

THE DECOLONIZATION OF AFRICAN KNOWLEDGES

Paul Tiyambe Zeleza
Professor of the Humanities and Social Sciences and Vice Chancellor
United States International University-Africa
Nairobi, Kenya

Essay specially prepared for 9th Africa Day Lecture, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa.

© Not for citation or distribution without the explicit permission of the author.

Introduction

It is truly a pleasure being back at your lovely university ten years after I was invited to give the keynote address at the Colloquium marking the Opening of your Centre for African Studies. A lot has happened in the last ten years. I was then a department head at the University of Illinois, Chicago. I've since been to three other universities as a college dean in California, then a Vice President of Academic Affairs in Connecticut, and now Vice Chancellor of a wonderful international and innovative university in Kenya, USIU-Africa.

Your university has also changed. So has the world at large. South Africa was then led by President Mbeki. Barack Obama was a little known US Senator. Facebook was only three years old, Twitter a year old, and Instagram was unknown. Forest Whitaker won Best Actor at the Oscars for *The Last King of Scotland*, a movie about Idi Amin, and the Dixie Chicks won Album of the Year at the Grammys. The interminable wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were in their fourth year. The World Cup in South Africa was three years away. But a lot has not changed. Poverty, disease, inequality, and climate change remain pressing global challenges, while the specters of racism, bigotry, and xenophobic nationalisms have arisen from the ravages of neoliberal globalization, not to mention the harrowing migration and refugee crises in various regions..

My presentation ten years ago focused on the development of African Studies in the Euroamerican academy, surveying its institutional, ideological, and intellectual tendencies. I was then deeply immersed in the field, having served as a director of one of the largest African studies programs in the United States at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Today, I wish to share broad reflections on the issue of knowledge production more generally, a subject that has preoccupied me for more than three decades, and acquired a new urgency since my relocation to the continent after spending 25 years in North America, and as a University leader involved in academic and policy discussions about the role of higher education for our beloved continent's integrated, inclusive, and innovative sustainable development.

I will focus on two interconnected issues. First, the unfinished project of decolonizing African knowledges. This is partly in homage to the social and academic struggles raging across South African universities. These struggles are familiar to many of us raised in the academies of postcolonial Africa in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. This is to underscore how much you can learn from the rest of the continent; it is a gentle caution against popular notions of South African exceptionalism. I will specifically focus on history. My two volume book, *The Study of Africa*, examines the other major disciplines that time doesn't allow. Second, I'll examine the continent's positioning in global knowledge production, which is relatively weak. Thus as we concentrate on the project of decolonizing African knowledges, let's also pay attention to raising the volume and value, quantity and quality of African knowledge production. The two are interconnected in so far as the decolonized African academy is best placed to serve as a robust center for producing knowledges that are both locally relevant and add to the global stock of knowledge.

The Project for Knowledge Decolonization

Ever since Africa's modern encounters with Europe in the 15th century, African thinkers have confronted the epistemic challenges of Eurocentrism, not to mention the existential and economic threats of European imperialism more generally. Eurocentrism frames African humanity and history as less than, mimetic, and becoming Europe, as perpetually infantile. The epistemological, ontological, and historiographical tropes of Eurocentrism permeate intellectual

and popular discourses on Africa, distorting, disparaging and demeaning African realities, lives, and experiences. Predictably, Eurocentrism has elicited countervailing affirmations of Africa and Africanness, of African purity, parity, and personhood; defiant assertions of African difference from Europe, sameness with Europe, and authenticity without Europe.

The imperatives for refashioning the Eurocentric narratives on Africa have mutated during the long historical geographies of slavery, colonialism, and neocolonialism. These three moments constitute the conjunctures through which the unequal exchanges and engagements, confrontations and contestations between the African and European worlds were produced and reproduced. Clearly, the way these eras were experienced in different parts of Africa varied. Consequently, the trends, tempos and textures of responses and resistances to Eurocentric knowledges, and reclamations and reconstructions of Africa centered knowledges differed.

