Introduction: Histories of training, Ethnographies of practice

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What unites a Ugandan social scientist working for the Population Council in Nairobi, a Lesothoan teaching at the University of Zimbabwe and a Khartoum-based academic doing a short-term consultancy for Oxfam in Southern Sudan? All share an anthropological identity and a commitment to shaping an African discipline that critically contributes to both social knowledge and social reform. Whilst aware of colonialism’s influence on the African disciplines, its practitioners are forging new intellectual agendas, working practices and international collaborations. This new face of the discipline is developing through ever closer-association between academic anthropologists and those working in multi-disciplinary research teams, between consultants and teachers, between ‘pure’ and ‘applied’ work.

This volume draws together writings on the history, application and teaching of anthropology in post-colonial Africa. Our aim is to unite critique and practice – showing how African anthropologists are redefining the historical legacy of European and American disciplinary hegemony and developing distinctively African contributions to anthropological theory and practice. As well as illustrating the diverse national traditions of anthropological practice that have developed in sub-Saharan Africa since decolonisation, and particularly during the last 25 years, the contributors to this volume exemplify the diversity of professional work carried out by the discipline’s practitioners, united by their use of anthropological perspectives to make a difference. Their
commitment to this disciplinary identity demonstrates the place that exists for a critical anthropology that is reflective about both its potentials and limitations.

A key tenet of this book is that the *pure/applied* dichotomy, consistently mobilized within anthropology, is an unhelpful way of categorising the discipline, particularly in the African context. All too often this rhetorical divide is used to reinforce the originative and core status of ‘pure’ theoretical anthropological work, on which applied research is derivative, and seen to depend. It is not enough to insist on the indivisibility of pure and applied research, or on the close links between theory and practice. The pure/applied distinction itself only makes sense in the particular context in which a discipline’s practitioners view their institutional location as key to their intellectual self-definition. One’s disciplinary ‘home’ is more than simply the university in which one’s office is located. Yet this is how British anthropologists viewed the future identity of their discipline once it had established a firm institutional foothold within the academy after the second world war. We suggest that the *pure/applied* dichotomy developed within this European and American historical context, and does not travel easily to an African setting where the epistemological demands of donor-funded social research and consultancies closely influence the very nature of academic anthropology.

As Pels and Salemink (1998:2) note, the lack of attention to the history of anthropological practice ‘can at least partly be explained by the hierarchical relationship between ‘pure’ and ‘applied’ anthropology that has dominated the discipline since the Second World War’. This very use of the term ‘applied’ presupposed the existence of a ‘pure’ disciplinary core that transcended historical context and practical use. We follow their work in questioning a narrow definition of ‘academic anthropology’ and the
comforting cloak of ‘professionalism’ that academics draw over their practices. Pels and Salemink also draw attention to the Eurocentrism inherent in this view of anthropology’s past. ‘If anthropology is identified with an academic location’, they write, this implies that the ‘most important intellectual events in anthropology's history are deemed to have taken place in scientific societies or at universities in Britain, France, the US, Germany and perhaps some other centres in the West’ (ibid.:5). The contributions to this book shift the focus away from conventional scholarly wisdom, and reveal a diverse, energised and engaged African discipline.

In this introduction we provide a scholarly back-ground to our venture in three different ways. We begin by retelling the history of African intellectual engagement with anthropology during the colonial and early post-colonial period, as well as discussing the changing role of African Higher Education over this period. We go on to document the contemporary state of the discipline and its teaching in Francophone and Anglophone Africa. Finally we discuss the role of regional research organisations like OSSREA and CODESRIA through whose funds African anthropological research has been revitalised. We end by reviewing the chapters.

Whilst seeking to avoid ‘Afro-pessimism’, our contributors do not shy away from the dilemmas and challenges faced by the discipline on the continent today, whether describing the political economy of knowledge production, or the time-demands imposed by applied and consultancy research. Each recounts challenges faced, some not always overcome. Each seeks to communicate something of the intellectual vibrancy, political reflexivity and social engagement demonstrated by contemporary African anthropologists. Each contribution is intended to inspire new generations of scholars in
Africa to study and train to be anthropologists, aware both of the histories of practice to which they contribute and motivated by a commitment to progressive social change.

**Histories of academic anthropology and application in Africa**

Academic disciplines, like all communities, craft identities for themselves through the histories they tell and the memories they nurture. All too often these histories are written for a purpose, that of explaining and legitimating the present, rather than in order to understand the events and disjunctures of the past. We want to ask which histories of African anthropology get told, when, and by whom? Which pasts get revisited, and which lay undisturbed? And how should we go about creating new accounts, particularly of the discipline’s involvement with colonialism, undoubtedly a formative moment for the social sciences in Africa?

The histories one tells depend partly on how one draws boundaries around the discipline. One way of doing so is to draw it very tightly, defining the discipline primarily as an ongoing intellectual dialogue, and thus focusing primarily on the internal history of ideas and theoretical debates. Such accounts can be revealing (e.g. Kuper 1996), but they also risk being internally self-contained, straying little from the academic seminar and the senior common-room. Goody’s history of British anthropology in Africa from 1918 to 1970, entitled ‘The expansive moment’, is a case in point (Goody 1995). This is an account of British social anthropology’s theoretical developments, in which Africa’s role as a research laboratory for the metropolitan academy is all too clear. Whilst the description of the rivalries and intrigues amongst British anthropologists is titillating,
the discipline’s relationship with colonial administrations and anti-colonial politics was very much played down. So too are all the other hidden histories of anthropological practice, such as the work of scholar-travellers, missionary ethnographers, African intellectuals or colonial administrators themselves. Geertz is ‘exceedingly unfond’ of what he calls ‘Practitioner Histories’ because they start with an ‘almost Cartesian, clear and self-evident perception of what anthropology is ...and work back from that to find rudimentary, prefigurative examples of it avant la letter’ (Geertz 1999:306). They risk simplifying the past in order to explain the present, rather than seeking to relate the past to the present. Ignoring the institutional and political contexts in which ideas unfold and blossom, such histories also overlook key aspects of their own disciplinary reproduction, and in particular practical aspects of teaching and training.

