

THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL SCIENCE IN AFRICA PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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Hide nothing from the masses of our people. Tell no Lies. Expost lies whenever they are told. Mask no difficulties, mistakes, failures. Claim no easy victories... ***

INTRODUCTION

In this paper we look at the problematic posed by the complex relationship between research on African societies, Social Science and the Development process of African countries. The paper is divided into three parts. In part one we briefly look at the evolution of research on African societies during the colonial period. This part is called the Historical Perspective. In part two we examine the inherited institutions and the development of both institutions and structures of higher educations and social science research in Africa during the post-colonial period. In part three of the paper we examine the development or evolution of the content of social science since independence to the present, and briefly analyse the nature of theories and concepts in relation to the evolution of the economies of African countries. Finally we briefly make certain tentative suggestions concerning the possibilities of future development of social science in Africa.

PART I – THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The establishment of colonialism in the continent of Africa and the consequent deepening of capitalist structures of exploitations throughout the continent set a chain of reaction throughout the continent. The first major response of African societies was military resistance to colonial occupation of their countries. This resistance started at the end of the last century but was eventually defeated militarily because of the poor military technology existing in Africa at the time. After the conquest came a period of «stability» which continued until the end of the second World War. After the second World War a second stage of resistance began and this developed into the nationalist movements which emerged throughout the continent in different forms and with different strength. This second stage of

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*** *Amilcar CABRAL, Revolution in Guinea, Stage One, London, 1969.*

resistance (through the nationalist movement) eventually led to the granting of political independence to the African countries by the colonial powers. The bench mark period for independence for the majority of countries was between 1960 and 1965.

During the colonial period, the colonial powers were faced with two fundamental problems. Firstly in order to establish capitalist economic structures both in rural and urban areas, it was necessary for the colonial powers to have what can only be called political «stability». Secondly because of the various forms of resistance that took place during the establishment of colonialist and because of the destructive nature of capitalist economic structures in relation to pre-capitalist modes of production, there was a serious need for the colonial system to effectively control labour so that it can be utilized for the new forms of economic structures which were being introduced. The control of labour was very critical for the emerging colonial economics both in rural and urban areas. Thus in order to fulfil these two requirements of the colonial situation, it was necessary for the colonial powers to have a deeper understanding of the African communities in terms of their social, economic and political structures. Hence from the very early period of colonial and capitalist penetration in Africa there was concomitantly a serious attempt to study African societies in all their aspects. The evolution of the so called African studies therefore is intimately linked with the colonial powers and the objective needs of the colonial situation. Hence the ascendancy in Britain, France and Belgium of Anthropology as the major discipline in the study of African societies. Later, after World War II and particularly after independence, Sociology, Economics and Political Science assumed a dominant role in research on African societies. There are particular reasons for this change which we cannot discuss here.

A review of the studies and literature produced by specialists from the metropolitan countries on African societies during the colonial period, clearly reflects the objective need for scientific information on African societies by both the colonial states and the colonial capitalists (owners and managers of mines, plantations and commercial enterprises). These studies concentrated mainly, on the following problematic of the colonial context. (a) The migration process, (b) the land tenure and farming systems, (c) the kinship and political structures, and (d) the process of urbanization and the rural urban linkages.

It is very clear that it is in these areas that both the colonial states and the colonial capitalist were facing problems. It was necessary for the colonial economy to understand the migration process in order to utilize labour more effectively and in order to avoid disruption of its enterprises (plantation and mining industries and commerce). Similarly it was necessary for the colonial economy to understand the subsistent pre-capitalist farming system and the nature of land tenure in order once again to be able to introduce new forms of agriculture which would complement the plantation system and the mining industries which were growing in different parts of Africa. Similarly as commerce and small industries began to emerge in the urban centres the process of labour migration, the rural farming systems and the very nature of urban structures and rural urban linkages became important for both the colonial state and the industrialist and commercial classes in the urban areas. It was necessary for these classes to understand the nature of the labour that has

come to town, the kind of stability or lack of stability that existed with this labour force and so on. Thus clearly and from the earliest period, the colonial economy had specific need to understand the way in which African societies were reacting to the penetration of the capitalist mode of production.

The colonial state itself also needed very important information concerning the political structures of African communities in order to effectively maintain administrative and political control over African societies. This was irrespective of the different forms and methods of control used by the different colonial powers in different parts of Africa. Hence the very large body of literature which undertook to study the kinship system and political structures of African societies in different parts of Africa.

Behind the many specialists who came to Africa to study African societies there were formidable institutional and financial structures which backed these researchers. All the centers and institutions which specialized in research on African societies were totally financed by the metropolitan countries.

