Editorial

A Giant Has Moved On

This 12th General Assembly is taking place exactly one year and nine months after the death of an illustrious member of CODESRIA, one most committed to the problematic of the public sphere in Africa. Wednesday 28 March 2007 will go down as a sad day among social researchers all over Africa and beyond. It was the day Professor Archibald Monwabisi Mafeje (fondly known among friends, colleagues and admirers as Archie) passed away in Pretoria, in what was a most quiet exit that has left very many of us whom he touched directly or indirectly, in a state of sadness and anger.

Archie Mafeje, the quintessential personality of science and one of the most versatile, extraordinary minds to emerge from Africa was, in his days, a living legend in every sense. His knowledge and grasp of issues – almost all issues – was breathtaking. His discourses transcended disciplinary boundaries and were characterised by a spirit of combative engagement underpinned by a commitment to social transformation. As an academic sojourner conscious of the history of Africa over the last six centuries, he rallied his colleagues to resist the intellectual servitude on which all forms of foreign domination thrive. He was intransigent in his call for the liberation of our collective imaginations as the foundation stone for continental liberation. In all of this, he also distinguished himself by his insistence on scientific rigour and originality. It was his trade mark to be uncompromisingly severe with fellow scientists who were mediocre in their analyses. The power of his pen and the passion of his interventions always went hand-in-hand with a uniquely polemical style hardly meant for those who were not sure-footed in their scholarship. This, then, was the Mafeje who left us on 28 March 2007, to join the other departed heroes and heroines of the African social research community. A great pan-African, an outstanding scientist, a first rate debater, a frontline partisan in the struggle for social justice, and a gentleman of great humanitarian principles, Archie was laid to rest on Saturday 7 April 2007 in Umtata, South Africa.

Professor Archie Mafeje, South African by birth, completed his undergraduate studies and began his career as a scholar at the University of Cape Town, but like many other South Africans, he was soon forced by the apartheid regime to go into exile where he spent the better part of his life. He obtained a PhD in Anthropology and Rural Sociology from University of Cambridge in 1966. In 1973, at the age of 34, he was appointed Professor of Anthropology and Sociology of Development at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague by an Act of Parliament and with the approval of all the Dutch universities, becoming the first African scholar to be so distinguished in The Netherlands. That appointment bestowed on him the honour of being a Queen Juliana Professor and one of her Lords. His name appears in the prestigious blue pages of the Dutch National Directorate.

Archie Mafeje' s professional career spanned four decades and covered three continents. From 1969 to 1971 he was Head of the Sociology Department at the University of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania before moving to The Hague as a Visiting Professor of Social Anthropology of Development and Chairman of the Rural Development, Urban Development and Labour Studies Programme at the Institute of Social Studies from 1972 to 1975. It was here that he met his wife and life-long companion, the Egyptian scholar and activist, Dr Shahida El Baz. In 1979, he joined the American University, in Cairo, as Professor of Sociology. Thereafter, he took up the post of Professor of Sociology and Anthropology and Director of the Multidisciplinary Research Centre at the University of Namibia from 1992 to 1994. Mafeje was also a senior fellow and visiting or guest professor at several other universities and research institutions in Africa, Europe and North America. He is the author of many books, monographs and journal articles. His critique of the concept of tribalism and his works on anthropology are widely cited as key reference materials. He also did path-breaking work on the land and agrarian question in Africa.

Mafeje returned to South Africa several years after the end of apartheid where he was appointed a Research Fellow by the National Research Foundation (NRF) working at the African Renaissance Centre at the University of South Africa (UNISA). In 2001, Archie Mafeje became a member of the Scientific Committee of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and in 2003 was awarded the Honorary Life Membership of this Council. In 2005, Professor Mafeje was appointed a CODESRIA Distinguished Fellow in conjuction with the Africa Institute of South Africa, in Pretoria.

An Incarnation of Africa's Intellectual Ideals and Struggles

Archie Mafeje was in many regards an epitome of the intellectual ideals that engineered the creation of CODESRIA in 1973, and that has fuelled and propelled the Council for the past thirty-five years. To Issa Shivji, he was a man of " great intellectual rigour and integrity" who did not compromise on ideas, and " whose ideas were so powerful that you instinctively felt you had known the man from time immemorial." He was a rigorous and thorough researcher who, already in the early 1960s, impressed his professor and supervisor – Monica Wilson – with the quality and depth of his masterly ethnography in Langa (John Sharp). But, as his daughter, Dana, rightly remarked in reaction to the outpouring of tributes following his death, Mafeje was more than just an intellectual giant. He was above all a human being. " My father was critical but humane, fierce but compassionate, sarcastic but gentle, silly but brilliant, stubborn but loyal, but most of all, he was passionate."