There is another, diametrically opposed, approach to the past. This is to define anthropology by the colonial contexts in which it was practiced, exploring its links, patronage and funding by colonial administrations. This external definition has been most powerfully adopted by the discipline’s critics, and was particularly dominant amongst African and leftist academics in the 1960s and 1970. Some focused on how anthropology had emerged from the colonial context (Asad 1973:8-19), others on the limits of its functionalist methods (Goddard 1972) or empirical methods (Banaji 1970; Magubane 1973) whilst others still emphasised the continuing and influential legacy of colonial ideologies (Magubane 1971; Owusu 1975). Some, such as Banaji and Goddard, came out of a Marxist tradition of social theorising, others were concerned to demonstrate the ‘developing contradictions’ (James 1973:69) between the administrators’ philosophy of
just rule and the growing nationalist movements, with anthropologists caught in the middle.

Over time the diverse aspects and nuances of this critique have begun to merge, and the general question asked of the past has become the more simplistic one of anthropology’s ‘complicity’ with colonial rule – caricatured as the ‘anthropology as handmaiden of colonialism’ debate. A number of authors have continued to develop this strong critique (Mafeje 1996; Rigby 1996; Magubane 2000). The ideological shadow of Western influence, such writers insist, continues to delegitimise anthropology. For them, the future for the African social sciences lay in escaping from its colonial past: anthropology is past rather than future. One of the problems in this position is its selective amnesia about the history that is supposedly to be left behind. It assumes a radical disjuncture between the colonial past and the post-colonial future, and depicts anthropology’s past in a singular and un-nuanced way, as a single entity.

But was Anthropology, as some have contended, simply colonialism’s ‘child’, ‘tool’ or ‘hand-maiden’? Stocking reminds us that ‘casual metaphorical characterisation’ (1996:368) is of little help in understanding the issues at stake. The accusation gains moral valence from its very lack of specificity. Can one talk about colonialism in general, or should one focus on particular colonial administrations and polities at specific moments in time? Are particular professional and institutional linkages that developed between scholars and administrators at issue, or is the broader issue of anthropology’s ‘ideological entanglement’ (Wolfe 1999) ultimately what matters? The issue of scale is key to an analysis of this sort. At the most general level, most anthropologists were members of European societies that participated enthusiastically in the imperial project,
and so share some responsibility for the patronising moral attitudes and exploitative social relations it espoused. At a more individual level, there were many who sought to develop a critique of these relations, not to mention the African scholars and activists who, as we will argue, sometimes used anthropology’s tools in new and oppositional ways.

As the opaque moral clouds of colonialism have dispersed, a more nuanced and historically subtle position has developed. Yes, as Stocking notes, British colonialism did represent a potential market for a new kind of anthropology, one which Malinowski was the first to recognize with his bids for Rockefeller funding. Yes, it did help in the process of facilitating the institutionalisation of academic social anthropology in Britain in the interwar and immediate post-war years (Stocking 1996:368). Yes, it did benefit from significant Colonial Office funding. But no, direct evidence of the systematic use of extant anthropological ideas (as opposed to nineteenth century philosophies of social evolutionism) by colonial administrations is limited. The relationship was more fraught than fruitful. If this debate continues, this is partly because Africa continues to be shaped by external forces and financial interests, in particular the neo-colonial conditionalities of international aid and debt repayments. Rather than fading away, the issues are re-framed.

An alternative way of telling this history is to closely attend to historical events whilst seeking to understand their implications for the present. By opening a dialogue with the past one can work towards a history of anthropological practice that neither denies colonialism nor lets it over-determine intellectual debate. We do this by foregrounding the work of African scholars and activists, showing how they worked within, challenged and reworked the colonial context they found themselves within.
Where does one start such a history? There are plenty of potential precedents. Pels and Salemink (1998) point to the ‘pre-terrain’ of anthropology as practised by missionaries, travellers and colonial administrators. We would add the African ‘organic intellectuals’ and informants who worked with them. An example here would be Apollo Kaggwa, the Regent of Buganda, who liaised closely with the missionary John Roscoe in interviewing Baganda chiefs, as part of Roscoe’s ethnography of the Buganda (Roscoe 1911). Like a number of other Baganda intellectuals, Kaggwa saw the power of the written word, publishing his own influential accounts of Kiga nda customs and clans (Kaggwa 1907).

We trace the beginning of African anthropology to those Africans who carried out PhD-level research themselves. One place to start is the work of writer-turned-politician Jomo Kenyatta, who joined Malinowski’s social anthropology seminar at the London School of Economics in the 1930s. This choice is not an arbitrary one. Whilst his subsequent political career left behind this early model of the engaged academic, his patriotic ethnography ‘Facing Mount Kenya’ (1938) was an attempt to bring together a record of Kikuyu past with a vision of a post-colonial Kenyan future. His work serves as a model of how one activist put anthropology to use, turning it against itself. Malinowski was aware of this subversive potential of the discipline, commenting once that ‘anthropology might one day be turned against us’ (cited in Onoge 1979:48).

Kenyatta first came to Britain in 1929 as a representative of the Kikuyu Central Association, and two years later, as a delegate to Colonial Office talks on the future of Kenya. He remained in exile for fifteen years, his belief in self-government vastly out of step with other leading Kenyan politicians who found it hard to look beyond British colonial rule. In his time in London he tried on very different persona. The first was as an
aspirant communist revolutionary, spending time with Trinidadian anti-colonial activist and writer George Padmore, with whom he went to Moscow.

They gradually began to realise that African socialism had to be African as well as socialist, and falling out with Stalin, were expelled in 1933 from the Communist party. On return to Britain, they set up their own organisational machine, the International African Service Bureau, and continued a hectic round of campaigning against the injustices of British Imperialism in Africa. Mixing in a cosmopolitan circle, Kenyatta soon met Bronislaw Malinowski, leader of the now famous social anthropology seminar at LSE. Both showmen, they apparently got on famously, seemingly sharing a prejudice in their dislike of Indians. Prince Peter of Greece recalls how Malinowski had once opened a seminar saying ‘My lectures are not for Indians’, with Kenyatta following up by describing how Indians had exploited Africans in Kenya (quoted in Murray-Brown, 1972:177).