To start with, in every metropolitan country there were specific universities and research institutes which specialized in the study of colonial peoples. This is of course the case for Britain, France, Belgium, Spain and Portugal. These metropolitan research institutes and universities had specialists who performed two functions. One was to undertake research in Africa and secondly to train administrators who were going to serve in the colonial administration. As colonialism deepened and as the need for more information increased, the colonial powers extended the institutional structures further and created research centers in Africa itself. These research centers were again financed by the metropolitan colonial powers as well as certain colonial capitalists such as owners of mines and plantations. These research centers were exclusively manned by specialists from the colonial powers. They had very strong linkages with both the colonial state, the colonial industrialist and farmers and also strong linkages with the metropolitan universities and research institutes which specialized on Africa. Thus the research centers in Africa were advanced outpost of metropolitan universities and research institutes, for collecting information, analyzing it and feeding it back. Such well known research centers as the E.A.I.S.R. (for East Africa), the Rhodes-Livingston Institute (for Central Africa), IFAN (for Francophone West Africa), to name only a few had large teams of specialists (mainly Anthropologist) who carried out extensive research on African societies. These centers had no financial difficulties. These centers in collaboration with metropolitan universities are responsible for the majority of literature produced on African societies in both Anglophone and Francophone parts of Africa. The same pattern of course existed in South Africa where similar research centers also played a critical role for the state and for the capitalist enterprises. It is therefore important to make the point that these centers manned by specialists from metropolitan countries not only undertook research in the various field mentioned, but they became the factories for producing both hard information as well as theories, concepts and tools for analyzing African societies.

The evolution of the study of African societies during the colonial period, passed through various stages which we need not describe in details here.

As the need for African manpower to aid in the administration of the colonial state and the colonial economy increased, it became necessary to create institutions of higher education for the training of higher level manpower. This became important especially after the second World War when the colonial powers began to realise that under the pressure of the nationalist struggle they will eventually have to concede political control to the African people. Hence began the evolution in many African countries of such institutions which passed through various stages and which eventually ended up as universities either just before independence or immediately after independence. These universities not only trained high level manpower but also began to undertake research which was previously done by the colonial research centers. Indeed most of these centers of research created during the colonial period were eventually absorbed and became part of the new African universities. It is important therefore to make two points here. Firstly the absorption of these research centers created by the colonial powers into the universities of the independent African states. Secondly the new universities themselves and the research institutes or centers which absorbed continued to be under the control and domination of specialist from metropolitan countries. Thus as an important corollary to this development all the literature on African societies and the theoretical framework and techniques of analyses produced and developed by the colonial specialist (both in metropolitan countries and in the centers in the colonies) were taken over by the new universities and accepted as «scientific» literature without questioning the colonial context and therefore the validity of the literature. Hence this carry over of the stock of knowledge from the colonial period through into the new national institutions of the emerging independent African countries was extremely important and thus provided what we can only call the «intellectual and scientific» continuity from the colonial period to the post colonial period. Thus the new universities and the research institutes which were created later in most African countries did not start from a clean slate, but rather with an inherited stock of knowledge and personnel in all fields – social science, humanities, education and of course later on in the natural sciences, technology, agriculture and medicine. To us the importance of this continuity is that it maintained during the 60s and 70s the dominance of conventional social science (of bourgeois origin and orientation)* in both teaching and research. There were of course other mechanisms which have also significantly contributed to this situation. Some of these are discussed below.

PART II – STRUCTURAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCE IN AFRICA.

As is clear from the above, social science in post independence Africa has not developed or existed in a vacuum. In this second part of the paper we look at a number of important issues related to the «development» of social science in Africa. First of all we look at the expansion of institutions in which social science research is based in the post independence period. Secondly, we

* For a detailed characterisation of conventional social science, see CODESRIA's Working Paper on «Social Science and the Development Crisis in Africa» *Africa Development Vol. III No 4 1978.*

look at the general orientation of African research institutes. And thirdly we look at the whole question of funding of research in Africa.

It is clear from what we have said earlier that post independence social science research and teaching in Africa has existed within both specific institutional and structural context as well as within an ideological framework of the capitalist mode of production from which conventional social science itself originated. We first look at the institutional and structural context.

Just before and immediately after independence there was, in many African countries an expansion of universities and colleges of various types for obvious reasons. There are of course a few important exceptions such as Egypt, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and one or two other countries.

Firstly let us look at the nature and the reasons for the creation of these universities which provided the major forum for research and teaching of social science. Most universities and colleges of various types were created for the primary purpose of training high level manpower for the institutions of the states themselves and for the commercial and industrial sectors of the national economies. As to what kind of social science research and teaching was done at these universities, the importance of continuity from the colonial period, and the strategic role played by metropolitan universities through the vertical links between them and African universities – These issues have been excellently dealt with by a number of sub-regional case studies, specially prepared by CODESRIA for this conference.* We therefore need not repeat the detailed analyses of these papers which corroborate our main contention. We would however like to emphasize a few points which clearly come out in these case studies and also from our surveys and experience in CODESRIA. These points relate to the major characteristics concerning the expansion of institutions and structures of universities and research institutes during the early post independence period.

(a) Universities were set up before independence in a number of strategic countries which had important colonial research centers – such as Uganda, Zambia, Zaïre, Nigeria and Senegal etc. In these strategic countries the universities absorbed, at the time of independence, the old colonial research centers which became the most important units within the post independence universities and which played a significant role in legitimising the «scientific» nature of the literature on African societies produced during the colonial period and buttressed by metropolitan conventional social sciences. Furthermore the former colonial research centers which had a rich body of literature from the colonial period became important in terms of providing leadership in research within the countries concerned.

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- * 1. *Towards a Social Science Policy in English Speaking West Africa* : by Claude AKE.
2. *Social Science Policies in Africa : The Case of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland*: by Frank BAFFOE.
3. *The Teaching of Social Sciences in East Africa*: by Peter Anyang NYONG'O.
4. *Les Sciences Sociales en Afrique de l'Ouest Francophone* : by Mokhtar DIOUF.