Indeed, it was this passion and compassion, this humanness that made him both appreciated and contested, leaving few indifferent in the face of his sharp, incisive, critical mindedness and love for debate in which he, metaphorically, did not hesitate

to cross swords or draw blood. His debates with fellow African intellectuals in the pages of the *CODESRIA Bulletin* – which we have reproduced in this special tribute issue – were, in the words of Ali Mazrui (one of his intellectual adversaries), " brutal – almost no holds barred!" Ali Mazrui, whose idea of ' inter-African colonisation' Archie Mafeje viciously savaged as an attempt at facilitating Europe' s recolonisation of Africa, regrets not having had " a formal intellectual reconciliation" with Mafeje before his passing away (Ali Mazrui). His utter forthrightness, razor-sharpness, brilliant turn of phrase, cynicism, polemical style, unwavering stances, and penchant for pushing arguments to, and even beyond their logical conclusions, made Mafeje to come across sometimes as " deeply embittered" .

However, there was reason enough to be embittered and saddened for someone at war against the intellectual hegemony of those who proclaim universal truth and wisdom, regardless of time or space, on a continent where many of his colleagues continue to embellish their references with irrelevant writers from the global North to prove their intellectualness (cf. Issa Shivj, Jimi Adesina). There was reason for bitterness and sadness for someone outstandingly critical of double-speak and other shortcomings of the African political and intellectual elite (Kwesi Prah), to realise that such dissemblance was far more deep-rooted and resilient than he initially imagined. And there indeed was reason for embitterment and sadness to be persuaded to return " home" to a post-apartheid South Africa where little in effect is post anything, and where, instead of closing ranks to win the battle of ideas, many are the black intellectuals who continue to be induced from academe into government, the corporate world and NGOs, where bureaucracy and making money matter more than knowledge production, social justice, truth and reconciliation (Eddy Maloka).

Despite his immense generosity of spirit and capacity to see the other side even when he disagreed with it, Archie felt more in exile back home in South Africa than he ever felt away from South Africa. According to Jimi Adesina, the relative intimacy he enjoyed within CODESRIA circles was brought home to Mafeje through the pain of his intellectual isolation in South Africa. " The tragedy for all of us," Jimi Adesina writes, " is that Archie did not die of natural causes – he died of intellectual neglect and isolation. In spite of the enormous love of his family and loyal life-long friends, Archie' s oxygen was vigorous intellectual engagement. He lived on serious, rigorous and relevant scholarship. Starved of that, he simply withered." Yet, as Maloka argues, instead of succumbing to embitterment and sadness, Mafeje should have used " his towering intellectual stature and his ' straight-shooting' approach" to help " make the case for a very vibrant, strong and independent black intelligentsia as a force to reckon with in confronting the enduring legacy of apartheid." His age was taking a heavy toll on him, Maloka admits, but if he had asked Mafeje, the latter would probably have repeated what he said at the CODESRIA 30th anniversary conference in Dakar in December 2003: " Youdon' t make knowledge alone" .

Archie Mafeje would die before reconciliation with the University of Cape Town (UCT) – his alma mater – the intellectual community within which he began his knowledge making – which in 1968 rescinded its decision to appoint him senior lecturer in Social Anthropology (or right to make and help make knowledge) because he was black in the apartheid eyes of the Minister of National Education, despite his being the best candidate for the position. It could always be argued that if Mafeje had reason to be angry and bitter vis-à-vis the UCT authorities for having succumbed too easily to government pressure, he should have taken heart to reintegrate himself at the end of apartheid in the 1990s from the fact that the National Union of South African Students protested the violation of his academic freedom through mass demonstrations within UCT and in other university campuses, including a sit-in that lasted for nine days (Lungisile Ntsebeza). He was relevant to students in the 1960s just as he was in exile, and within the CODESRIA networks where he served as resource person and mentor to younger scholars; and would certainly have been relevant to students in South Africa as well, after the 1990s, with some mutual forgiving and forgetting.