In November 1935, it was Kenyatta’s turn to give a paper at the seminar, and he chose the topic of female circumcision. Prince Peter took notes on Kenyatta’s talk, recording: ‘Europeans and missionaries consider this rite disgusting and barbarous, the Kikuyu consider it very important for the solidity of the social structure’ (ibid.:190). In capitalizing on anthropology’s concern with integrated and functioning ‘going concerns’, Kenyatta developed the core of an argument for imagining the Gikuyu nation. He used a form of cultural relativism to challenge the administrative philosophy of ‘enlightened’ progressive colonialism. With funding from the International African Institute, the idea developed into the book, which Malinowski provided with a fulsome introduction, praising the combination of ‘his full competence of a trained Western scholar’, and the
‘illuminating sidelights inspired by the inside knowledge of an Africa’ (Malinowski 1938:viii). Despite a few cavils about ‘European bias’ and Kenyatta’s unproblematic description of the Kikuyu magician’s ‘telepathy’, Malinowski declares that the book is one of the ‘first really competent and instructive contributions to African ethnography by a scholar of pure African patronage’ (ibid.:xiii). The book itself is a persuasive mix of detailed empirical description and the occasional more campaigning appeal to the dignity and cohesion of Gikuyu culture. The material is organized into the usual chapters on land tenure, kinship, economics, religion and marriage, as befitting the Malinowskian ethnographic genre, but each has a twist in the tail. The conclusion is unashamedly political, berating the way that when Europeans ‘rob the people of their land, he is taking away not only their livelihood but the material symbol that holds family and tribe together. In doing this, he gives one blow which cuts away the foundations from the whole of Kikuyu life, social, moral and economic’ (Kenyatta 1938:317). Similar critiques of European missionaries and teachers are made at the end of chapters on education and initiation rates. These remind the reader that Kenya is being changed by settlers, missionaries, administrators and even scholars, rather than maintain the scholarly façade of an untouched ‘ethnographic present’. There is also a swipe at the ‘professional friends of Africa’ in his introduction – a veiled reference to anthropologists. Thus like his friend and teacher--Malinowski--Kenyatta mobilizes anthropological knowledge to argue for an unpolluted Kikuyu polity, one that was best left alone if its cultural autonomy was to be preserved.

It is too easy to judge a book by its author. Kenyatta’s subsequent career, his rewriting of his role within the anti-colonial struggle, the divisions caused by Kikuyu
nationalism and his own sometimes autocratic Presidential rule, make it easy to overlook the book’s scholarly contributions. The book openly uses anthropology to challenge colonial rule. It could fairly be labeled as the first postcolonial ethnography. Not simply one step on an academic career ladder, the brand of anthropology presented in *Facing Mount Kenya* contributed to, and built upon, a renewed interest in traditional African cultures. Mirroring debates within the Negritude movement, this was a strategic reclamation and celebration of Africanity in ways that would challenge Western and colonial perceptions and constructions of Africa.

Kenyatta increasingly prioritised his political campaigning for African rights, and his work with Padmore eventually led to the 5th Pan African Congress in Manchester in 1945. Amongst other African American activists, in attendance was WEB du Bois, the Classics professor whose 1903 work *The souls of Black folk* was a seminal text for those writing about racial discrimination and Pan-Africanism. The event was a formative event for many of the African delegates who attended, including Kwame Nkrumah. Kenyatta’s African roots gave him an authority that the Caribbean intellectuals envied, but also helped him see the Kenyan situation in its global racial context.

Whilst Kenyatta chose to pursue a political career, he had recognised the progressive potential offered by anthropology. He wasn’t the only one to do so. Nkrumah also took courses in the discipline at University College London, and as Ghanaian Prime Minister encouraged the Africanisation of the university curriculum, in which anthropology and African studies played a prominent role. He established the Institute of African Studies at the University Ghana, Legon, and whilst rejecting the anthropological label, he called for a pan-African study of African cultural practice. Speaking in 1964, he
attacked anthropology, arguing that scholars of African studies had ‘begun to give accounts of African society which were used to justify colonialism as a duty of civilisation… this explains, I believe, the popularity and success of anthropology’ (Nkrumah, quoted in Brokensha 1966). This critique, we would argue, was not about the efficacy of anthropology as a discipline capable of understanding African social realities but about the abuse of that anthropological knowledge. Both Nkrumah and Kenyatta knew the value of anthropology in defining an African ethos yet both took different paths with it.

Kofi Busia, leader of the Ghanaian opposition and Nkrumah’s eventual successor after the military coup of 1966, was initially recruited to help Fortes in a social survey of Asanteland in the 1940s. This led him to do a PhD at Oxford with Fortes, published in 1951 as *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti* (Busia 1951). Building on Rattray’s work, Busia’s work differs from his peers in that it carefully situated within, and critical of, British colonial rule. He starts from the premise that ‘the British occupation of 1900 disintegrated the Ashanti union’ (ibid, 101). He goes on to describe local uprisings, destoolings and challenges to Chiefly authority, explaining them as a result of true power having been vested in the Colonial Government and its agents, ‘which the people associate with limitless power, endless wealth and a high prestige’ (ibid.:117). Alex Kyerematen, another Ghanaian, was also a student of anthropology with Busia at Oxford during this period, writing a thesis on Ashanti royal regalia.

Busia continued to write about the implications of colonialism for African culture, and became the first Ghanaian to hold a Professorship at the University of Legon, the Chair in Sociology (Goody 1995). He was not afraid to be critical of the more romantic
elements of the Negritude movement that developed in 1930s Paris. First propounded by Lamine and Leopold Senghor, the negritude movement can again be too easily critiqued for its essentialist depictions of African culture. It has to be understood, like Kenyatta’s work, as an intellectual resource for consciousness-raising developed during a period where direct anti-colonial activism was repressed by the French authorities. As Young notes, if ‘the Anglophone activists tended to be political philosophers, the leaders of the anti-colonial revolution in the French Caribbean and Africa, Césaire and Leopold Senghor, were both poets (2002:265).

