskovits in the late 1930s had even recommended that African visitors "should spend much more time on Indian reservations, since the Indian problem is much more comparable than our Negro problem." 25

These attitudes quickly shifted under the new conditions of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Northern U.S. scholars, universities, and foundation officials launched a steady campaign to reorient African students to the rising centers of African studies in the north. Studies by Howard scholars showing that African students faced considerable racism and adjustment problems in the United States were countered by studies contracted by the Twentieth Century Fund and the Social Science Research Council. The latter concluded that "adjustment problems" were few, and greater numbers of Africans should be brought to the U.S. for study provided that "such candidates be placed in northern schools." New programs were subsequently set up and run through the Institute of International Education (IIE). As Herskovits, ever the aspiring gatekeeper, had advised the Ford Foundation, IIE was far more reliable than previous networks with ties to Africa-America, such as the Phelps-Stokes Fund, which Herskovits argued still had a "missionary spirit and the conviction that 'they know all the answers." 27

U.S. scholars and funders faced greater difficulties on the opposing side of the Atlantic as colonies became independent states and new nations demanded control and expansion of their own institutions of higher education. Centers in the old colonial powers came under attack, most notably the International African Institute in London. When Lord Hailey stepped down as IAI chair in 1947, his farewell address illustrated well the paternalist attitude toward Africans: "We should use every endeavor to secure the collaboration of those Africans whose attainments in scholarship may fit them to take a share in our work." 28

Such views held for quite a long time. In the mid-1960s five former colonial governors, for example, still played prominent roles on the IAI's Executive Council, much to the disapproval of African members. As a confidential report by James S. Coleman to the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations noted at the time, the addition of a few Africans to the Executive Board did not prevent "strong resistance by many African scholars." Vice Chancellor Kenneth Dike of the University of Ibadan was vice-chairman

of the IAI's Council, but even he refused to attend any Council meeting held outside Africa—and thus attended none. Coleman's interpretation of Dike's resistance, as expressed in a note to Ford, was that "to contend that all associations interested in African must be directed and centered in Africa, is sheer xenophobia." In Coleman's eyes, most IAI critics were "Afrophiles and African nationalists" embodying an "inverted racism." But this, of course, was not Dike's position (and in any case, the charge of privileging their own would have been better placed at the feet of the IAI).

Resistance by African scholars and institutions to domination by both Britain and the United States deepened over time, a story that for the most part remains to be written. In the early days of the postindependence period, both vindicationist and pan-Africanist impulses were often carried back to Africa by graduates returning from U.S. universities. By the mid-1960s new centers or institutes of African studies were proliferating, including the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ibadan (established in 1962), the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ife (1962), the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana (1962), the Institute of African Studies at the University College of Sierra Leone (1963), and the Center of African Studies at the University of Zambia (1966). At the vast majority of universities such units were never proposed, however, and by the late 1960s, when personal ties to the pan-African programs at African American schools had faded and been forgotten, an open attack on the assumptions and practitioners of African studies in Africa, most notably anthropology, became very widespread.

Black South African scholars, banned for both racial and political reasons, played an important role in this process, with Archie Mafeje and Bernard Magubane publishing influential attacks in 1971. Mafeje had been a student of Monica Wilson at UCT and subsequently went to Cambridge, where he received a Ph.D. in anthropology and rural sociology working with Audrey Richards. Attaining the Ph.D. was not without difficulty, for although Mafeje wrote much later that Richards "never doubted my intellectual integrity" (1998), Richards was actually quite acerbic in private in her judgment of his work. Writing to Monica Wilson in 1968, she stated with exasperation that "I took a lot of trouble over Archie but reckon him as my most significant failure as a research student" and specifically a "complete failure" in field work. As for his dissertation, she said that it was "slight but very well written as are most of his things and as one of his outside examiners is an economic agriculturalist who does not know the material very well, I think it may be all right!" 31

Mafeje's reception in the North was not uncommon, and led not only to the rejection of anthropology at most new African universities, but also a continuing effort, long past the period under review here, to escape the models and dictates of Africanists from the global North. As part of the worldwide expansion of higher education in those decades, African universities often drew upon European or North American models—and indeed

were often initially staffed by expatriates from England or France. Advanced training, particularly at the Ph.D. level and certainly in terms of theoretical and methodological advances, was dominated, as the Mafeje case illustrates, by metropolitan centers for a very long time. Yet this only served to drive African scholars to establish their own research networks, agendas, centers, and perspectives. As Mkandwire has noted, the first postindependence generation, "finding themselves scattered all over the continent, cut off from the research networks dominated by expatriates and isolated in small departments or institutions... strove to set up continental and subregional organisations." Moreover, "this generation was self-consciously anti-neo-colonial and considered decolonisation of national institutions and even the intellectual terrain as major tasks" (1995:9).