(b) Given the pressure by the states on universities to produce as many graduates as quickly as possible, it was therefore to be expected that the universities (which were at this time dominated by expatriate staff) used almost exclusively the existing conventional social science for teaching and research. The early post independence period thus saw the reproduction and strengthening of the major bourgeois social science disciplines of economics, sociology, political science, public administration, business management, etc. This situation was not conducive to innovation and progressive changes in the social sciences. Indeed it definitely blocked any possible changes. Reproduction and imitation of conventional social science reigned supreme during this period.

(c) Again in the early period of independence in most African countries almost all universities recruited the majority of their teaching staff and researchers from the former metropolitan countries. It is not necessary here to describe the structure of recruitment between the African universities and the metropolitan countries. These are well known and as institutions they still continue to recruit professors and lecturers in Britain, France, Belgium and Portugal for universities in the African countries.

In many countries, research institutes per se were created some years later after the universities. These research institutes went through two important phases of development. In the first phase, they were almost totally dominated by expatriates from metropolitan countries and North America.* Additionally most of the important research undertaken in these research institutes during this early period were financed from external sources. Hence the research institutes of most African countries during this early period tended to reinforce the inherited social science which prevailed at the level of university teaching. The second phase of these research institutes was what we can only call the phase of localization of personnel in these research institutes. In the majority of cases the research institutes went through a certain period of conflict between local and indigenous researchers on the one hand and the expatriate specialists from North America and metropolitan countries on the other. This conflict centered on the question of (a) the control of research institutes themselves and therefore their ultimate direction in terms of research, and (b) in terms of research priorities. The eventual outcome of this conflict has been the triumph of localization, which is of course a reflection of policies of localization in general during the post independence period. Whether the first period in which the research institutes were dominated by expatriates from outside differ fundamentally in terms of the nature of its research from the later period of local control of research institutes is a question for debate. We would like here to refer you to two excellent papers concerning this problem. Both these papers do refer to the evolution of research institutes in these two different countries and the role of these research institutes in terms of the overall development of social science in their respective countries.

* *North American social scientists began to play an important role in social science research in Africa after independence.*

Again we would like to point out that some of the important issues related to the nature, orientation and direction of research at both university level and the research institutes in African countries, are discussed below when we discuss the question of funding of research in African countries, both external and internal.

We would like now to turn briefly to the question of the relationship between the research institutes, universities and governments. In most African countries (again with the exception of a few countries) there is only one university and one major research institute. Both universities and research institutes are seen as very important institutions related to the state itself. Hence the relationship between universities and research institutes on the one hand and the state on the other is very very strong and complex in most African countries. For example, the appointment of Vice-Chancellor, the appointment of Directors of Research institutes, the appointments of senior professors and lecturers at the universities, are often taken as important issues in which the state itself has certain interest. Indeed it is the state which finances almost totally the universities and research institutes, thus giving the states important leverage in controlling the orientation of the universities. Similarly the majority of students get their scholarships from the governments. These are some examples of the strong links between the universities and research institutes on the one hand and the state on the other. There are of course important implications concerning the development of research and the teaching of social science in African universities and research institutes precisely because of this strong relationship. In many cases universities are seen by the state as simply training institutions. Similarly research institutes as such are also viewed as institutions which should undertake research which will be useful to the state itself. To what extent therefore this strong relationship allows flexibility for the development of social science from the perspective of the nation itself, is an issue which needs to be discussed in more detail. Some of these issues are discussed below when we come to the question of funding both external and internal.

GENERAL ORIENTATION OF RESEARCH INSTITUTES IN AFRICA

By the late 60s and early 70s, localization of personnel in research institutes was more or less completed. By this period most African governments were implementing «Development Plans» as important instruments of social development. At the same time most governments were encountering many serious problems in rural areas, urban centers, in the private and nationalized industrial sectors, foreign exchange problems, difficulties in public administration, inflation, unemployment, etc. Hence research into these different areas and fragmented problems became important and was given priority. Though most governments created their own departmental research units in the various ministries, nevertheless many African governments began to put pressure on research institutes to undertake research on these various problems. Furthermore because many research institutes had become localized in terms of personnel, many governments felt more confident in having their own nationals undertake research for the government. But this situation in which government puts pressure on research

institutes to undertake research on problems identified by the government could hardly be considered conducive to bringing about changes in the very nature and thinking of social science itself. Like the early period when the *Universities* were under pressure to produce graduates, local researchers in research institutes also came under pressure from government to undertake many research projects and to produce results and reports as quickly as possible for government consumption. These researchers also had no alternative but to fall back to the conventional models and tools of research which they have learned from Europe and North America and which exists and dominates the African universities. As pointed out above concerning the universities, the research institutes similarly had little room for innovative research and the development of a more relevant and progressive social science.

The success of localization policies in research institutes led to a certain reduction in the level and intensity of the traditional vertical linkages with metropolitan countries. At the same time African research institutes began to diversify their linkages by establishing relations with Scandinavians, Germans, Americans, Canadian institutes and scholars. The diversification of links by African research institutes (and universities) reflects two important aspects of the African situation. Firstly the non-colonial Western European and North America began to extend their interest and active involvement in Africa. We will not discuss this particular issue here. Secondly African research institutes could not establish alternative linkages with other African research institutes i.e. horizontal linkages within the continent. We will briefly discuss this second aspect.