UCT and the Game of Reconciliation: Too Little, Too Late

Following the end of apartheid in the early 1990s, instead of things getting better in the spirit of truth and reconciliation, relations between UCT and Mafeje only worsened, despite several attempts by Mafeje to return to UCT, including as the AC Jordan Chair in African Studies. Mafeje felt insulted and in certain cases described as " most demeaning" the reactions of the authorities of UCT to his efforts to return to his alma mater as professor. When it was announced to him that another candidate had been offered the AC Jordan Chair to which he, Mafeje, had not even been invited for an interview, Mafeje wrote: " In 1968 it was an honour to be offered a post at UCT but in 1994 it is a heavy burden which only the politically naïve or the unimaginative can face, without some uneasy doubts. I might be wrong, but only time will tell." From then on Mafeje treated with disdain various overtures by UCT, including the proposed award of an honorary doctorate and a formal apology in 2003. Only in August 2008, almost two years after his death, did UCT bring together 11 members of the Mafeje family at a symposium where a second apology was issued and an honorary doctorate awarded him posthumously. The Mafeje family agreed to overrule Archie Mafeje and accept the apology on his behalf, an apology in which UCT recognises that it " did not do nearly enough in the 1990s to make it possible for Professor Mafeje to return to UCT, and that this remained an obstacle to his reconciliation with his alma mater" (Lungisile Ntsebeza).

Whatever the reasons for his rejection of overtures of reconciliation and recognition by UCT, Mafeje was seldom comfortable with honours, especially in his life time. In December 2003 when CODESRIA, on the occasion of its 30th anniversary celebrations, decided to honour him with a Life Long Membership of CODESRIA in recognition of his lifetime contribution to scholarship, Mafeje was grateful but full of misgivings. " It might be that you are wishing me not a soon death, but death alright. When you honour people, you usually honour them after their deaths, and the glory comes after their death. But this glory comes before death," he told the special panel CODESRIA had put together to celebrate him (Ebrima Sall). The challenge is thus for UCT to prove that its posthumous recognition of Archie Mafeje would bring glory enough to be recognised even by the late Mafeje, a man who was not comfortable with honours, and who had every reason to be bitter towards an institution that

had yielded too easily to the pressures of apartheid in his regard, and that did not appear keen to make him part and parcel of its post-apartheid identity in knowledge production and academic freedom (Lungisile Ntsebeza; Teboho Lebakeng).

A Staunch Critic of Intellectual Colonialism

Archie Mafeje' s bitter critiques of Ali Mazrui' s Africa' s self-colonisation and Achille Mbembe' s " African Modes of Self-writing" are only fully understood in the light of his deep intellectual and political commitment to the total emancipation of Africa as a symbol of the pan-African ideals he shared and fought for in his scholarship, activities and pronouncements. Through his sustained critique of African anthropology as a handmaiden of colonialism and call for social history to replace it as a discipline, surfaces Archie Mafeje' s total discomfort with the epistemology of alterity and exogenously generated and contextually irrelevant knowledge produced with ambitions of dominance, especially when such knowledge is passively internalised and reproduced by the very people whose ontology and experiences have been carefully scripted out (sometimes even as fellow scholars – see the Archie Mafeje versus Sally Falk Moore debate) of this knowledge by misrepresentations informed by hierarchies of humanity structured, inter alia, on race, place, class, gender and age (Jimi Adesina, Helmi Sharawy, Dani Nabudere, Samir Amin, Teboho Lebakeng).

As John Sharp argues below, what Archie Mafeje objected to about anthropology which he once described as his ' calling' , " was not its methods of research or the evidence that could be produced by careful participant observation. Even at his most critical he took care to endorse the value of this form of inquiry relative to others." He remained faithful to the fact " that any attempt to understand the circumstances of people in Africa required firsthand inquiry into what they made of these circumstances themselves." What he objected to therefore, " was an anthropology in which particular epistemological assumptions …were allowed to overwhelm whatever it was that people on the ground had to say about the conditions in which they found themselves." If Mafeje objected to this kind of anthropology, it was " because anthropology was the discipline he knew best – the one he had said was his ' calling at the outset of his professional career. Had he had cause to express himself with equal fervour in respect of other disciplines, he would no doubt have found the epistemological premises of their liberal versions as objectionable as those of liberal anthropology" (John Sharp).

Fred Hendricks notes that Mafeje was committed " to combating the distorted images produced and reproduced about Africa from the outside" , and sometimes uncritically internalised and reproduced by Africans trained to mimic but not to question (Issa Shivji). Mafeje spent the best part of his life and scholarship contesting the racialised epistemological underpinnings of a system of social knowledge production into which Africans have been co-opted and schooled as passive consumers without voice even on matters pertaining to their very own realities and existence. In this regard, Mafeje' s unwavering pan-Africanism has always resonated with CODESRIA's mission of increased visibility for African scholars, African scholarship and African perspectives on African and global issues. Yet, his call for the valorisation of Africanity, its creativity and innovations has not meant easy endorsement for all that claims to be afrocentric. He has been especially critical of well-meaning but poorly conceived and even more poorly articulated attempts at affirming Africanity such as " African renaissance" (Eddy Maloka). The extent to which African scholars buy these aspirations in principle and in practice would determine the degree to which Mafeje and CODESRIA have succeeded in making these battles and lofty heights truly collective and pan-African beyond rhetoric.