The struggles over the who, what, when, where, and whys of African knowledges, about the producers, content, periodicity, spatiality, and meaning of studying, researching, and knowing this most ancient and infinitely complex and diverse constellation of peoples called Africa are dateless. They go back millennia to the emergence of African social thought long before the tragic encounters of Africa and Europe in modern times. The historical geographies of these epistemological and ontological battles vary across Africa in their manifestation and intensity. They tend to be captured by the term decolonization.

Both as a temporal condition and analytical or discursive term, decolonization dominated African countries in the heady days of nationalist struggles and the immediate aftermath of independence. The imperatives and contestations over the reorganization of national political, economic, cultural and social life, including education were particularly heightened in the early decades of the post-colony. For the majority of African countries this happened from the 1950s to the 1980s. It is not surprising that the debates about the decolonization of knowledge, of the curriculum and academic texts, of scholarly and popular discourses, of modes of being and speech are currently so hotly contested in South Africa, the last country to join the ranks of postcolonial African states following the end of the grotesque system of apartheid in 1994.

The term decolonization is both illuminating and limiting, combining as it does epistemic desires for decentering Eurocentric knowledges, but in all its consuming deconstructive drive it often inadvertently centers the latter in the archives of African knowledges. This is to argue that just as colonialism is not the sum total of African history, Eurocentrism should not be allowed to overwhelm African knowledges of their capaciousness. In this presentation I would like to argue that Africa has different libraries of which the Eurocentric is only a part of one of these libraries. A project that seeks to liberate African knowledges must begin by understanding the variety, development, and intersections of Africa's multiple libraries. It must go beyond Afrocentric injunctions of proclaiming Africa's eternal difference and recognize the enduring and complex conversations of cultures and ideas within Africa itself and between the continent's societies and civilizations and those of other continents beyond Europe.

This is to make a simple proposition: let us truly immerse ourselves in African and global histories of knowledge. This injunction is of course predictable coming from a historian. I urge us to take seriously the studying of African and world histories, not to apologize for Africa's centrality certainly to itself and also to the world, in our efforts to recenter Africa and its knowledges and decenter Eurocentrism and provincialize Europe. In this regard, let me outline Africa's key libraries that go back at least two thousand years. What I propose is to provide a broad overview of African historiography. In discussing the history of ideas it is important to note that the economies and cultures of knowledge production are an integral part of complex

and sometimes contradictory, but always changing institutional, intellectual, ideological and individual dynamics and predilections that unfold at interlocking national and transnational, or local and global levels. Knowledge production unfolds in the shifting intersections of political economy, historical geography, and epistemological and ontological constructs.

I identify four libraries that emerged during the four broad phases in African historiography, each of which embodied various traditions. The first phase is the ancient era that spawned what I call the Afro-Christian, Afro-Islamic, and griot libraries. The second phase is the slave trade era that gave rise to the colonial library. The third phase is the colonial period when the colonial library was consolidated. We are in the fourth phase, the post-independence era, during which the four libraries are locked in fierce contestations. The question is: what are the prospects for a new library to emerge out of the synthesis of these four libraries?

The ancient phase was dominated by three successive and coexisting traditions: that of the Afro-Christian library, the Afro-Islamic library, and the griot library. The first is brilliantly represented by the great theologian and philosopher, St Augustine from present-day Algeria. His writings profoundly influenced the development of Christianity. He saw history as inevitably universal and meta-historical in that it entails movement towards divine providence. There were other thinkers and theologians from Tertullian to Origen located in Alexandrian Egypt whose works were part of the corpus of early Christian theology and historiography. The ecclesiastical writings and histories of Christian Africa extend to Ethiopia, where chronicles such as *Kebra Negaste* (Glory of Kings) were produced proclaiming dynastic glory in a religious idiom.

The Afro-Islamic library is also represented by an illustrious line of African thinkers and writers from northern, western and eastern Africa. As with their Christian counterparts, African Muslim scholars played a major role in the development of Islamic theology and philosophy, and the transmission of knowledges from classical Greece and Rome and from Asia (such as Arabic numerals which were actually Indian) to Western Europe following the establishment of what have variously been called Muslim, Moorish, or African empires in the Iberian peninsula in the early 8th century. One of the most renowned figures in this tradition is Ibn Khaldun from present-day Tunisia, who is regarded by many as one of the greatest historians of all time. His history of the world provided the first serious challenge to providential history. His work postulated a cyclical theory of history and anticipated modern historical methodology and influenced interpretations of Maghreb history well into the 20th century. It is to Khaldun that we owe one of the earliest surviving fragments of the history of the Mali Empire.