There were and still are important objective difficulties in the creation of horizontal linkages within Africa. To start with, during the 60s and even during the early 70s, there were no regional organizations such as CODESRIA whose main objective is the creation of horizontal linkages among African research institutes. Secondly there are major problems of communication in terms of language, different social science tradition inherited from the various colonial powers, physical difficulties of movement by individuals within the continent and the absence of common literature, archives and exchange of information. Thirdly there has always been political reasons for lack of horizontal linkages. For example the first and most promising experiment in this field was the creation of the East African University, composed of Makerere, Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam university colleges. For a period of a few years this particular sub-region went through an important experimental phase in which linkages between the social science community of the three parts of the East African university were strong and well established. The university provided incentive to the social science community in East Africa for the development of ideas, exchange of information and experience and thus leading to innovation in social science research and teaching. However when the East African community broke down for political reasons the university of East Africa also broke down into three different and independent universities (Makerere, Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam universities). Thus the earlier cooperation, in research and all the advantages which ensured from that cooperation, began to disappear, leading to the present situation in which the three universities are isolated from each other. The break down of the East African university was not because of lack of cooperation and initiative by the social science community, but because of political factors which intervened in the situation.

Additionally by the middle 70s many governments were going through serious economic, financial and political problems. Many states felt the need to control what they considered their most important institutions of high education groups and «foreign» ideologies. There were therefore many states which had policies of either directly or indirectly controlling the output of research and content of teaching at the universities and research institutes. The small social science community of many African countries often felt threatened by the power of the state and therefore tended (with a few noble exceptions) to conform rather than react against the power of the state. Movements to other countries were often controlled partly for political reasons and partly for economic and financial reasons. Thus as the economic and political situation in various African countries deteriorated, conformity became the order of the day and creating links with other African scholars became more and more difficult. This was and is at a time when horizontal linkages are, objectively, most needed. Indeed the difficult problems of travelling between African countries, foreign exchange problems, the difficulty of obtaining visas, etc. made this cooperation and creating of links between institutes and researchers in the continent more and more difficult. In contrast to this was the ease in which African researchers could travel to Europe and to North America without facing the kind of difficulties that they normally meet in travelling within Africa. All these seemingly small matters assume certain importance in their totality.

Why should the creation of horizontal linkages amongst African research institutes and universities as an alternative to the vertical linkages with institutions in Europe and North America, be more productive in terms of the development of social science in Africa? The simple answer is that the more the vertical linkages are entrenched in African universities and research institutes the more dominant will conventional social science continue to be in Africa. On the other hand the creation of horizontal linkages between researchers and research institutes within Africa need not automatically lead to innovation and a more relevant and critical social science. Nevertheless we do believe that horizontal linkages can be much more innovative and productive because of the nature of the experience of underdevelopment in different African countries. As African researchers interact intensively, they will begin to see that the wider African experience has certain general characteristics in terms of the problems of development by the different countries, and in terms of the various solutions adopted, etc. As African researchers begin to have a wider perspective on the African experience, and as more information on these problems is exchanged, we are sure that certain re-examination and re-thinking of conventional social science will take place and indeed is beginning to take place in some areas. We expect this re-examination and re-thinking will eventually lead to the acceptance of a more relevant and critical social science. Though such critical social science has existed in a few centers in Africa, it is only now that it is emerging as a stronger force. Indeed in Latin America it was this very process i.e. the generalization of the Latin America experience as a whole, which led to the development of the various critical schools in social science in Latin America. Obviously there are important differences between Latin America and Africa which we need not discuss in this paper. Nevertheless it is this expected development in social science in Africa, emanating from the creation of horizontal linkages, which give sustenance to those of us who work in CODESRIA.

PROBLEMS OF FUNDING

The problems of funding impinge not only on the quantity of research but also on the quality and direction of research. It is a well-known fact that underdeveloped countries account for less than 5 per cent of total world expenditure on research. The obvious implication is that in the underdeveloped countries only a very small percentage of scientific personnel will, at any given time, be devoted to research, most of the personnel being confined to administrative and teaching tasks. An immediate result of this limitation on resource availability will be low levels of research output at least in quantitative terms.

These problems of resource scarcity and research capacity have been extensively discussed in both national and international fora and need no further elaboration here. We shall therefore proceed to deal with other implications of research funding especially on the content of research in Africa.

Internal Funding

In Africa virtually all the internal sources of funds are State or parastatal. These sources of funds tend to view research along two broad lines: (a) An instrumental or praxiological function of research and (b) an ideological legitimization function. Very rarely will a government welcome a critical function of research except perhaps where such research is directed towards external factors (e.g. Transnational firm, imperialism or neocolonialism) although even here the realization that these external factors have internal manifestations within the state structure may provoke government annoyance at the direction of research.

At first sight the instrumental function of research would seem the least problematic. After all the urgency of development is generally understood and the need to mobilize a country's resources, including her meager intellectual capital, should be clear to everyone. In the African context where «development planning» has been widely accepted it would appear that such planning provides a framework for research orientation. Researchers should provide the state with information necessary not only for the drawing up of plans but also for their actual implementation. Such information may take the form of house-hold surveys, studies on demographic shifts, rural surveys, manpower needs, analyses, etc. In general the need for the regularity of such studies will lead to their routinization and oftentimes bureaucratization within specific ministries or departments. Research will then involve no more than routine statistical exercises. (1) Due to limited funds and institutional rivalries very little funds will be available for researchers outside government ministries or departments. Indeed once such research has been routinized, research outside the formal government structures may appear superfluous. A result is that few extra-governmental institutions such as universities are not able to carry out empirical research due to shortage of funds.

