

## DECOLONIZATION OF AFRICAN STUDIES: THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL DIMENSIONS

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**Abstract.** The article is devoted to the analysis of the historical dynamics of the development of the processes of decolonization of African studies in the period from the 1960s to the present. The decolonization of knowledge has been a longstanding topic, gaining significant relevance in academic discussions in sub-Saharan Africa in recent decades due to the impact of postcolonial discourse. The author examines the theories and practices related to liberating the knowledge production system that have been suggested and put into action by researchers and sociopolitical leaders of African descent. The paper analyzes initiatives to consolidate researchers, and particular attention is paid to the history of the creation of the Pan-African non-governmental research organization CODESRIA, which is still active today. The study also addresses the debates that occurred at the University of Dar es Salaam between the mid-1960s and 1980. Evidence suggests that during the initial two decades of independence, African intellectuals sought integration at the continent, the diaspora, and the international academic community levels. The emphasis is placed on the factors influencing the necessity of further transformations in the research and educational sphere in the 21st century. These factors encompass epistemic and epistemological injustice, along with academic asymmetry. It is noted that the works of modern intellectuals, such as Achille Mbembe and Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, form an “ideological continuum” with the works of their predecessors, Claude Ake, Samir Amin, Cheikh Anta Diop. The article also introduces and characterizes the concept of pluriversality.

The author’s conclusion is that contemporary African researchers focused on decolonizing research and education frequently look to the thoughts of earlier scholars when striving to establish their own niche within the pluriversal system of knowledge.

**Keywords:** Africa, decolonization, African studies, Pan-Africanism, CODESRIA, pluriversality

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### INTRODUCTION

Decolonization is a global initiative and a complex historical process aimed at liberation from oppression and dependence. It has proliferated worldwide with varying intensity and magnitude, affecting the realms of politics and law, economics, and international affairs, culture and science. Decolonization is often regarded as a political

“counter-project” (in relation to the “colonization project”), implemented by the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and transitioned by the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century into a new phase of emancipation, associated with the elimination of sociocultural structures and institutions imposed by former colonizers.

Researchers of African descent have been actively participating in discussions addressing the historically rooted “asymmetries of power” [Arowosegbe 2016: 324] in knowledge production. Over the past six decades, their perspectives on transformation have encompassed a spectrum from Pan-Africanism and Afrocentrism to pluriversalism, and from global and regional integration to the diversification of knowledge systems and academic institutions.

Decolonization of knowledge, especially in African studies, is not a novel concept, but it has taken on increased importance in recent decades. Since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, public and political figures, intellectuals, and members of academic communities, including a Nigerian political scientist Claude Ake (1939–1996), a Ghanaian philosopher Kwasi Wiredu (1931–2022), a Senegalese scholar Cheikh Anta Diop (1923–1986), Ghana’s first president Kwame Nkrumah (1909–1972), Tanzania’s first president Julius Nyerere (1922–1999), have tried to address the problem of developing new principles, methods, and approaches in the study of the history and culture of the continent. It was extremely important in the conditions of the beginning of nation-building [Bondarenko 2022]. In their works and public speeches, there were calls for the reorientation of the academic sphere, its “Africanization,” both at the fundamental (theoretical) and institutional (practical) levels.

Sixty years later, the intentions of the figures of the period of independence, only partially embodied in practice, continue to be followed by modern African intellectuals, among whom are Achille Mbembe, Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Ephraim Gwaravanda, Toyin Falola, and others. Preserving and rethinking the intellectual legacy of their predecessors, many of them tried to develop a comprehensive strategy for the transformation of both African studies and the humanities and bring it into action through research and educational institutions.

#### THE FIRST YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE: INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND INTEGRATION

Several decades prior to the declaration of independence by African nations, Africans, both on the continent and in the African diaspora outside it, delved into the pursuit of mental and spiritual decolonization. Edward Blyden (1832–1912) and William Du Bois (1868–1963), known as the “founding fathers” of Pan-Africanism, and Frantz Fanon (1925–1961), a founding figure in ethnopsychology, established the basis for discussions on African (self)-consciousness and cultural identity. Cheikh Anta Diop, recognized as the “pioneer of the decolonization of African history” [Osha 2022:130], became the founder of academic Afrocentrism. He was among the early proponents of the idea that the culture of Ancient Egypt, considered as the basis of civilization, has an African (Negroid) origin<sup>1</sup>. His works, offering an alternative perspective to the Western humanitarian knowledge framework, significantly influenced many researchers of African descent.