Muslim scholars from North Africa and West Africa itself produced numerous works on West African societies, among them the famous *Ta'rikh al-Sūdān* and *Ta'rikh al-Fattāsh*, both produced in Timbuctu in the 17th century, and the *Kano Chronicle* and the *Gonja Chronicle* produced in modern day Ghana in the 18th century. In East Africa you have similar chronicles, such as the *Kilwa Chronicle*. It is not an exaggeration to say that comprehension of Arabic and *Ajami* writings (writing using Arabic script) are fundamental to understanding African history and historiography. Numerous *Ajami* archives continue to be discovered and preserved.

It is out of the Islamic tradition that Africa's and some of the world's oldest universities emerged. They include Ez-Zitouna in Tunis founded in 732. Next came al-Qarawiyyin established in Fez in 859 by a young migrant female princess from Tunisia, Fatima Al-Fihri. The university attracted students and scholars from Andalusian Spain to West Africa. Then in 969 Al-Azhar was established in Cairo, the same year that the city was founded by the Fatimid dynasty from the Maghreb. It became the most prestigious center of Islamic education and scholarship and attracted great intellectuals of the Muslim world, including Ibn Khaldun who

taught there. Another major early Islamic university was Sankore in Timbuktu founded in the 12th century. Save for the last the other three universities have survived to this day.

The third tradition is the griot library. Griots, known by different names in various societies, were highly trained custodians of oral traditions and narratives. Their recollections sought to link the past and the present, construct collective worldviews and identity, educate the youth, express political views, and provide entertainment and aesthetic pleasure. Studies show griots had many other functions besides being genealogists and historians; they were also advisers to rulers, arts patrons, spokespersons, diplomats, mediators, interpreters and translators, musicians, composers, teachers, exhorters, warriors, witnesses, praise-singers, and ceremony participants during namings, initiation, courtship, marriages, installations and funerals. In West Africa griots first emerged at least a thousand years ago, and since then their role has changed.

The griot library is often mistakenly seen as quintessentially African, as much as writing is regarded as a preserve of Europe. The existence and development of Africa's Afro-Christian and Afro-Islamic libraries should put to rest the misguided notion that African knowledge production or what some people call indigenous knowledges can be confined to orality. Christianity and Islam are as indigenous to their long-term African followers in northern, western and eastern Africa as they are to the long-term followers of these religions in Europe and Asia. Lest we forget clerics in Christian Ethiopia were writing centuries before the inhabitants of the British Isles had been converted to Christianity and learned the Roman alphabet. Similarly, Islam reached Ethiopia before it arrived in most parts of Asia including the so-called Middle East.

The emergence of the colonial library can be dated to the second phase in African historiography, the period from the 15th to the 19th centuries, characterized by the Atlantic slave trade and incipient colonialism. Needless to say, the three libraries identified above continued to exist and develop and engaged the new historiographical traditions in complicated ways. From the rising colonial library emerged the Eurocentric and the vindicationist traditions.

Much of the early European writings on Africa consisted of colorful and often inaccurate travel texts. Later more self-consciously historical writings developed but they often used the travel literature as their sources. Much of this work was unapologetically Eurocentric, especially as the Atlantic slave trade expanded and the need to justify it grew. Africa was increasingly portrayed as 'primitive,' and as the drums of imperialism began beating, its salvation was seen to lie in European overlordship. Eurocentrism was given philosophical imprimatur in Hegel's *Philosophy of History* which declared that Africa 'is not a historical continent; it shows neither change nor development,' and that the portion that showed historical light, according to him, North Africa, was not really a part of this benighted continent. Thus, was born the racist truncation of Africa into the sub-Saharan cartographic contraption. In the meantime, North Africa was encapsulated into Orientalism so brilliantly dissected by Edward Said.