Unsurprisingly, Anglophone African socialists like Busia were less convinced by such poetry. In his book, ‘The Challenge for Africa’ Busia reflects on the notion of the ‘African personality’ being propounded within the Negritude movement. Drawing on his anthropological training, he develops an early critique of Negritude, asking ‘what is the shared social tradition with reference to which the abstraction of an African personality is conceived? Where does it prevail? In the whole continent? In parts of the continent? Which parts?’ (1962:43) He goes on to criticize the concept of African personality as a political myth, which given its ‘profound social consequences’ can be ‘extravagantly’ abused. Yet he too recognizes it as a quest for the ‘vindication of the dignity of persons of African descent’, given that ‘colonialism rests on force and violence’, and that ‘its persistence constitutes the most burning challenge in Africa today’ (ibid.:63)

There is one final figure to add to this coterie of anti-colonial activists who engaged with anthropology – Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, later the first president of Nigeria, and also a founder of a Nigerian university. He went to the US to study, doing a degree in political science at Lincoln University and an MSc in Anthropology at Pennsylvania,
writing his thesis on ‘Mythology in Onitsha Society’. Malinowski attended a seminar he
gave on ‘The origins of the state’ at Pennsylvania and invited him to join the Royal
Anthropological Institute and also sought to recruit him to his seminar, but in 1934 he
returned to West Africa to a career first in newspaper publishing and then politics,
becoming an icon to the nationalist movement. He too met George Padmore whilst in the
US, and in his autobiography Azikiwe recalls how Padmore led a student protest against
British colonial policy during the visit of the British Ambassador to Howard University.

A key aspect of this history of anti-colonial intellectual debate is the space that the
metropolitan universities offered to these young scholars. Self-exiled activists like
Azikiwe, Kenyatta and Nkrumah used the opportunity of studying abroad to both develop
their ideas and their political networks. Nkrumah and Azikiwe specifically chose to study
in the US because of the African-American tradition of nationalism and self-
empowerment. Anthropology was part of their education, even if they subsequently
disowned the discipline. Whilst one may wish to dismiss anthropology as an intimate part
of a colonial knowledge structure, one also has to acknowledge the interstitial space that
the discipline offered to those of a critical bent, and the first steps in Africanising the
discipline. As Young notes, ‘the mechanics and production of African liberation thus
took the form of an inter-continental movement, never operating in isolation from a
significant US and Caribbean involvement. To set up a division today between
postcolonial diasporic and indigenous African politics has little meaning historically’
(2002:219). For the same reason, any rigid dichotomy of ‘Western’ anthropology versus
‘indigenous’ knowledge practices is likely to be a strained, artificial comparison. For
Young, ‘post-colonialism is neither western nor non-western, but a dialectical product of
interaction between the two (2002:68). In their written work both Kenyatta and Busia were pericipient about the potential for a postcolonial anthropology. That none of them pursued their scholarly work is both a reflection of their political careers and the way that the discipline’s reputation became increasingly tarnished by the funding and support it received from the British Colonial Office.

The history of academic disciplines is the story of both ideas and institutions. How did anti-colonial politics gradually intersect with the establishment of universities in Africa? Before the second world war, there were already a number of Colleges scattered across British-controlled Africa, such as Fourah Bay College in Freetown, first established in 1870s. Makerere in Uganda, and Achimota in the Gold Coast both offered post-secondary vocational education by 1935. But most African Higher Education institutions were developed after the war, with colleges being formed in Ibadan and Legon in 1949, and Makerere being upgraded to university status in 1963. Ashby (1964) describes how the Asquith commission of 1951 became ‘Britain's blueprint for the export of universities to her people overseas’. Acknowledging this as one of the few ‘lasting legacies’ of British colonialism, with much time, effort and funding going into these new universities, he also points out that the policy was ‘a vivid expression of British cultural parochialism’, for its basic assumption was that a university system ‘appropriate for Europeans brought up in London and Manchester and Hull was also appropriate for Africans brought up in Lagos and Kumasi and Kampala’ (ibid.:19). As with new provincial universities in the UK, they initially had to teach to London University curricula and maintain the same entrance standards. This meant that often places went unfilled – there were 100 vacancies in University College Ghana in 1955. The principle
of academic autonomy may be a good one, but in practice in 1950s Africa this meant a
denate of primarily expatriate scholars defining university policy. As Tadesse (1999)
notes, these universities were lavishly funded, often located on campuses away from
urban centres. Several of the universities were regional in ambition, and only later
became national institutions. All of this contributed to a growing public backlash against
such racialised ‘ivory towers’, and there was strong pressure on universities to become
more publicly accountable. The initial focus on standards was gradually replaced by a
call for relevance and usefulness.

The situation in Francophone Africa was rather different. The French did not
support the early creation of African universities, and the only university founded prior to
independence was in Dakar. Young African scholars all graduated from French
universities, and Coquery-Vidrovitch suggests that this led them to strongly oppose the
‘brutal’ assimilation of the Francophone model, and to ‘construct a national history
separate from their French heritage (Mudimbe 1991). Both Mamadiou Diouf and Achille
Mbembe, founders of the Senegal school of cultural philosophy, and leaders of a
movement to develop an autochthonous African scholarly project, were trained in France
(Diouf and Mbembe 1993). The picture is complex and country-specific. Nkwi and
Messina (2000) describe the teaching of Ethnology within Sociology at the University of
Yaounde in Cameroon, firstly led by a French anthropologist in the 1960s, and gradually
evolving till anthropology become, in 1993, a recognised degree in its own right.

Anthropological work in Anglophone Africa was both aided and abetted by
British support for social research, through the funding provided by the Colonial Social
Science Research Council (Mills, this volume). In Francophone Africa, such work was
aided by the creation of the Institute of Ethnology at the University of Paris in 1925 and later by the founding of the Société des Africanistes (Society of Africanists) to mirror the British-dominated International African Institute (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1999). Couched in a paternalist rhetoric of colonial development and welfare, two hundred different social research projects were established across British Africa in the 1950s, many of which were anthropologically informed. The funding also led to the creation of regional research institutes centres including the Rhodes Livingstone Institute (RLI) in Northern Rhodesia, the East African Institute for Social Research at Makerere College in Uganda, and the West African Institute for Social Research in Nigeria. Yet the very prestige and visibility of such projects led, in the minds of many African observers, to the discipline being closely associated with colonial administrations. This had not been the intention, and back in 1944 Max Gluckman had stated his hope that Africans would use the ‘sociologist’s knowledge’ to challenge the colonial administration (Schumaker 2001).