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<sup>1</sup> The researcher’s linguistic and cultural-anthropological analysis led to the conclusion that various aspects, such as totemism, circumcision rituals, kingdom governance, cosmogony beliefs, social structure, matriarchy, kinship with the kingdom of Kush, geographical location, and language, all support the theory of African origins for ancient Egyptian civilization.

After African countries gained sovereignty, the aspirations and initiatives of intellectuals entered a more active and formal phase. Nevertheless, there was a lack of comprehensive plans for the advancement of African studies in the early years of independence. Certain concepts took shape during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Kwasi Wiredu proposed a program of “conceptual decolonization” [Wiredu 1980], which entails “reversing” the processes of mental assimilation of Africans through the rejection of foreign philosophical traditions and the return to the resources of their own “indigenous conceptual schemes and categories of thought” [Wiredu 1997]. Claude Ake, who sympathized with the ideas of Afrocentrism and Marxism, introduced the thesis about the “endogeneity” of knowledge production. This concept emphasizes that the process should be determined by African contexts and factors. He was one of the early advocates for a “non-hierarchical cross-regional conversation” between the North and South [Ake 1982].

The 1960s and 1970s in African countries saw the institutionalization of the humanities. During this period, the decolonization of academic infrastructure progressed faster than the decolonization of research approaches. The political leaders of the first years of independence took an active part in the transformation of the academic scene. Some of them dedicated their efforts and resources to developing decolonization strategies and implementing decolonial projects in practice.

Kwame Nkrumah, who developed the concept of consciencism<sup>2</sup> [Nkrumah 1964], was among the first political leaders in Africa to emphasize the necessity of transforming African studies. In 1961, on his initiative, the Institute of African Studies was established at the University of Ghana. In a speech on the occasion of the official opening of the institution, delivered on October 25, 1963, the Osagyefo<sup>3</sup> pointed out: “One essential function of this Institute must surely be to study the history, culture and institutions, languages and arts of Ghana and of Africa in new African-centred way” [Nkrumah 1963: 3].

To this very day, the Institute is still functioning, with its mission including the words stated above. It was not the sole organization to venture into developing new principles of humanitarian knowledge about Africa. Similar situations could be observed in the educational institutions that arose in Nigeria, specifically in Ibadan and Nsukka, and in Tanzania at the University of Dar es Salaam. However, the work of researchers at these schools was occasionally disrupted. The reasons could be sociopolitical instability, leading to a decrease or cessation of financial support for the institutions, armed conflicts, and ideological division between key researchers. The relationship between political elites and academic communities during the active phase of decolonization was quite complex, “oscillating between a common belief in engaged sciences supporting the development of the respective political systems and heavy confrontations due to the suppression of autonomous scientific research” [Castryck-Naumann 2022].

Between the 1960s and 1980s, many intellectuals were involved in events that sought to define the direction of socio-political development for young states breaking free from colonial rule and to establish guidelines for knowledge generation. These events could be initiated by the leadership of particular countries, international organizations such as UNESCO, scientific foundations of former colonial powers, and the United States, as well as the researchers themselves. Academic meetings, similar to political forums of the

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<sup>2</sup> According to Nkrumah, *Consciencism*, as a philosophical and ideological concept, is focused on rebuilding the traditional humanistic values of African society.

<sup>3</sup> Kwame Nkrumah was hailed as the “Osagyefo,” a term derived from the Akan language signifying “the Redeemer.”

time, often had a Pan-African orientation. Some of these meetings resulted in the establishment of professional organizations.