In reaction Western educated scholars in West Africa and the African diaspora, began producing histories which emphasized African civilizations and achievements. The vindicationist tradition found a powerful voice in Oluadah Equino's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Oluadah Equiano*. Even more scholarly and combative were the works of the great Liberian scholar, Edward Blyden, whose trilogy—*A Vindication of the African Race*, *The Negro in Ancient History*, and *Christianity, Islam, and the Negro Race*—published in the mid-19th century set the tone for much of 20th century nationalist and Pan-Africanist thought and historiography. Besides these large civilizational histories, national histories were also published by West African intellectuals, such as Samuel Johnson's influential and classic *History of the Yoruba*. From the diaspora came the writings of Alexander Crummel, and in the early 20th

century those of W. E. B. Dubois, most memorably his *The World and Africa*, and W. L. Hansberry who conducted lifelong research on the image of Africa and Africans by classical Greco-Roman writers. These histories defended the humanity and historicity of Africans.

The third phase emerged in the 20th century. The colonial library flourished. But this library embodied contrasting historiographical traditions. Challenging the Eurocentric or imperialist perspectives were the nationalist and radical traditions. Each of these traditions differed both in their interpretations and methodology, in the type and way they used historical sources. Imperialist and nationalist historiographies represented almost diametrically opposed views of African history. To the former African history began with the arrival of Europeans, a narrative that turned colonialism into a decisive moment, while to the latter African history stretches for millennia and colonialism is only a parenthesis, an episode, a footnote, as Ade Ajayi so memorably put it.

Consequently, imperialist historians mostly discussed, in a positive light, the policies of colonial governments and the activities of colonial auxiliaries from European merchants to missionaries to the settlers. When Africans appeared in their narratives, it was to condemn their societies and cultures, or to chronicle their westernization or modernization. Those who resisted colonial conquest or colonial rule were depicted as atavistic, while those who collaborated or accepted the colonial regime were praised for their foresight and wisdom. In fact, in-depth study of African societies was largely left to anthropology, which with its functionalist-positivist paradigms and ethnographic present, exonerated, if not extolled, colonialism.

But the production of historical knowledge was not an imperial monopoly even in the darkest days of colonialism. This is because the colonial project was always contested. The perennial struggles over the organizations of the colonial economy, politics, and culture created spaces for the production of anti-imperialist knowledges by the proponents of Africa's ancient libraries. There were also anti-colonial critics in the imperial metropolises themselves. The vindicationist tradition of the slave trade era mutated into fully-fledged nationalist historiography that focused on African agency, adaptations, choices, experiences, initiatives, and resistance against colonialism. The methodological forte of nationalist historiography lay in its discovery of new sources of data. Oral tradition, historical linguistics, evidence from the natural sciences, and historical anthropology joined written and archaeological sources prized by Eurocentric historiography as valid sources for historical research and reconstruction.

Decolonization created favorable conditions for the production of nationalist historiography as new universities were established, research funds became available, historical associations were formed, journals launched, and publishers scrambled for the latest research findings. Famous schools emerged, most prominently the Ibadan school, which denounced the shortcomings of missionaries and colonial governments, and the Dar es Salaam school, which popularized dependency approaches that stressed, to use the title of Walter Rodney's famous book, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Nationalist historians chronicled the rise and fall of Africa's ancient states and empires, long-distance trade, migrations, the spread of religions, and critiqued colonial policies, celebrated the growth of nationalism, and reincorporated Egypt and North Africa into the mainstream of African history. The nationalist perspective spread to universities in the global North where African studies programs mushroomed.

From the 1970s, the fourth phase, the post-independence era, began to unfold from the momentary euphoria of decolonization. Not surprisingly, the nationalist tradition started to face challenges from radical perspectives. Critics charged that nationalist historiography focused on the 'voices' of the ruling classes, rather than the 'masses'. It was also pointed out that nationalist

historians were too preoccupied with showing that Africa had produced organized polities, monarchies, and cities, just like Europe, so that they wrote African history by analogy and subsumed it to the logic or teleology of European history, and failed to probe deeper into the historical realities of African material and social life before colonial rule. As for the colonial period, nationalism was made so ‘overdetermining’ that only feeble efforts were made to provide systematic analyses of imperialism, its changing forms, and their impact, not to mention the processes of local class formation and class struggle.