The original purpose of the centres had been to build research-capacity and train local researchers; this did not always materialise. Schumaker describes how many of the research assistants employed at the RLI were never offered permanent appointments within the institute, despite developing a strong commitment to the discipline, and went on to develop non-academic careers. Like Kenyatta however, they made anthropology their own, making use of their nationalist political credentials to gain access to sensitive urban contexts, and also using their research appointments to further their own political careers. In Makerere, Ugandan research assistants left for careers in journalism and politics.
With independence, the research concerns of both the RLI and the EAISR shifted away from anthropological to economic topics; and the debates begun in the early years of the RLI had more influence on scholarly work in Manchester than Lusaka. The RLI was shifted first to Lusaka and then to Salisbury during the years of the federation. The first, and last, Zambian Director of the institute, Philip Nsugbe, presided over its renaming as an Institute for African Studies. His memories of that period are revealing:

'In Zambian eyes, the Rhodes Livingstone Institute was viewed as an embarrassing colonial relic, indeed as an open window through which the same old Colonial eyes pried… it still bore to the oversensitive Zambian nostrils the unpleasant skin odour of its Colonial ancestry' (Nsugbe 1977:335). He recalls the battle for its future amongst expatriate researchers, some of whom had an inevitably ‘strong emotional attachment’ to the RLI. These research institutes were plagued by their history and their semi-autonomous status in relation to the new universities, few of which established departments of anthropology. Not one of the universities in English-speaking Africa, save for South Africa, created a single-discipline anthropology department, though a number of joint departments of anthropology and sociology were created, including in Nigeria, Sudan, Zimbabwe, and Ethiopia.

Nigeria was one exception to this general relegation of anthropology in the post-colonial period. A strong tradition of anthropological research was begun when Nathaniel Fadipe became the first Nigerian to receive a PhD in social anthropology in 1939. There followed a succession of scholars, who whilst calling themselves sociologists for tactical reasons, trained in social anthropology in Europe and America. These included Philip
Nsugbe, Onige Otite, Victor Uchendu, M Onwuejeogwu, Azuka Dike and FI Ekiuba, several of whom wrote classic anthropological monographs (Otite 1999).

From the mid 1960s onwards flourishing universities like Makerere came under increasing state control, and growing social pressure to Africanise their workforce. This was also a time during which dynamic new schools of thought emerged within the radical social sciences, such as the Dar es Salaam school of political economy (Rodney 1972; Shivji 1976) and new schools of thinking within history. Professional associations and regional research centers like CODESRIA (Council for the development of Economic and Social Research in Africa) began to emerge. Tadesse characterises this period as ‘a euphoric one, seemingly full of intellectual promise’, yet he notes that a ‘tradition of research and publishing was not institutionalized’ (1999:148).

Viewed historically, the omens for anthropology in late-colonial Africa were never auspicious, born as it was amidst a rising tide of anti-colonial sentiment and the increasingly scholastic and metropolitan concerns of academic social anthropology. The inevitable consequence of being associated with Colonial office funding was that anthropology in Anglophone Africa became the scapegoat. With the exception of South Africa, most African anthropologists adopted new identities and taught in cognate disciplines. With neither a presence in the new universities nor support from African intelligentsia, the rejection of the discipline in the 1960s and 1970s was almost complete. Brokensha felt that ‘most African intellectuals are best indifferent to, or mildly tolerant of, social anthropology, and frequently they have a strong feeling of hostility to the subject and its practitioners (Brokensha 1966:16). . With anthropology suddenly out of
fashion, its approaches and research practices were adopted to great effect within African history – such as the sudden scholarly emphasis on the importance of oral history.

New academic fashions developed. Works by Amin (1974), Cabral (1969), Walter Rodney (1972), Mafeje (1971), Shivji (1976) and Mamdani (1976) captivated a growing community of African social scientists. Structural Marxism, revisionist histories and dependency theory analyses threw light on the history of colonialism and the structurally peripheral economic and political relationships Africa found itself in. However Marxism’s explanatory ambitions took it away from the more modest tasks of making empirical sense of changing African social forms. This was a period of grand narratives about African history, politics and economics, but with rather less attention to social relations or cultural forms, ‘society’ being the tarnished analytical tool of the anthropologists. If, as Mamdani (1999:192) argues, ‘ethnicity (tribalism) was simultaneously the form of colonial control over ‘natives’ and the form of revolt against it’, then ethnicity was unlikely to be the analytical frame of choice. As Brokensha noted in 1966, ‘any appearance of anthropologists fostering interest in this potentially divisive and disruptive force would be regarded with deep suspicion’ (Brokensha 1966:15). At the first International Congress of Africanists in 1964, anthropology was attacked for its portrayal of African societies in a way that justified colonial rule (Bown and Crowder 1964). Paul Nkwi notes that this critique was repeated at the 1971 Algiers Congress of African intellectuals (Nkwi 1998a).

The growing influence of Marxist theory was mirrored by the growth of Institutes of Development studies and of ‘developmentalist’ ideology within African universities and civil society. As Obbo demonstrates in her contribution to this volume, scholars
were primarily interested in ‘modern’ Africa, and had little interest in documenting rural African life. The focus was on nation-building as a means to development. The paradox was that neither modernisation paradigm, nor its critique, engaged with the everyday reality of life on the continent. Applied anthropology continued during the 1960s as Brokensha demonstrates (1966, 1969), but was primarily carried out by Western expatriate scholars.