One result of these endeavors was the effort by African scholars and institutions to isolate themselves from visiting "academic tourists," as a common formulation put it. By the early 1960s African scholars were beginning to decry the flood of American students and scholars who took up time on often unknown or questionable research projects. Africans began to demand reciprocity, and began to control the unchecked access foreign researchers had enjoyed. By 1965 these problems were occurring with such frequency that the ASA dispatched two senior scholars, William Hance and Philip Curtin, on a Ford Foundation-funded tour of Africa to examine the difficulties U.S. Africanists were recounting. As both internal confidential reports and more public conference presentations indicate, U.S. scholars and students often ran into local resistance. Local university and national authorities were even beginning to require clearance for foreign research on an increasingly wide basis—to the dismay of many Africanists who had previously ranged freely across the continent. 32

While rarely acknowledged today, as the U.S. Africanist community expanded, it was met by an broad emerging consensus by scholars on the continent: the production of knowledge needed to take place in continental Africa, by Africans. As a result, throughout the 1970s and 1980s African scholars and Euro-North American scholars often pursued their work quite separate from one another, with African research centers rarely engaging in collaborative research with Northerners by choice. This marked another key rupture, as the rise of the U.S. African studies establishment irrevocably marked the demise of the multiple, transnational commitments and conceptions of the first half of the twentieth century. As the Cold War accelerated in the North, ties with radical nationalists and pan-Africanists were severed outright, with an iron curtain arising in the mid-Atlantic, separating the study of African-America from continental Africa.

These tendencies were enhanced on the U.S. side of the Atlantic as federal support quickly came to displace the formative efforts by foundations and the early Africanist elite of the late 1950s. Federal fellowships, and especially the significant and recurring funds that sustained the federally funded ("Title VI") African studies centers, created a cohort of faculty at

major research universities who organized collectively through the African Studies Association. For many this marked progress. Yet much was lost, too, for the new Africanist model marked in many ways the parochialization and enhanced stratification of the study of Africa. Whatever their differences, the preceding frameworks deployed by colonial, settler, and black scholars had at least one conviction in common: that the study of colonial systems, settler dominions, and especially the global black world all rested on the conception of a larger, transnational unit. This was markedly different from the nation-state unit that modernizing academic Africanists embraced and that severed continental Africa from the world to the North, West, and East. As these transnational perspectives gave way to modernizing national ones in the 1960s, so too was the study of Africa increasingly compartmentalized, as it became centralized in the U.S. at the historically white research universities, while on the continent African scholars sought to create their own networks.

#### Denouement: Consolidation, Resistance, and Reform

This intellectual and institutional construction was based on national units of analysis that assumed the stability of the international political order and U.S. hegemony that emerged in the wake of decolonization. These foundational factors no longer hold, as contemporary forces of "globalization" and "anti-globalization," whatever we take these terms to mean, have increasingly eroded national territories and intellectual communities, including the African studies community. While the implication of these latter forces is beyond the scope of this essay, it is worth recalling in this context that transnational conceptions of and struggles over the meaning of Africa long predate the present. If African studies became reduced after World War II to largely the study of sub-Saharan Africa in the United States, this development did not go uncontested.

The most notable challenge within the institutions of African studies was mounted during the late 1960s, when African American students and scholars, speaking with the voice of resurgent black power, called for the transformation of the academy through greater black representation and the greater relevance of academic research to the black struggle and community (see Martin & West 1999:97–106). At the 1968 annual meeting of the ASA a black caucus emerged to give voice to this movement, following the emergence of black caucuses in the core disciplines and their associations. It called for the ASA to "immediately direct its energies toward rendering itself more relevant and competent to deal with the challenging times and conditions of black people in Africa, in the United States and in the whole black world" (Clark 1969:7). The ASA could hardly deny the lack of black voices and perspectives, as it had few black members, a voting roll restricted to its elite "fellows," and only one black person in a policy position.