The radical tendencies included the Marxist, dependency, feminist, ecological, and postcolonial traditions. Marxist influence grew with the triumph of armed liberation movements in the early 1970s in Southern Africa, and the adoption of Marxism as a developmentalist ideology by several African political parties and states, and by western intellectuals dissatisfied with bourgeois liberalism and western imperialism in the then Third World. Marxist scholars examined the processes of production, social formation, and class struggle, as well as the complex mediations and contradictory effects of imperialism in modern Africa. Marxist historiography, broadly defined, came in different theoretical and national configurations. Some of the Marxist-inspired work was schematic, doctrinaire, and pretentious. But some of it was rich and enlightening. Particularly impressive were the studies on labor and workers, agriculture and peasants, and the changing structures of Africa’s incorporation into the world economy.

Marxists did not regard dependency scholars as fellow travelers. Indeed, there was much theoretical and ideological bloodletting between the two, but they shared more affinities than differences in their emphasis on exploitative economic structures and processes. The Marxists preferred to concentrate on the internal dynamics of African societies, while the dependistas were more interested in the external dynamics of Africa’s contemporary underdevelopment. They blamed it on Africa’s incorporation as a periphery in the world capitalist system during the eras of the slave trade, colonialism, and neocolonial or multilateral imperialism. All along the structures of internal underdevelopment and external dependency for capital, markets, and technology were reproduced through unequal exchange and continuous outflows of surpluses.

Despite some of the insightful work the various approaches inspired there was one glaring omission: their coverage of gender and women’s history was poor. From the turn of the 1970s feminist historians began to challenge women’s marginalization in African historiography, a challenge buoyed by the growth of the women’s movement. Some African feminists relentlessly attacked the epistemological hegemony of western feminism, criticizing the very foundational categories such as ‘gender’, ‘woman’ and the ‘body’, arguing that these categories must be subjected to critical analysis and the need to privilege the categories and interpretations of African societies. From the 1980s there was an explosion of feminist-inspired histories, many of which simply sought to restore women to history, to record women’s activities and experiences in the conventional themes of African historiography, and some to engender African historiography as a whole. Feminist scholarship inspired new research work including highly sophisticated studies on African societies, development, sexualities, and gendered identities.

For its part, the ecological tradition began to reshape the way various periods and phenomena in African history were understood as dynamic processes involving the complex interactions between humans and habitat, nature and society, history and geography, how the physical environment and human agency are mutually constitutive, that people’s creativity and thought produce places as much as places produce people’s cultures and identities, and of the deep effects of ideologies of power on the landscape and vice-versa. Influenced by postcolonial ideas many environmental historians increasingly stressed the complexity and contradictions of

environmental change and the variability of outcomes. Inter-related work dwelt on African environmental ideas, ideologies, movements, and conflicts.

The 1980s and 1990s also saw the rise of the postcolonial tradition and its affiliated ‘posts’—postmodernism and poststructuralism. Analyses inspired by the ‘posts’ shared a distrust of the ‘metanarratives’ of nation, class, and sometimes gender, and the positivism and dichotomies of modernist history. They insisted on the hybridity, contingency, decenteredness, ambivalence, and the centrality of discourse in historical experience. African scholars developed a complex relationship with the ‘posts,’ one characterized by advocacy, ambivalence, and antagonism. To them the claims of the ‘posts’ sounded both familiar and strange—familiar, because they had spent their entire careers deconstructing Western and modernist claims to truth, to the universal, and to chronicling the clashes and convergences of cultures and the loss of certainties; but also strange because many of them believe passionately, bred as they were with the enduring dreams of African nationalism—self-determination, development, and democratization—in the possibilities of historical agency, the necessity of Africa’s regeneration.

To sum up, taking the long view, African knowledges are constituted from different libraries, each with a variety of paradigmatic traditions. I asked earlier: what are the prospects for an integrated library to emerge out of the synthesis of the four libraries examined in this presentation? This begs another set of questions: is such a project necessary? Who will undertake it? A starting point, surely, would be for our scholars and students to immerse themselves in the rich traditions of African social thought going back millennia. If nothing else that will help put Eurocentrism in its place as a strand in our intellectual history that we must continue to combat, but neither the sum total nor the foundational matrix of our knowledge systems.