The building of nation-states has necessitated not only the training of many skilled local professionals in different fields but also the cultivation of a new type of consciousness. This has triggered a reconsideration of the entire academic system and its mechanisms. Many conferences have taken place since the early 1960s, both locally and internationally, with the aim of bringing together researchers, creating innovative ideas and techniques, and sharing them. In December 1961, during an Intellectual Seminar on Inter-University Co-Operation in West Africa, held in Freetown, Sierra Leone, the concept of creating a common intellectual space in West Africa was first proposed. Saburi Biobaku, a Nigerian historian (1918–2001) present at the event, put forward the idea of forming an Association of West African Universities, with scheduled biennial meetings to deliberate on current issues [Biobaku 1962]. Pan-African initiatives sparked concerns among the former colonial powers, who were still exerting a significant influence on science and education in their ex-colonies. France, seeking to maintain its authority over its former territories, organized and conducted 18 conferences between 1960 and 1969, resulting in the establishment of cooperative agreements, as outlined by historian Laurent Manière [Manière 2012].

#### CODESRIA AS THE FIRST PAN-AFRICAN INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY

External actors significantly influenced the establishment and development of scientific and educational institutions in African countries. This influence, whether imposed or welcomed, was both direct and indirect, often through international organizations and private foundations. In 1964, the Rockefeller Foundation convened a gathering of economists and sociologists in Bellagio, Italy, where twelve African scientific institution leaders were in attendance. The primary goals of the event were to review the research conducted in Africa and forge academic connections. Out of the twelve delegates, only two were of African descent: Herbert Onitiri (1928–2016), who was then the director of the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER) at the University of Ibadan, and Omer Osman, who led the Faculty of Economic and Social Studies at the University of Khartoum. The rest of the participants were mainly French and British. Three years later, Onitiri decided to create a similar conference to bring together African researchers from all over the continent. This event marked the beginning of a series of meetings known as the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA).

In 1973, Samir Amin (1931–2018), a French-Egyptian economist, and Abdullah Bujra (born 1938), a Kenyan sociologist, transformed regular conferences into a Pan-African non-governmental research organization. Their aim was to bring together professionals who could analyze sociopolitical issues in African countries, as well as the transformation initiatives from local governments and international bodies like UNESCO and the World Bank [Castrycck-Naumann 2022]. The organization's headquarters were established in Dakar with the approval of Leopold Sedar Senghor (1906–2001), the first president of Senegal and the founder of the Negritude philosophy<sup>4</sup>. It remains in the

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<sup>4</sup> Senghor's opinion on the decolonization of the academic field was ambiguous. Some researchers suggest that his endorsement of locating the CODESRIA headquarters in Dakar was more of a political compromise than a sincere support for the project. His conflicts with Cheikh Anta Diop and his directive to forcefully end the strike at the University of Dakar in 1968, where demands for the "Africanization" of the university were articulated, are often cited as reasons for criticizing him.

capital of Senegal to this day. The University of Dakar, along with the University of Ibadan in Nigeria, Makerere University in Uganda, and the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, were recognized as fundamental partners of the organization.

CODESRIA's main mission was to share the viewpoints of African scholars on African issues. Its tasks included building a sustainable progressive intellectual community [Degtarev 2024: 68], increasing opportunities for researchers from African countries, and opposing their marginalization in the global academic community. The essential plan of the organization's ideologists comprised three key points: challenging "Western epistemological dominance in its claims to have a monopoly on universal rationality" [Zevounou 2020: 8]; rethinking the conventional socio-economic development model for Africa put forth by non-African research centers, and creating innovative models and initiatives for African progress.

CODESRIA emerged as the largest and most enduring intellectual community dedicated to decolonizing knowledge. In addition, smaller communities formed in countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The University of Dar es Salaam, in particular, became a prominent hub for discussions among scholars and policymakers in the 1970s. In the first two decades after "the Year of Africa," it became one of the epicenters of the debate on post-colonial reforms. Julius Nyerere, the first president of Tanzania (1964–1985) and also vice-chancellor of the University, was actively engaged in academic activities. He communicated regularly with professors and students and frequently invited foreign scholars to Tanzania.

In heated debates about the essence and potential of African socialism, the effectiveness of Nyerere's political direction, and the future of Tanzania and Africa, Tanzanians and foreign experts gathered. Many of these experts held radical left-wing views. Notable participants included Walter Rodney (1942–1980), a Guyanese historian and political activist, and Dani Nabudere (1932–2011), a Ugandan researcher and political figure.