Debate over the epistemological and racial politics inherent in the Western academic study of Africa continue to this day, particularly in the US. A heated conflict over the racial composition of staff in African studies departments in the US (Curtin 1995; Atkins et al 1995) brought to the surface strong divisions over the ‘conceptions, institutions and communities dedicated to the study of Africa’ (Martin and West 1999:1). Those who critique the ‘Africanist’ establishment decry its narrow and compartmentalised construction of Africa, and ‘gatekeeping practices’ within Area studies. This has led to over-specialisation, with scholars defining themselves, for example, as ‘East Africanists’ or ‘West Africanists’. This has lead established scholars to dismiss the work of African Americans and those in the diaspora who have moved from area specific to theme-specific studies of African studies. Martin and West suggest ways that an ‘examination of the origin of the study of Africa outside the Africanist establishment indicates both a different history of the field and the foundations of alternative, non-Africanist future for African studies’ (ibid.:14). They point to the continuing importance of what they call ‘transcontinental’ scholarship, a tradition begun by W.E.B. DuBois, that explores Africa in relation to its diasporic communities.
Creative marginality? the teaching and practice of anthropology in Africa today

After a half-century of being out of favour, how and where is Anthropology being taught in Africa today? How are anthropologists being employed? There is a growing literature and debates about the history of the discipline and its teaching in Africa (e.g. Gordon 1993; Nkwi 2001; Mamdani 1998) across Africa, and it is now possible to piece together a continent wide picture of disciplinary practice.

Within Anglophone Africa there are very few university institutions with explicitly labelled Anthropology departments outside Southern Africa. Exceptions include a number of joint Sociology and Anthropology departments in Nigeria, Moi university in Kenya, and the University of Khartoum. Sudan holds the record for the longest record of teaching within a department of anthropology, where it has been taught since 1955 (Kameir and Elbakri 1989). In Nigeria there has also been a long tradition of anthropology teaching, either within sociology departments or joint departments of sociology and anthropology, with the particular emphasis of each dependent on the scholars founding the department (Otite 1999). The University of Nigeria, Nsukka, founded by Nnamdi Azikwe, was one of the first to teach anthropology (see Ezeh, this volume). As Pankhurst demonstrates (this volume) Anthropology has also had a relatively unbroken record in Ethiopia, where it has been taught at the University of Addis Ababa since the late 1960s. Each country and institution has a different and very specific history and relationship with the discipline. As Joshua Akong’a, once a Dean of the Faculty of Cultural and Development Studies at Moi University (where anthropology has been taught since 1994) puts it in relation to the situation in Kenya: ‘We have broken
away from European Anthropology, we’re not about writing ethnographies, but rather we’re seeking to solve societies’ problems’ (Akong’a pers. comm.).

South Africa has a rather different history (Gordon 1993, Hammond-Tooke 1997), both because of the early development of anthropology departments in South Africa - Radcliffe-Brown taught at UCT in the 1930s - and because of its years of isolation under apartheid. Yet even in Southern Africa, one often finds a contradictory situation. Anthropologists are usually ‘hidden’ within sociology departments, and yet the majority of empirical research done for masters and doctorates in countries such as Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Zimbabwe is carried out by anthropologists. As leBeau and Gordon (2002) note, this has been primarily carried out by Western expatriates rather than local scholars. Mamdani (1998) has been a vocal critic of the shape of the social sciences in Southern Africa, pointing out that if students wished to study the ‘native’ rather than white experience at the University of Cape Town, they were expected to go to the Centre for African Studies rather than to the disciplinary departments (see also Hall’s response 1998). He calls for the ‘deracialisation of intellectual production’ through state action to change the institutional context of knowledge production (Mamdani 1999:134) citing similar government interventions in the 1960s as a key catalyst to intellectual debate across Sub-Saharan Africa. If there are relatively few universities teaching anthropology in Anglophone Africa, there are even fewer in Francophone Africa. Instead, as Abega shows in this volume, anthropologists were usually trained first in philosophy, often within the seminary.

One way of understanding the ongoing epistemological legacy of the discipline’s relationship with the colonial metropole is to explore the degree to which, 40 years after
independence, university faculty are still being appointed after having completed research degrees outside Africa. An informal sample of the situation in Anglophone Africa can be taken from those staff listed as teaching in Sociology or Anthropology departments in the 2002 Commonwealth University Yearbook. Of the 170 or so academics listed, roughly two-thirds had a Masters or PhD degree from a non-African university. The sample is a casual one, potentially skewed by a selective listing of only the senior staff within departments, but it is nonetheless revealing. It raises the issue of the extent to which ‘endogenisation’ is occurring in African universities. Crossman uses the term to evaluate the extent to which African universities are developing ‘new and original approaches to the practices of their own disciplines – in short, their own schools of thought’ (1999:27).

African anthropology continues to be characterised by an imbalance in its disciplinary networks. The international networks that are a legacy of colonial rule outweigh the regional and national networks that one might have predicted to develop. This has both positive and negative consequences. African anthropology has thrived on its contacts and exchanges with British, French, American and other European anthropologies via scholarships and sabbaticals, workshops and conferences, exchange of teachers and students, research funding, and participation in joint research projects. Although this has protected African anthropology from provincialism, it has been at the expense of forging similar contacts and exchanges among African anthropologists, even amongst those within a single country. It is instructive that anthropologists in Africa communicate less across national boundaries than they do with colleagues in Europe and North America. The separation seems even greater between Anglophone and Francophone African anthropologists where language is a major hindrance. An exception
is Cameroon, where both English and French have often been used simultaneously as media of instruction in the education system.

One example of this is the relative paucity of linkages between South African anthropologists and those from the rest of the continent. De Jongh sees this as partly the result of South Africa's years of isolation’ during apartheid, which led to a ‘relative ignorance of the discipline and its practitioners in the rest of Africa’ (1997:443). Two distinct traditions of anthropology also developed in South Africa, one catering to the intellectual interests and linguistic needs of Afrikaans intellectuals, and the other to the more liberal English-speaking anthropological community. Neither addressed the interests or training needs of black academics.

The issue today for African anthropology is not simply one of redressing the geopolitical balance, but also one of sustaining its global networks, which have been seriously undermined by the more inward-looking economic and educational policies of the Western countries. African anthropology enters the 21st century not only fragmented, but also isolated from the international anthropological community. Perhaps with the exception of Southern Africa, the shortage of resources for research and teaching (such as up-to-date literature) and low salaries have combined to cause a ‘brain drain’ and a disincentive to serious anthropological work. With universities declining in prestige and resources, intellectual outlooks are becoming narrow and provincial, and the best of staff and graduates emigrating. These material constraints and inequities have been extensively explored in the literature (Selassie and Kameir 1989; Ajayi 1995; Mamdani 1993).
Those who stay behind are drifting into consultancy work with international organisations. Consultancies are not in themselves problematic, but they can result in the confining of intellectual production and debate to routine reports, sacrificing scholarly creativity to survival necessities. A particular problem for many African researchers has been the way they have ended up serving as local sources of information for their more fortunate colleagues abroad.