In the following year representatives of the Black Caucus, now transformed into the African Studies Heritage Association, seized the stage at the annual meeting in Montreal as the ASA president was speaking and demanded "that the study of African life be undertaken from a Pan-Africanist perspective" (Clarke 1969:7). Long and tumultuous negotiations between the ASA and the AHSA ensued. By early 1971 these exchanges had ground to a halt, with the AHSA, along with a number of senior black scholars and ASA board members, severing ties to the ASA. As the AHSA's president, John Henrik Clarke, framed it at the time, the ASA was "essentially a white organization and there has been no overt attempt to solicit black membership until very recently.... Most of the papers [at annual conferences] are presented by white scholars and their concern, in the main. is African anthropology and African politics. There were very few papers presented on general African history....<sup>33</sup> Pressure from below, Clarke argued, would push forward a new pan-African research program. The immediate impact on the ASA was marginal, however, and much of the pan-African impulse was channeled into the building of alternative black studies programs on campuses across the country. As others have charted, the role of student protest on the one hand, and foundations (and especially the Ford Foundation) on the other, were central elements in the effort to establish black studies programs across the country (see Rojas 2007; Rooks 2006).

U.S. scholars and institutions were not alone in facing dissident forces from below in this period, for all along the coastlines of the black world protests against the European-centered postwar academy emerged, grew, and in many cases became linked to one another. In South Africa, protests against white liberal universities erupted in the wake of the University of Cape Town's withdrawal of a job offer to Archie Mafeje in order not to offend the apartheid government (see Hendricks 2008). Meanwhile, students on black South African campuses gave birth to the Black Consciousness movement, which rejected Anglo-American educational models and, more critically, severed ties with white-dominated student and university organizations. Student protests against U.S. and European influence mushroomed across the rest of the continent as well (see West & Martin 2009:26-31). In the Caribbean parallel student protests broke out across the University of West Indies campuses, most notably the rebellion surrounding the deportation of the popular and pan-Africanist lecturer Walter Rodney (Payne 1983). Following his expulsion from Jamaica, Rodney taught at the University of Dar es Salaam, which became a center for radical and nationalist historians in the period (see Falola 2002:251-54). It was from there that he produced and published his highly influential How Europe Underdeveloped Africa.

Under these pressures African universities and states moved to curtail unsupervised foreign researchers even further. As the University of Tanzania calendar for 1971–72 noted, "All applications for permission to conduct

research must be channeled through the University of Dar es Salaam... Only research projects which are beneficial to the University and the country will normally be considered" (cited in Harlow 2008; emphasis in original). The effort to establish regional and continental organizations also accelerated, leading to the formation, for example, of CODESRIA in Dakar, which served to strengthen continental African scholars' networks and independence from Northern academic (but not philanthropic) organizations (see Mkandawire 2006; Beckman & Adeoti 2006). On the American side of the Atlantic the radical push from below led to the creation of African American studies and its institutionalization—a process not without its own difficult history within the academy and research community.

As these brief comments suggest, very little of the insurgent agenda was institutionally successful in the short or medium run. A potentially far more formative challenge to the divisions of labor and knowledge set in place in the 1950s and 1960s has been posed by the neoliberal Thermidor of the 1980s and 1990s, which successfully sought to discipline radical insurgencies and undermine state-funded institutions of higher education. The last several decades have not been kind to scholars of Africa, whether in the Americas or Africa. And yet here is the paradox: while it achieved many of its aims, the neoliberal onslaught has unwittingly undermined the very stability of the more conservative elements of the compacts established in the early postwar period.

In part this was due to fiscal effects: in the U.S. and especially Great Britain, state and foundation funding for area studies, and especially African studies, came under sustained attack, with core disciplines reasserting their primacy. The narrowing and militarization of U.S. ties to Africa has also had an effect, most notably in the rollback of U.S. African studies programs' collective rejection of the military and intelligence funding (which had been established due to pressure from below). As is commonly known, the effect of structural adjustment policies was far more dire in Africa, leading to an ever-increasing gap between the conditions of work in Africa and the U.S. and Europe. These conditions are very far indeed from the boom years of the 1950s and 1960s, when salaries were often higher in Africa than in Europe, leading European scholars to depart for African universities. The decline of U.S. power, and concomitantly the loss of belief in U.S.-led modernization, industrialization, and progress, has had an even more unsettling effect.