Part of the discussions, mainly held within the Department of Social Sciences, focused on the academic environment and education. The talks highlighted the necessity for changes in academia and teaching methods, taking into account the local context and circumstances. As a result of these discussions, a significant Pan-African professional organization was formed: the African Association of Political Science.

It was established in December 1973 with the aim of uniting researchers from Africa and the diaspora to eliminate "colonial and neocolonial traditions" in political science [Shamuyarira 1974: 137] and to modernize the discipline in order to better address the development challenges and needs of the continent. Alongside the team from the University of Dar es Salaam, which included Anthony Rweyemamu (Tanzania), Nathan Shamuyarira (Zimbabwe), and Dani Nabudere (Uganda), who each served as the association's president at different times, numerous scholars from various countries in Africa, the United States, and Great Britain, such as Claude Ake and Ali Mazrui (1933–2014), a Kenyan historian and political scientist, also joined.

The creation of the association was one of the major outcomes of the debate at the University of Dar es Salaam, which lasted over a decade. The participants, divided into strong supporters and critics of Nyerere, could not reach a consensus on building socialism and developing a comprehensive decolonization strategy. Nevertheless, the discussions had a wide impact and influenced the formation of the academic landscape in East Africa.

During the first twenty years of independent development in sub-Saharan Africa, scholars and socio-political leaders advocating for intellectual freedom focused primarily on social, political, and governance issues. They viewed decolonization and

“Africanization” as processes that embraced local realities and enhanced the conceptual framework and methodology of the social sciences through a critical examination of the colonial past. The views of the intellectuals did not completely coincide. For example, Ake, who saw the meaning of the humanities in achieving epistemological balance and equality, challenged the very idea of the existence of universals and truths [Ake 1982] and called for a radical revision of academic traditions and the development of new conceptual and categorical apparatus and tools. At the same time, Nkrumah, within the framework of the concept of *Consciencism*, recognized the dialectical connection between particulars and universals [Nkrumah 1964].

Despite the aforementioned contradictions, integration at the level of the continent, the diaspora, and the international academic community was a guiding principle for most intellectuals during the period under review. After declaring the originality and authenticity of African epistemology, they assumed to occupy their own niche in world science, commensurate with that of Europeans. The calls for “Africanization” did not reduce the discussion to racial discourse and did not significantly impact the staff of research and educational institutions. Organizations like CODESRIA and others at the time, comprising individuals from diverse backgrounds, did not show heightened concern about the ethnoracial composition of researchers and educators and did not directly influence personnel policies.

Since the early 1980s, the situation in many countries of sub-Saharan Africa has changed significantly. The euphoria of the first years of independence faded as one-party systems and socio-economic crises emerged. Government spending on science, research, and education decreased due to economic liberalization following the advice from the International Monetary Fund. In countries like Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, and Guinea-Conakry, internal political unrest frequently resulted in the persecution of intellectuals. These issues led to a rise in the emigration of educated individuals, known as “brain drain.”

According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the number of highly qualified professionals leaving the continent doubled by 1987 compared to the previous two decades, reaching almost 80,000 people<sup>5</sup>. In the following decade, the flow of emigrants continued to grow. Thabo Mbeki, a politician and diplomat who served as the President of South Africa from 1999 to 2008, stated that Africa had lost 20,000 researchers since 1990<sup>6</sup>. Consequently, the activities of research communities were often transferred outside the continent or put on hold, and the issues of decolonizing of knowledge receded into the background.

## DECOLONIZATION OF AFRICAN STUDIES IN THE CONTEXT OF PLURIVERSALITY

The emergence of postcolonial studies has revitalized conversations about the orientation of African studies [Gavristova 2023]. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, a professor at the University of Bayreuth in Germany and the University of Johannesburg in South Africa, suggests that “decolonial turn has been able, across time, to subsist within and even trouble these other turns” [Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2021].

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<sup>5</sup> Regional Conference on Brain Drain and Capacity Building in Africa. Aide Memoir. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. UNECA. 22–24.02.2000. <https://repository.uneca.org/ds2/stream/?#/documents/cfd515f3-1416-5fcc-afc7-b629661d47a2/page/1> (accessed: 13.06.2024)

<sup>6</sup> Majiet L. Mbeki: The extent of Africa's brain drain is frightening. *Jacaranda FM*. 14.08.2015. <https://jacaranda.fm.com/news/news/mbeki-extent-africas-brain-drain-frightening/> (accessed: 13.06.2024)

Discussions of the problems of constructing a liberated epistemology have become both a part and a consequence of a set of cultural turns that took place in the last third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and included, in addition to the postcolonial, interpretative, reflexive, spatial, and other turns [Bachmann-Medick 2017].