A more positive aspect of the interaction between anthropology and its cognate disciplines has been the growing integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches within anthropological work. Partly driven by the conventions of bio-medical research, anthropologists have increasingly found ways of using quantitative tools to analyse qualitative research. This is demonstrated in Mary Amuyunzu-Nyamongo’s contribution to this book. This is not necessarily a new departure for anthropology, for Max Gluckman’s students at the RLI constantly returned to the importance of bringing together qualitative and quantitative data.

A legacy of the ideological legacy of colonial anthropology is found in the continued perception of a divide between ‘Africanists’ and African scholars working in Africa. Whilst there has never been more potential for creative and collaborative linkages, between individuals, disciplines and countries, they are rarely in evidence. African scholars are well positioned to carry out empirical social research, partly because of their familiarity with local political contexts, but are often less exposed to theoretical debates current in ‘Northern’ institutions. Examples of such collaborative research projects between institutions are increasing, but the relationship is not always an equal one. There are also a growing number of undergraduate study-abroad programmes being
organised by US universities across Africa (currently 33 US universities offer such programmes in Ghana). Mwenda Ntarangwi (this volume) explores the complex relationship that attends between anthropology and study abroad.

A related question is the role of ‘theory’ in the African discipline. Zeleza (1997:iv) expresses his frustration at the existing gap between disciplinary theory and practice: ‘African scholars cannot afford the disengaged academic recreations of faddish theorising others seem to be able to indulge in. Their countries and communities cry out for clear and committed analyses, not the superficial travelogues they often get from foreign fly-by-night academic tourists’. Sichone, in an important critique of contemporary American anthropological trends, suggests that ‘anthropological research is still a western enterprise in a way that political science, development studies or any of the other social sciences are not’ (2001:371). He is particularly concerned about what he calls ‘pure anthropology’, which in its ‘insistence on creating meaning even when lacking information’ he sees as even more imperial than colonial anthropology. For him, current trends in American anthropology are leading to anthropology ‘that has no practical value’ (ibid.). He ends by suggesting that it should be a requirement of the profession that ‘all anthropologists do some research at home’ (ibid.:379). It is our argument that the African anthropologies currently being carried out ‘at home’ and across the continent have a very real value, and represent an important disciplinary future. Yet given the international exchanges that do occur, African anthropology is inevitably torn between forging its own identity and building on the traditions of scholarship in the institutions where its practitioners are trained. In the US, for instance, the ‘four field’ approach conceptualises anthropology in a rather different way from the British focus on social anthropology as
separate from archaeology. African scholars employed in the same national university who have trained in both the US and the UK bring very different experiences and perceptions of anthropology to their teaching. Critiques of anthropology in Africa, including those by Zeleza and Sichone, do not just question the discipline’s epistemological ability to offer understandings of Africa and its complexities. They also ask questions of the social identities and institutional locations of academics, and how these shape the questions they ask and the conclusions they make. The currently favoured disciplines of Political Science and Development Studies, seen by some as suitable for Africa in ways that ‘pure Anthropology’ is not, are not exempt from the same Western epistemological assumptions. It is not just theories of post-modernism that have given rise to the ‘superficial travelogues’ that Zeleza criticises. In fact, post-modern critiques can sit well within the discipline, since the production of anthropological knowledge through the study of the ‘other’ has allowed for the legitimacy of other world-views besides those of Western anthropologists. In its practice African anthropology decentres Western epistemological traditions, creating its own traditions of reflexive anthropology and cultural critique (cf Marcus and Fischer 1986). This is not to say that every African anthropologist ought to conduct research ‘at home’ as a way of levelling the field, because we will continue to study not ‘ourselves’ but ‘others’, as Onyango-Ouma points out. We cannot ignore the critiques levelled against anthropology but nor can we refute its usefulness. We thus suggest a more discriminating engagement with anthropology that is not corrupted by a priori conception of global knowledge hierarchies or because it was a ‘handmaiden’ of colonialism. A precedent for such an engagement is offered in the discussion of the close links between scholarship and politics in ‘Anthropologies of the
South’ (Quinlan 2000) and in recent debates about world anthropologies (Lin Ribeiro and Escobar 2005).

The founding of the Pan-African Anthropology Association (PAAA) in 1989 was an attempt to demonstrate how anthropology’s potential contribution to understanding of Africa’s social, cultural and political terrain. It marked a renaissance and recognition for the discipline in Africa. The PAAA was the brainchild of 14 African anthropologists who met in Zagreb at the 12th International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (ICAES). During the Congress, these anthropologists assembled a steering committee, chaired by Prof. Paul Nchoji Nkwii (Cameroon), and including Prof. Adama Diop (Senegal), Dr. George Hagan (Ghana) and Dr. Ocholla Ayayo (Kenya). They acknowledged the ‘serious problems’ facing African anthropologists’, evidenced in the way that ‘African Ethnology and Anthropology did not feature as prominently as it should have’ at the Congress, and determined to launch an association of African Anthropologists to ‘come together and identify these problems more clearly’.

The PAAA was launched the following year in Cameroon, with financial support from the Wenner-Gren foundation, which has been supplemented by funds from the Carnegie foundation, the UNFPA (UN Family Planning Association) and other UN funding bodies. The PAAA has also fostered a series of scholarly networks and, again with Wenner-Gren support, a mentoring and training programme for young African scholars. Its journal, *African Anthropology*, has been published twice a year since 1995 and beginning in 2005 will be sponsored by CODESRIA. The association has attended closely to the issue of disciplinary reproduction, and in collaboration with Wenner-Gren,
has organised a number of training and mentoring initiatives, and has been attentive to the issue of disciplinary reproduction (Nkwi 1998a, 1998b, 2000).