Taken together, these forces have generated not only ever-increasing inequality, but also instability in the structures of the production of knowledge worldwide. "Globalization," in the basic sense of an increasing integration of and flows across academic markets and areas, as well as increasing challenges to the paradigms and programs established under United States hegemony, has opened up the possibility of new transnational connections and programs. As barriers to migration and cooperation across continental boundaries have fallen, for example, there has been an ever greater "brain

drain" to the North. Yet at the same time these new processes have opened up the prospects of greater cooperation among African, American, European, and more recently Eastern institutes, programs, and scholars. The academic boundaries between continental Africa, Africa-America, and the North that had underpinned African studies for so long have visibly begun to dissolve due to the very actions designed to create a stable, neoconservative world order.

We do not know where this complex mix of forces, opportunities, and constraints may lead over the course of the coming decades. Will the study of Africa in the United States in the first half of the twenty-first century be as transnational in inspiration as it was in the first half of the twentieth century? We do not know. Of one thing we may be certain, however: the movement away from the area studies complex created and led by the United States after 1957 opens up the possibilities of a new beginning. Expectations and actions promoting a post–American-centered world, and all that might mean for Africa and its descendents, can only be welcomed.

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- 17. "Report on the progress and value...," 40.
- 18. There has been considerable if uneven work on the impact of the Cold War on U.S. scholarship and university life; see among others Chomsky et al. (1997) and Simpson (1998). There is, however, relatively little tracing of its direct effect over time on the study of Africa, something of increasing interest given the recent escalation of the importance of U.S. military and intelligences ties with, and funding for the study of, Africa. For one reminiscence, see Wallerstein (1997).
- 19. E. Franklin Frazier Papers, Box 131-20, Folder 3, Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.
- 20. Memo, From John M. Thompson, March 3, 1954, "Pre-grant Investigative Visit

- to Howard University, March 1, 1954," Howard Grant file, PA54-49 file, reel 0402, FFA.
- 21. Memo from John M. Thompson.
- 22. William O. Brown to Leon Swayzee, January 29, 1954, Report file 003340, FFA.
- 23. L. Gary Cowan, et al. "Confidential Supplement to 'Report on the State of African Studies," August 1958, Report file 000625, 51-2, FFA.
- 24. L. Gary Cowan et al., 51.
- 25. Carnegie Corporation of New York Records, Grant Files, Office of the President, Record of Interview, September 1, 1938, Box 169.19, CUA.
- 26. Africa Discussions, Melvin Fox Meeting with Mr. Alvin Zallinger, Boston University, May 28, 1956, Report file 003340, FFA.
- 27. Memo, Office of President, Record of Interview, June 4, 1948, Box 619.19 Grant files, Melville J. Herksovits, 1938-63, FFA.
- 28. James S. Coleman, "Report on a Survey of African Studies," October 2, 1966, Report No. 000602, 19, FFA.
- 29. Coleman, "Report on a Survey of African Studies, 20.
- 30. Audrey Richards to Monica Wilson, February 24, 1968, Monica Wilson papers, BC880, B6.14, UCT.
- 31. Audrey Richards to Monica Wilson, July 16, 1968, Monica Wilson papers, BC880, B6.14, UCT.
- 32. For one of the former, see Confidential Memo to the Board of Directors, African Studies Association, From William A. Hance, "Report on Exploratory Mission to Selected Educational and Scientific Institutions in Eastern Africa, June 1-September 4, 1965; File R62, General Correspondences 1965, Reel 100E, RAC. For one of the latter, see Research Liaison Committee, African Studies Association, "Summary Report of the Conference on the Position and Problems of the American Scholar in Africa," November 18-19, 1966, File R62, General Correspondences 1967, RAC.
- 33. "Lecture notes, African Studies in the United States," John Henrik Clarke Papers, Box 17, folder 27, 15, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.