However, even when funds are made available to institutions outside direct government control, several problems arise leading to mutual distrust between governments and the commissioned researchers. One major source of friction is the haphazard nature of planning in Africa, a planning usually characterized by the absence of coherent social development programmes and priorities. This leads to the inability of the official funding authorities to formulate in a coherent manner research programmes necessary for the society's developmental and planning needs. Even where an internally consistent plan document exists clearly indicating what areas need further research, the widespread discrepancy between the drawing up of plans and their implementation can be a source of frustration and alienation as researchers are increasingly convinced there is neither the political will nor the institutional mechanism for the systematic utilization of research findings as inputs in the planning effort. For researchers, this may lead to a kind of «intellectual emigration» into mindless model-building or arcane preoccupations with more intellectually or internationally «respectable» subjects, further convincing the funding authorities that university researchers are «too academic» and therefore irrelevant. Where researchers go further and begin to question the political structures or the institutional mechanisms involved in planning, charges of «academic irresponsibility» will be raised. The inclination from government side to internalize and routinize instrumental research within the ministries and department will be reinforced thus starring non-government researchers of funds.

A more problematic relationship between state funding authorities and researchers arises from the former's desire to use researchers to legitimize or at least reinforce certain ideological positions adopted by the leadership and the latter's quest for academic freedom and intellectual autonomy. For historical reasons, African leaders have had an unusual proclivity to establish what they believe are indigenous ideological constructs to guide the development process. Such «ideologies» as Nyerere's «Ujamaa», Kaunda's «Humanism», Nasser's «Arab Socialism», Senghor's «African Socialism», Tolbert's «Humanistic Capitalism», Mobutu's «Authenticity», to name only a few of the well-known ones, have entered the arena of African politics. In some cases, the leaders announcing these ideologies have directly or indirectly demanded that researchers contribute towards the further elaboration, justification or even implementation of these ideologies. Funds have been more favourably allocated to research considered positive towards these ideologies. While it is true that some simple-minded or even opportunistic work has come up in line with some of these ideologies, in general African researchers have eschewed dwelling directly, let alone critically, with these constructs.

Several reasons for African researchers' distancing from these issues can be named. In the case of some of the earlier formulations, African scholars doing their postgraduate studies abroad were constrained from showing interest in these ideologies because their host institutes in Europe or America usually refused to see these ideological formulations as worthy of serious academic consideration. The dominant structural-functionalist approach in the universities of Europe and America was basically with the role of ideology in the process of «modernization». This was particularly so since in this approach ideology had been declared dead and in retrospect, prematurely so.

A second factor was the finality with which some of these ideologies were launched. They became state policy and immediately sacrosanct. In only a few cases, (Tanzania and Senegal immediately come to mind) did the leadership permit relatively open academic discussion and questioning of official ideology. In most cases, academic work on these ideologies was at best purely expository and at worst purely apologetic, critical examination of these ideologies having been precluded *ex Cathedra*. Furthermore, the charismatic and dogmatic framework within which the ideologies were pronounced obviated the need for allocation of research funds to examine the relevance, coherence and applicability of some of these ideologies to the African situation.

The Problem of External Funding of Research

The meagreness of internal resources and the failure to establish mutually satisfactory and stable working relationships between the state and researchers on instrumental, let alone critical, functions of research have created problems which have been further compounded by the presence of external funding. We do not have available the exact magnitudes of foreign funding of African research although there is no doubt it is quite substantial. Foreign funding is carried out in various forms: It may be bilateral or multilateral public grants to institutes or individual researchers; it may take the form of grants from private foundations; or it may assume the form of technical assistance involving the presence of research personnel from the developed countries.

African researchers and governments usually exhibit ambiguity in their attitudes towards foreign funding. At times it is seen as necessary to supplement the meager funds available in the African countries. At other times it is seen as one more aspect of continued domination of African societies by foreigners, a form of «intellectual imperialism», if you like. And still at other times researchers will consider foreign funding as an escape valve from domestic restraints and state control of research activities and direction although even here it is never clear whether the escape from one form of control (by internal funding organizations) is worth it if the alternative is control by external funding organizations. There is no a priori ground for supposing that one form of funding guarantees greater professional autonomy although it is more likely than not that foreign funding organizations will eschew direct forms of control and instead exercise their control through more subtler means if only because they are more sensitive and more vulnerable to charges of foreign interference.

Like all forms of foreign assistance, there is a multitude of motives behind foreign research grants. There is the now familiar neo-colonial use of aid to exercise control in order to acquire, in this case, intellectual and cultural hegemony over the underdeveloped countries. Such control can take the crude form of foreign intelligence organizations actually funding research and publications (2). In some cases it can involve the «planting» of foreign

intelligence personnel in research institutions. Given the clandestine nature of this form of research funding we can never be certain of its magnitude. A more open form of control and steering of research is one where the external funding organizations specify not only what areas they consider as top priority but even the methodologies to be used to carry out studies in Africa by either African researchers working independently or under the guidance of carefully selected foreign academics. The selection of foreign personnel will be biased towards conventional social scientists. Thus it is very rare indeed that a well-known Marxist scholar is funded by private foundations to do work in Africa. Of course this may reflect academic repression or intolerance in the advanced countries so that the absence of Marxist scholars in the universities of the advanced countries spills over in the selection of research personnel possessing qualifications deemed «scientifically acceptable». Whatever is the case, the intellectual bias in the universities of the advanced countries will reflect itself in the type of researchers sent to Africa and the selection of acceptable project proposals from African researchers and research institutes.