Various Black and Afrocentric movements, campaigns, and actions have played a role in reigniting conversations about the decolonization of knowledge. One of them is “Rhodes Must Fall,” which originated in South Africa in 2015. During a speech titled “Has Rhodes Fallen? Decolonizing the Humanities in Africa and Constructing Intellectual Sovereignty” [Prah 2017] delivered on October 20, 2016, at the Academy of Science of South Africa, Kwesi Kwame Prah (born 1942), a sociologist of Ghanaian descent, highlighted that this movement not only had symbolic importance but also sparked a global resonance, potentially leading to significant transformations in education and science across the South African region. Echoing the views of activist Chumani Maxwele, the scholar stressed that the removal of Cecil Rhodes’<sup>7</sup> statue was just the initial step in a broader movement: “The next move is to ask the vice-chancellor of the university by the end of next year, to have 50 percent of black South African professors and change the curriculum of the university” [Prah 2017: 2].

The participants of the movement believe that changes should be made not only to the staffing of educational institutions but also to the essence and nature of science and education. Researchers Shose Kessi and Elelwani Ramugondo from the University of Cape Town highlighted that students expect their professors to address issues of representation and legitimization of certain phenomena not just during protests but also in their everyday work [Kessi, Marks, Ramudongo 2020: 272]. These demands have prompted South African researchers to get actively involved in the discussion on the transformation of humanities and educational curriculum.

The issue of decolonizing knowledge, the factors that determine it, and the suggested solutions exist in both theoretical and practical dimensions. Nkrumah’s warning about the threat of neocolonialism, made in 1965, remains relevant at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Nowadays, researchers are frequently mentioning the “new colonialism”<sup>8</sup> and the “epicolonial legacy”<sup>9</sup> [Kessi, Marks, Ramudongo 2020: 271] as the sources of epistemic and epistemological injustices leading to an increase of academic asymmetry.

As an example of epistemic injustice, modern African intellectuals refer to the “colonial paradigm of discovery” of Africa [Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015: 23], associated not only with geographical discoveries but also with a wide range of stereotypes and myths based on ideas about Africans’ backwardness and underdevelopment and attempts to declare Africa *terra nullius* [Prah 2017: 4]. Epistemological injustice is manifested in the marginalization of African scholars, whose voices are not only regarded as less

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<sup>7</sup> Cecil Rhodes (1853–1902) was the founder of the British South African Company in 1889 and served as the Prime Minister of the Cape Colony from 1893 to 1896. Rhodes was not only a British politician and entrepreneur but also one of the wealthiest individuals globally during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. He played a significant role in initiating British colonial expansion in Southern Africa.

<sup>8</sup> Paevs kij A., Abramova I. An Interview. “Irina Abramova: The new colonialism is functioning in such a way that the development of most countries in the world is slowing down.” *Russian Academy of Sciences*. 07.03.2023. <https://www.ras.ru/news/shownews.aspx?id=016ef828-17ae-478e-98d9-4543ec7cfa11> (accessed: 13.06.2024)

<sup>9</sup> The term “epicolonial” refers to phenomena directly or indirectly related to colonialism; their roots and/or origins may not be explicitly linked to the colonial past, but their essence is “recognizably colonial.” It was introduced by Subramanian Shankar, an Indian scholar [Shankar 2013]. In the context of African studies, the word was first used by Shose Kessi, Zoe Marks, and Elelwani Ramugondo [Kessi, Marks, Ramugondo 2020: 271].

authoritative and significant but sometimes are even ignored. According to South African researchers, epistemic and epistemological injustice leads to academic asymmetry, visible in universities' personnel policies and publication activity. The combination of these circumstances forces representatives of the African intellectual elite to develop strategies for change and discuss them in public.