**Training for the future: the role of regional research institutes**

A key concern for the discipline in Africa is the continued low status of anthropology amidst the social sciences. Anthropology continues to occupy a marginal position within university departments, and is accorded little attention by planners and funders in comparison to the other social sciences. On the other hand, independent regional organisations such as CODESRIA and OSSREA have received funding and support. Tadesse (1999) points to the growth in these organisations and their role in forging a cumulative knowledge base and a culture of critical inquiry. But how autonomous are such organisations? The social sciences have always depended on state patronage and support, but in Africa anthropology is now reliant on funding from development agencies and international donors. Their influence on the contemporary discipline is conditioning the very shape of anthropological writing, even within universities.

At the 2002 PAAA conference, the outgoing Executive Secretary Paul Nkwi suggested that one of the biggest problems facing African anthropology was publication - and the need for scholars to develop writing skills, particularly in the generation of detailed ‘thick’ ethnographies. This raised the question of whether anthropology’s identity is defined by its commitment to the production of ‘ethnographic’ texts. The link between the two now seems incontrovertible, but this has not always been the case, and
post-war British anthropologists used to jest about ‘mere’ ethnographers – insisting that the real purpose of ethnographic research was to ‘build’ theory. This raises the question whether prioritizing ethnographic monographs, and the time needed to write them, is always appropriate in an environment dominated by the short-term demands of applied social research and the use of consultancies to augment meagre professional salaries. One could also argue that, provided consultancy work is theoretically grounded, such reports could be rewritten into the sort of ‘thick ethnographic descriptions’ favoured by the scholarly community. Repeated consultancies in the same community or with the same group of people could result in an accumulated set of data that, over time, amounts to a critical ethnography. The relationship is not always one-way. Accepted techniques of academic research, such as those of participatory appraisal, first developed out of the world of consultancy.²

The issue is not simply one of funding, but also of epistemology. There is an increasing reliance by funders and donors on a standardisation of research procedures, particularly within short-term consultancies. One consequence of this is a simplistic break-down of the research and writing process into methodology, data collection, results and conclusions. We call this the ‘bureaucratisation of anthropology’. Such chunky categories do not necessarily do justice to the nuances of anthropological knowledge, or the iterative process of carrying out anthropological research, during which ‘results’ gained can lead to both a change in methods used or even the research questions themselves. The genre of the consultancy report or project assessment equally serves to shape writing styles, privileging crisp analyses and succinct summaries rather than more subtle explorations of anthropological themes. The irony is that research projects often
turn to anthropology because of its seeming promise to garner ‘local knowledge’, and overcome past failures of quantitative sociology to deliver tangible results. Yet there is a tension between the expectations laid on the discipline by funding agencies and a lack of understanding of the time-frames and research conventions within which anthropological research operates.

Some of the independent Africa-based social science research institutes have been encouraged by funders to similarly conform to the expectations of a generic, evidence-based social science. Whilst they have prioritised support for students, the fellowships offered by both OSSREA and CODESRIA are for a year (or less) to do research and write up their findings, often leading to inadequate and poorly written dissertations. Such funding available is never long enough to help students through the complex and often lonely process of carrying out fieldwork and writing an anthropological PhD.

Anthropological research is undercut by the demands of funding agencies that have little respect for a disciplinary identity based on extended fieldwork.

Looking at research reports written by young researchers supported by one such organisation, one sees a discrepancy between the careful articulation of the research problem and the final output. Why does a well-designed research programme end in a mediocre report? Is this a problem of inadequate research supervision; lack of seriousness in implementation; inadequate funds; or an insufficient time frame? There is a worrying tendency towards the increasing bureaucratisation of the research cycles and research outputs. The exhaustive application form, the details of the budget, the clarity of the work plan, and the meeting of deadlines are all becoming more important than the intellectual content. This constitutes a major handicap to social science research and intellectual
creativity. This is particularly the case for anthropology, whose great strength is to generate ‘thick’ ethnography that provides insights and realities that no ‘thin’ description can possibly produce.

One possible change would be for research organisations to abandon their obsession with ‘quantity’ in favour of a quest for ‘quality’ by limiting the numbers of their annual research grants. In this way they could provide the young researchers with enough funds, and an ample and flexible time frame, whilst also subjecting them to a rigorous process of monitoring and evaluation of research output. Such organisations inevitably have to operate under the constant risk of donors withdrawing funds. However, we do not think it is impossible to strike a balance between the bureaucratic requirements of donors and the effective use of funds to ensure the quality of the final output. If, as it stands, few of the research reports produced from these grants qualify for publication, the onus is on the organisations to clarify their aims in supporting junior research projects.

Some of the funding bodies also expect young researchers to carry out every aspect of the research themselves, discouraging the development of research teams and the use of research assistants. Yet anthropologists have long relied on the help provided by committed and systematic informants (school teachers, administrators, veterinarians, extension agents, rural nurses) who in fact become unpaid research assistants. In most cases these are not merely mechanistic data-gatherers, but informed observers who offer insights and intelligent criticism. In the field, to use Thomas’s phrase, ‘…one works not with informants, but with co-interpreters’ (1999:343). Therefore, research organisations could make provisions in the research design and financial support of young researchers for the employment of research assistant(s), whilst not divorcing young researchers from
directly handling the data. An education in research management is essential for the future development of the discipline as well as for the professional careers of the younger anthropologists.

Notes

1 Recently one of the editors - Mustafa Babiker - was involved in a study of the social and economic impact of a sugar production project in the White Nile province of Sudan. He adds ‘Since this was in an area that I had not done research before, I decided to acquaint myself with the area by reading the available literature. My intensive search in the libraries of the University of Khartoum boiled down to a single article written by a colonial administrator and published in the 1930 volume of Sudan & Notes and Records. Yet I knew that anthropological research had recently been done in the area by a Italian anthropologist, some of which was published in the journal Nomadic People in 1995. Unfortunately, that journal was not available in the library and I had to email a friend of mine, an anthropologist currently reading for his PhD degree in Bergen, Norway in order to get hold of the material. As we go to press, it has been mailed, but only God knows how long will it take to travel the distance of 300 metres between the Post Office of Khartoum University and my Department, if it arrives at all,

2 We acknowledge Stephen Maack’s useful insights on applied anthropology.
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