There are foreign sources of funding which may be viewed as disinterested and where the major purpose is genuine research cooperation with and development of African research institutes. However even this source of funding is not without its problems. We have already indicated the ever present danger of foreign intellectual bias and idiosyncracies «spilling over» to African research institutions. Research paradigms dominant in the funding countries will tend to influence not only the direction of assistance to African research but will also condition the choice of institutes with which to collaborate. Institutes considered hostile to the dominant paradigm in the advanced countries or simply considered as not sufficiently competent in terms of that paradigm will receive no financial assistance. Given the paucity of funds in their own countries African researchers will, either out of outright opportunism or academic self-preservation, tend to adjust their research activities in a manner most likely to attract favourable responses from external funding organizations.

Complicating the situation further is the «trendy» and ephemeral nature of research on problems of economic underdevelopment. In one year funding may be directed largely towards demographic problems, in another on rural poverty and in yet others problems of employment, women, child labour, land reform or any other subject reflecting whatever has been declared by international organizations as the «burning issue of our time». An unfortunate consequence of these research «fads» is that they oftentimes do not correspond to national priorities as perceived by local researchers nor is the time over which these issues are considered «burning» long enough to permit serious study of these problems over a sufficiently long time. To keep up with «trends», researchers are cynically compelled to engage in «instant research» to beat the deadlines determined not so much by the magnitude of the problems but by the funding organizations' time perspective and fiscal year. Specialization is then considered as dangerously restrictive and a «Jack-of-all trades» mentality is, wittingly or unwittingly, cultivated. Funding organizations will then complain of absence of competent and specialized researchers with whom to co-operate while it is partly their own preference for «in» projects rather than long-term support for research

programmes which contribute to the disjointed and diffused activities so characteristic of research in African universities and research institutes.

Even where genuine co-operation is sought, it is often vitiated by a type of division of labour that emerges. African researchers are often given the task of doing the spadework of collecting local data which is then sent abroad for processing theoretical elaboration and model building. The processed and restructured data is then brought back to Africa in the form of publications and textbook. In the more pernicious forms of this type of co-operation and division of labour foreign researchers are attached to research institutes which provide research assistants, the foreign researchers then collect the data and take it with them to their universities abroad as material for their doctoral dissertation. Nothing more is heard of them except by scavenging foreign microfilm libraries at the African universities own expense. In the absence of continuity, whatever research experience is gained by the indigenous research assistants and collaborators will come to no use as projects are abandoned with the departure of the expatriates.

CONTENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

The content of research carried out by African scholars has undergone various transformations in the last 30 years or so. Two time periods conditioning the content of social science research in Africa can be identified — the colonial and post-colonial period. In the former period the content was clearly conditioned by the demands of the struggle for independence and the leading role played by intellectuals during this struggle. As a result the major themes evolved not only around an incessant polemic against the iniquities of colonial rule, but also around the affirmation of the basic humanity of the African people in face of the dominant racist ideology of the time. Senghor's «Negritude», Nkrumah's «African Personality» and Kenyatta's «Facing Mount Kenya» are outstanding examples of the affirmative role of African intellectual activity of the time. An interesting point to note here is the social position of most of the Africans writing on African's social and cultural problems of the time. They were all invariably drawn into the leading positions of the nationality struggle.

«Ivory towers» scholarship was a luxury few of the African intellectuals could afford for various reasons. In the first place the absence of institutions of higher learning deprived African intellectuals of any «Ivory towers». The few university colleges that existed were totally detached from their local environment being totally dominated by expatriates and being more appendages of metropolitan universities. In the second place, the colonial system's discriminatory policies tended to alienate African intellectuals from the colonial regimes which until much later in the game had no clear policy as to how they would absorb the «educated natives». This was particularly so in the settler societies of Eastern and Southern Africa where entrenched racism and availability of white labour (supposedly for climatic reasons) obviated the need for any indigenization of positions in the colonial administration. Thirdly, intellectuals could not possibly be shielded from the exigencies of the liberation struggle and the nationalism sweeping across the African continent.

Following the attainment of independence, some of the intellectuals who had participated in the struggle for independence were catapulted into key positions in their new governments. A number of them continued writing on African issues in a generally ideological framework. Mamadou DIA, Senghor, Nyerere, Nkrumah, to name only a few, published works dealing with various problems of the transformation of African societies and the consolidation of Africa's economic, political and cultural independence. The literary output of these intellectuals in power enjoyed a rather peculiar existence. While widely read, it was never a subject of systematic study in African universities which refused to give to this work any «intellectual respectability». One of the reasons was that scholars in the advanced countries, who dominated the training of African scholars, tended to view this work as *curiosa* and not «scientific» enough to deserve serious study or critique. It could be collected in anthologies of writings from Africa but it never figured in serious intellectual discussion. One has only to look at some of the «modernization» literature to see that the views of these intellectuals in power on the nature and direction of change in Africa were never seriously considered.