Achille Mbembe, in a highly erroneous post-modern monologue – ' African Modes of Self-Writing' , lumps Archie Mafeje together with those he dismisses as " nativists" , in opposition to his own supposed " cosmopolitan" experience, outlook and scholarship (Jimi Adesina). Fred Hendricks and others have also challenged Mafeje for freezing his intellectual gaze narrowly on sub-Saharan Africa, and for inadvertently reproducing ideas about " a disaggregated and dismembered Africa" in a pan-Africanism that had little real room for North Africa beyond the fact of his considerably long period of stay in Cairo and being married to Shahida El Baz, an Egyptian and mother of his daughter Dana. But such criticism could be countered by the fact that he did not necessarily have to study Egypt or North Africa in order to consider the region as part of his pan-African project. In the absence of personal scholarship, Mafeje used other indicators to affirm his belonging to North-Africa and esteem the region in his pan-Africanism. He probably felt more at home in Egypt than he ever did in South Africa, especially following his return under the post-apartheid dispensation, where he increasingly felt isolated and lonely, and indeed, where he died unattended (Jimi Adesina, Eddy Maloka). Was it a premonition of this lack of warm relationships in the land of his birth that made Mafeje less than enthusiastic about returning home to South Africa after 1994, preferring instead to stay on in Namibia as director of the newly established Multidisciplinary Research Centre at the University of Namibia, even if he did not last long in the latter position (Kwesi Prah, Eddy Maloka)?

Whatever be the answer to this and similar questions, to measure the fullness of Mafeje' s Africanity and pan-Africanism, it is appropriate to go beyond scholarly declarations and appreciate the social relationships he forged and entertained in his life in and away from a place called home, motherland or fatherland. According to Kwesi Prah, Archie Mafeje exuded an " effortless worldliness" that gave him a rare " vibrant and sublime cosmopolitanism" ; and as a veritable cosmopolitan African, he was used to describing himself as " South African by birth, Dutch by citizenship and Egyptian by domicile" . Kwesi Prah writes of Mafeje' s impressive familiarity with Western literature, Dutch art, " sophisticated and totally uncommon knowledge of European wines" , and culinary skills and accomplishments. Just as " his often placid exterior belied a stridently combative spirit and expression" in debates, Archie Mafeje' s committed pronouncement and writings on pan-Africanism and the importance of decolonising the social sciences, often took attention away from the cosmopolitan that he was – leading to misrepresentations even by fellow African intellectuals. Far from being essentialist, Mafeje was a person to whom belonging was always work in progress to be constantly enriched with new encounters and new relationships, and never to be confined by geography or boundaries, political or disciplinary. His deep embitterment came and/or was exacerbated when those claiming him failed to demonstrate the nuances and sophistication that made of him the cosmopolitan intellectual and African that he was. As Jimi

Adesina reminds us, the meaning of Archie Mafeje for three generations of African scholars and social scientists is about encounters and the relationships that resulted from those encounters. To John Sharp, Archie Mafeje will be remembered as a scholar who spoke truth, unfailingly, to power; and who over the years carefully worked out how best to support his political convictions by means of the research he did. In speaking truth to power, he had come to master the art of hard and uncompromising intellectual argument, without having to resort to personal animosity or the denial of respect for those with whom he came to argue.

Archie Mafeje has fought the battle and run the race successfully. We will surely miss his thoughtful insights, his strident rebukes, his loyal friendship, his companionship, and – yes, his wit, humour and expert culinary skills that included an incomparable knowledge of foods and wines from all corners of the world. For those he has left behind, especially those of us whom he inspired, the challenge before us is clear: Keep the Mafeje spirit alive by investing ourselves with dedication to the quest for the knowledge we need in order to transform our societies – and the human condition for the better. The timely call by Mahmood Mamdani, for CODESRIA to take a formal decision to commit resources to gathering Archie Mafeje' s papers, with a view to deciding whether they should be archived at CODESRIA or are substantial enough to be archived in a library, most likely in South Africa, with the understanding that these would be available to all scholars, is precisely what CODESRIA is actively pursuing. This special issue of the *CODESRIA Bulletin*, and the 12th General Assembly panel in honour of Mafeje are part of a package of measures aimed at memorializing his substantial contribution to the development of knowledge on the African continent.

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