Much of what is included in the transformation programs for African studies, proposed by, among others, Achille Mbembe [Mbembe 2021], a Cameroonian philosopher, and Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, is based on the work of their predecessors. Decentralization, de-westernization, and demarginalization of African studies remain on the list of priorities. Following Ake's ideas, many modern intellectuals talk about transdisciplinary research, which implies not only the absence of strict boundaries between different fields of knowledge and the strengthening of interaction between them but also the principle of equitable treatment for both well-known and lesser-known researchers.

According to contemporary intellectuals, humanitarian research should be characterized by the recognition of two divergent but not mutually exclusive trends: the facilitation of cross-cultural dialogue between scholars worldwide driven by transdisciplinarity and the integration of indigenous knowledge. Meanwhile, indigenization of knowledge should be understood not in terms of cultural isolation but as a practice of grounding knowledge in a specific socio-cultural context by actively engaging with alternative sources (such as oral traditions) [Falola 2022b].

The main intention of modern African intellectuals pursuing the goals of decolonization of knowledge remains, according to the terminology used by Toyin Falola, a Nigerian-American historian, "the construction of African epistemology" [Falola 2022a] or, in accordance with Ndlovu-Gatsheni's expressions, "the creation of the own canon" [Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2024]. However, the positioning of African studies in the system of humanities is progressively aligning with a pluriversal perspective.

The concept of pluriversality introduced by Franz Hinkelammert (1931–2023), a Costa Rican theologian [Hinkelammert 1996: 238–240; Mignolo 2018], and developed by such intellectuals as Enrique Dussel [Dussel 2002], Arturo Escobar [Escobar 2018], and Walter Mignolo [Mignolo 2018] implies that the world is an interconnected diversity, an entanglement of epistemologies existing in a context of major shifts in the global poles of power. It has challenged not only Western epistemology but the very idea of Western universality. Latin American decolonial theorists criticizing the theoretical core of the "Western knowledge system" considered epistemic decolonization "an unavoidable imperative" and called for a rethinking of global cognitive experience. According to modern African intellectuals like Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Gwarawanda, the context of the Latin American experience shares some similarities with the African one, and decolonized African epistemology can be a part of a pluriversal outlook. To achieve this, it is necessary to "incorporate indigenous knowledge systems" into research and educational processes<sup>10</sup>.

The reconfiguration of African studies, according to many proponents of epistemological decolonization, involves complex transformations affecting academic communities and educational institutions. Academic communities retain their value and are seen as a driving force for change.

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<sup>10</sup> Oyegbile O., Falola T. Nigerian Historian and Thinker Toyin Falola on Decolonising the Academy in Africa. *The Conversation*. 23.06.2022. <https://theconversation.com/nigerian-historian-and-thinker-toyin-falola-on-decolonising-the-academy-in-africa-184188> (accessed: 13.06.2024)



CODESRIA remains one of the leading research centers in sub-Saharan Africa. The organization's reputation has grown significantly in recent years, thanks to the involvement of renowned scholars like Mbembe and Ndlovu-Gatsheni in its projects. Over the last 50 years, CODESRIA has expanded its structure, increased its membership, and initiated various research and publishing initiatives<sup>11</sup>. "As an epistemological community, CODESRIA brings together individuals from diverse intellectual backgrounds (Marxists, Pan-Africanists, Nationalists, Third Worldists, Postcolonialists, etc.), each of whom contributes a various impulse to the institution according to their role" [Zevounou 2020: 3]. This diversity extends to the range of disciplines covered by the community, now including history, philosophy, and gender studies.

New centers are being established around the ideologists of epistemic decolonization. For example, on the initiative of Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Africa Decolonial Research Network (ADERN)*<sup>12</sup>, was founded at the University of South Africa in 2011. It mainly consists of colleagues and former students of the professor. Ndlovu-Gatsheni thus explained the need to create ADERN: "At UNISA just like in other universities located on the African continent (University in Africa rather than African Universities), we were accustomed to consume academic material from the West. There was little awareness of rich local African scholarship and African knowledge production. I found that we needed to shift the geography of knowledge as well as the biography of knowledge. So the first thing we needed to do was to establish who the decolonial thinkers are in Africa, and establish what their contributions have been and still are."<sup>13</sup>