The post-colonial period immediately witnessed a dramatic expansion in the number of social scientists trained abroad or locally. The «localization» policies, expansion of state activities, some rudimentary import substitution industrialization, all these created new opportunities for the educated members of the new societies leading to their relatively easy co-optation in the state and party apparatus. Careerism and the basic belief that with independence Africa could now put to use the conventional wisdom, disseminated in the new universities and from abroad, led to a certain complacency and the blunting of the critical faculties of the researchers thus permitting the continued pre-eminence of conventional western social science paradigms. Social science research was uncritically and innocently descriptive of the new societies and was replicative of studies elsewhere with Africa merely providing «case studies» to collaborate already established models and theories. At the same time, the African intelligentsia became increasingly depoliticized and tended to accept with alacrity their newly assigned roles as advisers to governments and administrators. Whatever confrontation between governments and the intelligentsia occurred, it was confined to such practical matters as the pace of «Africanization» of professions, living conditions in the universities and salaries.

The second phase, which was not to wait too long, began to change the position of the intellectuals in African societies. The failure of industrialization, the whittling down by inflation of the incomes of the educated, increased repression by the embattled governments, the demobilization of the masses and governments' increased reliance on coercion rather than persuasion as their charisma lost its lustre, the deepening economic dependence, rampant corruption penetrating even the hallowed grounds of academia, all these began to undermine the complacency of the intellectual and open room for more critical theories of underdevelopment. It is not being suggested here that this new room was immediately flooded by critical research. Several objective factors still remained to reinforce or at least prop up conventional social science research. We have already mentioned how research funding has introduced certain biases and styles of research.

Another factor was sheer intellectual inertia which continued to bind African scholars to the more familiar patterns of thought. Universities and Research institutes are not as flexible or adaptable as one would hope. The effect was a growing discrepancy between the purely academic functions of the intellectuals and their extra curricular preoccupation with the condition of the masses. On the «*scientific*» level one continued to disseminate or advocate development models that often generated forces creating the social malaise which one condemned on the *moral* level. Part of the explanation of this intellectual schizophrenia can be derived from the conventional dichotomy between «positive» and «normative» aspects of social science. Another explanation is the ambiguity of intellectuals in the emerging class structures. In economic terms, they belonged to the new privileged classes and the system of incentives (including repression) demanded that they continue to have close links with those that could pay the piper. On the other hand their social origins and the dramatic conspicuousness of the growing inequality and injustice impinged themselves upon their usual academic preoccupations.

We have elsewhere (CODESRIA OCCASIONAL PAPER No1, 1979) discussed the characteristic of conventional research and the interested reader is referred to that work. Here we may only repeat telegraphically our observations in the paper: (a) conventional social science in Africa has been *ahistorical* relying largely on a static functionalist views of society; (b) it make unwarranted claims of ideological neutralism couched in scientific terminology although it is quite clear that its underlying *wetanschaung* presupposes certain ideological conceptualizations of man and society; (c) it is highly compartmentalized into various disciplines and each discipline is further fragmented into so-called specializations. The specializations generated are not responses to the exigences of the objects of analysis but of styles and tradition of organizations copied from abroad*. (d) it systematically eschews the study of fundamental issues of the development processes confining itself to the symptoms of a particular style of development («inappropriate» technologies, unemployment etc) (e) and finally it is increasingly and fetishistically reliant on sophisticated models and analytical tools without examining the appropriateness of these tools to the task at hand let alone the paradigmatic sources of the models of these tools. We are not suggesting here that analytical tools are inherently bad or inappropriate. What we are pointing to is the uncritical fascination with abstractions derived from totally different social formations. One has only to look at the case of economics where considerable time is spent on the study of the macroeconomics of the stabilization of advanced countries in societies where the task is structural change and development; or the preoccupation with sophisticated models of perfect competition in societies where private and state monopolies are the decisive economic units.

* *One such example is «Institutes of Development Research». One would have supposed that the entire university in underdeveloped would be the Institute of Development Research. If only one institute in the universities is peoccupied with problems of development one wonders what the others are doing.*

To be sure new critical approaches to our social problems are emerging but these face severe problems of funding and political and academic tolerance. Deprived of funds and institutional infrastructure the critical studies have lacked the technical sophistication of the dominant approaches and have confined themselves to assertive or polemical styles of writing. Furthermore, the newness of the approach has lent itself to unfortunate forms of «eclectism» that undermines its claims as an alternative approach. The matter is further complicated by admission by conventional social scientists that problems of underdevelopment have eluded conventional wisdom so that a number of themes common to the critical schools are now entering conventional science research albeit often blunted of their sting and insight. Thus, for instance, only a few years ago critical researchers pointed out that the conventional models of development were generating the growing marginalization and immiserization of large sections of the population. Today this is widely accepted but the initial insight is being used to introduce «system maintenance» schemes for the eradication of absolute (!) poverty. This intellectual co-optation and ideological emasculation pose severe problems to the development of a critical and relevant social research. It may of course raise useful challenges to critical researchers compelling them to be more specific and clear in their arguments. But they need to be on guard since some of these concessions may be merely tactical obfuscating crucial differences on fundamental issues.

CONCLUSION

In this final brief section we start with a quotation from the Executive Secretary of the E.C.A.

«Africa, more than the other Third World regions, is thus faced with a development crisis of great portent. In spite of the region's ample natural resources, of a favourable population to natural resources ration, in spite of the generous and even indiscriminating incentives for foreign private enterprise, in spite of our participation in numerous conferences, both regional and inter-regional, *and in spite of our adherence to orthodox theories and prescriptions* – in spite of all these, neither high rates of growth nor of diversification nor an increasing measure of self-reliance and dynamism seems to be within our reach»* (my emphasis).