One of the most radical examples of "decolonization in action" is the *Black Academic Caucus (BAC)*, created by Shose Kessi, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Cape Town [Kessi, Marks, Ramugondo 2020: 276] and her colleagues. Their goal is to change the knowledge production industry by promoting the advancement of black researchers and lecturers. According to the members of the community, the perception of "blackness as colour and consciousness, rooted in an African and Afro-Diasporic experience as a lens through which to see, think, and act in the world" [Kessi, Marks, Ramugondo 2020: 274] embodies the very idea of decolonization of African studies and contributes to a policy of localization of knowledge and inclusivity. In order to overthrow a "descending hierarchy" and achieve "strict and mutual pluralism," the participants of the Meeting monitor the equality of employment of the teaching staff at the University of Cape Town.

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The decolonization initiatives proposed by contemporary African scholars are viewed as part of the ideological framework established by their predecessors in the early post-independence era. Following the previously formed trajectory of "Africanization" of humanities and education, modern intellectuals strive to construct their own section within the pluriverse system of knowledge. Nevertheless, certain individuals have been using more extreme rhetoric, redirecting their focus from academic activities to activism within academia. Statements and proposals for radical transformations based on the ideas

<sup>11</sup> CODESRIA Official Website. 2024. <https://codesria.org> (accessed: 13.06.2024)

<sup>12</sup> Africa Decolonial Research Network (ADERN). *Decolonial International Network*. <https://din.today/sabelo-j-ndlovu-gatsheni-we-needed-to-shift-the-geography-of-knowledge-as-well-as-the-biography-of-knowledge/> (accessed: 25.03.2024)

<sup>13</sup> Ndlovu-Gatsheni S. Africa Decolonial Research Network (ADERN). *Decolonial International Network*. <https://din.today/sabelo-j-ndlovu-gatsheni-we-needed-to-shift-the-geography-of-knowledge-as-well-as-the-biography-of-knowledge/> (accessed: 25.03.2024)

of prioritizing people with a certain skin color could raise concerns and be classified as indications of “reverse racism.” Ndlovu-Gatsheni suggests that the embracing of radical ideas inspired by Afrocentrism is justifiable and temporary. By synthesizing the perspectives of his predecessors, like Ake and Amin, the researcher concludes that “there is a need to decentering, so that other lives come also to the center and the very idea of the center then disappears”<sup>14</sup>.

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## ДЕКОЛОНИЗАЦИЯ АФРИКАНСКИХ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ: ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКОЕ И ПРАКТИЧЕСКОЕ ИЗМЕРЕНИЯ

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**Аннотация.** Статья посвящена анализу исторической динамики процессов деколонизации африканских исследований в период с 1960 г. по настоящее время. Тема деколонизации знания в последние десятилетия под влиянием постколониального дискурса приобретает особую актуальность и становится предметом оживленных дискуссий в академических кругах стран Африки южнее Сахары. В центре внимания автора – теории и практики освобождения системы производства знаний, предложенные и полностью или частично реализованные исследователями и общественными и политическими деятелями африканского происхождения.

В работе рассматриваются инициативы консолидации ученых, в частности история создания панафриканской неправительственной исследовательской организации КОДЕСРИА, действующей и по сей день. Затронута проблема дебатов, проходивших в период с середины 1960-х по 1980 г. в Дар-эс-Саламском университете. Указано, что одним из ориентиров для африканских интеллектуалов первых двух десятилетий независимости

была интеграция на уровне континента, диаспоры и международного академического сообщества. Сделан акцент на факторах, обуславливающих необходимость продолжения трансформации научно-образовательной сферы в XXI в. В их числе эпистемическая и эпистемологическая несправедливость, а также академическая асимметрия. Отмечено, что труды современных интеллектуалов таких как А. Мбембе и С. Ндлову-Гатшени образуют «идейный континуум» с работами их предшественников – Клода Аке, Самира Амина, Шейха Анта Диопа. В статье введено и охарактеризовано понятие «плюриверсальности». Автор приходит к выводу о том, что современные африканские исследователи, занимающиеся проблемами деколонизации науки и образования, в стремлении создать собственный сегмент в плюриверсальной системе знания зачастую обращаются к идеям предшественников.

**Ключевые слова:** Африка, деколонизация, африканские исследования, панафриканизм, плюриверсальность, КОДЕСРИА

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