The E.C.A. is a UN organization and has existed for sometime now. As an international organization it is basically a center which uses conventional social science in its research. It is not a well-known center for radical or marxist thinking. On the contrary it is a well known institution in which conventional social science is highly entrenched and unquestioned. Yet as the quotation above indicates, even in this establishment oriented center where conventional social science has dominated and ruled for a long time,

* *Dr. Adebayo ADEDEJI, Executive Secretary of ECA. «Africa Development Crisis» in Africa Guide, 1978, p. 25. Publishers: David C. Jamieson. Anthony Axon.*

people have begun to accept the fact that conventional social science has failed. More importantly it is very clear from the above quotation that the relationship between social science per se and the development process are intimately connected. It is thus impossible to look at the development of social science in Africa without relating it to the development problems and processes taking place in African countries. This point we make very clear and explore further in more details in our CODESRIA Working Paper published in *Africa Development* Vol. III No.4, 1978.

The above quotation clearly acknowledges the basic failure of conventional social science. Hence we believe that there is real hope for a positive development of social science in Africa especially from those researchers and centers where critical social science has begun to emerge as an important instrument of analysing the development process in Africa. Additionally, now that an organization such as CODESRIA exists in which its main thrust is precisely to re-examine and question the dominant inherited conventional social science pervading African universities and research institutes, we feel that innovation and progress will emerge very soon from the social science community in Africa as a whole. This hope is not based on wishful thinking. The objective conditions are such that rethinking is necessary as the traditional supporters of conventional social science have themselves admitted. Indeed we in CODESRIA believe that because of this objective condition certain actions on the part of regional organization like CODESRIA are necessary in order to provide the stimulus and the spark which will bring about this new era of relevant and more critical social science in Africa. Hence all the programmes in CODESRIA, when examined carefully and in details, are geared towards bringing about this situation. There is an additional factor which should be taken into consideration. As pointed out earlier there are certain practical and political problems which many researchers meet in their own countries. Some of these difficulties are obviously political in nature and others are practical in nature and therefore difficult to solve. Nevertheless it is suggested here that African researchers working within the framework and under the auspices of CODESRIA projects, can, *in general* overcome these difficulties. CODESRIA can thus provide certain protective umbrella to researchers facing such problems. This is because CODESRIA is a regional African organization with certain legitimacy and therefore acceptability throughout the continent.

FOOTNOTES

1. Such routinized research does have its risks however. In one case in Africa the whole Central Office of statistics has had to be temporarily closed as statisticians were detained for publishing information deemed unpleasant by the government.
2. A much publicised case was the funding of the then Uganda-based «Transition» by the Central Intelligence Agency.

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RESUME

Cet article traite de l'évolution des Sciences Sociales en Afrique, de ses problèmes et de ses perspectives. Quatre grandes parties le composent :

- a) L'évolution de la recherche sur les sociétés africaines à l'ère coloniale.
- b) L'évolution des institutions en sciences sociales et des structures de l'enseignement supérieur héritées de la colonisation en Afrique.
- c) Les problèmes de financement de la recherche en sciences sociales.
- d) Quelques suggestions pour le développement futur des sciences sociales en Afrique.

Abordant le premier point de leur article, les auteurs attribuent les premières recherches menées sur les différents aspects des sociétés africaines au désir des colonialistes d'étudier et de disposer des moyens les plus appropriés pour implanter le système capitaliste en Afrique où s'étaient manifestées déjà dès la fin du siècle dernier des résistances à la fois à la pénétration coloniale et à ses structures capitalistes d'exploitation. Il leur fallait des informations scientifiquement exactes sur les sociétés africaines concernant les processus des migrations (pour une meilleure utilisation de la main-d'œuvre) ainsi que les systèmes agricoles et la nature du titre foncier (pour introduire plus facilement d'autres systèmes agricoles capables de compléter les systèmes de plantations et d'industries minières qui se développaient çà et là en Afrique).

Dans le second point, les auteurs estiment que les sciences sociales ne se sont pas développées à partir d'un néant. Elles se sont développées dans les cadres institutionnel, structurel et idéologique particuliers au mode de production capitaliste. Aussi la plupart des universités et centres de recherche en sciences sociales qui ont vu le jour avant ou immédiatement après les indépendances avaient-ils pour but essentiel de former de la main-d'œuvre hautement qualifiée pour les instituts des états eux-mêmes et pour les secteurs commerciaux et industriels des économies nationales, perpétuant ainsi une forme de recherche et d'enseignement leguée par les chercheurs et enseignants des pays coloniaux.

Un autre point non moins important de l'évolution des sciences sociales en Afrique est celui du financement de la recherche en sciences en Afrique. Ce financement peut provenir soit de l'intérieur soit de l'extérieur des pays africains. Dans tous les cas il est obtenu dans des conditions telles que le contenu empirique de la recherche peut en être affecté.

Compte tenu de l'incapacité des sciences sociales telles qu'elles ont été héritées, à promouvoir le développement harmonieux des pays africains, les auteurs suggèrent dans leur conclusion qu'une étude critique de ces sciences sociales doit avant tout être faite. Les conditions objectives pour un tel travail sont maintenant réunies après le constat d'échec des sciences sociales conventionnelles et c'est aux organismes comme le CODESRIA de fournir l'étincelle qui va faire jaillir la flamme de véritables sciences sociales au service de l'Afrique.