For those of us who are historians, and I believe every student across the continent should be taught African history, we have to continue recovering and reconstructing Africa’s long history, the oldest in the world, but also insert it into global history, into the history of humanity. The immense achievements of African historiography over the past half-century are impressive. The apotheosis of the African historiographical revolution was the publication of two rival compendiums, each in eight volumes, namely, the *UNESCO General History of Africa* (1965-1993) and the *Cambridge History of Africa* (1975-1986). The *General History* brought together the largest group of historians ever assembled to work on a research project. Today, thousands of studies are published every year on every aspect of African histories, societies, politics, cultures, economies, and ecologies by the tens of thousands of academics that derive their professional lives researching, thinking, and writing their pieces of this gigantic continent Africa.

Nevertheless, studies of African phenomena, processes, and problems have yet to rid themselves entirely of the epistemic erasures, omissions, fabrications, stereotypes and silences of Eurocentrism. The struggles to liberate African knowledges will have to continue resting on a triple intellectual maneuver: provincializing Europe that has monopolized universality, universalizing Africa beyond its Eurocentric provincialization, and engaging histories of other continents on their own terms. No amount of historiographical conceit can hide the fact that Europe has not always been the dominant part of the world, or Europeans the most numerous members of the human species. The rise of Europe to global hegemony is fairly recent: until the mid-18th century the Muslim world was dominant in much of the Afro-Eurasian world. And in recent times global power has been shifting gradually from Euroamerica to Asia as China returns to its share of the world economy it used to enjoy. Moreover, the notion of the West must be deconstructed: there is no industrial Britain without the Atlantic slave trade, and the Americas including the United States are inconceivable without the massive contributions of Africans.

This is to suggest that African historians must take seriously the challenge of placing African history in world history, and in the history of our species, *Homo sapiens*. Conventional history covers only the last 5,000 years, a flash in the span of human evolution and existence on this incredibly beautiful and fragile planet of ours. It is from this continent that *Homo sapiens* evolved and scattered across the globe. Thus, Africa is at the heart of the human story, the continent where humans have lived the longest, where they underwent and made many of the fundamental transformations and innovations that characterize modern humans and social life.

Long conceptions of human history offer us and the world an immense opportunity to recenter Africa in global and human history and deepen our understanding of African history itself. Conceiving and writing the remarkable history of humanity requires us to focus on key moments and transformations. Different authors focus, and will select, different thematic anchors. For me a history of *Homo sapiens* would have to include at least four critical elements: first, changes in production for our material lives including agriculture and manufacturing and their ecological inputs and implications; second, changes in modes of communication and interaction including the development of languages and exchange systems; third, changes in the human imagination including the development of religions and the arts; and finally, changes in modes of power including the constructions and hierarchies of imperialism, race, nationality, ethnicity class, gender, sexuality, and other social inscriptions of difference and control.

Raising Africa's Knowledge Production

I would like to conclude with reflections on a critical challenge facing Africa when it comes to knowledge production that we ought to give weight to as we continue fighting against Eurocentrism. As I noted earlier, I see connections between the two, between the development of fully decolonized African universities and the establishment of robust and globally competitive knowledge producing institutions. I would now like to briefly address the issue of Africa's positioning in global knowledge production. My remarks are drawn from my most recent book, *The Transformation of Global Higher Education, 1945-2015*. The book examines the development of higher education on every continent over the past 70 years. I identify five major sets of changes, namely, massification, privatization, internationalization, shifts in knowledge production, and rising pressures for accountability. Here I will briefly discuss shifts in knowledge production and how they manifest themselves in Africa.

Before sharing with you data on Africa's global research profile, let me identify some of the key changes in global knowledge production. First, there is massive reorganization of knowledge production, dissemination and consumption. This transformation is partly evident in the expansion and emergence of new disciplines, sub-disciplines, and inter-, trans-, and multi-disciplinary fields of study. New interdisciplinary formations ranging from environmental studies to 'big science' have grown. This has led to shifts in the positioning and status of different academic fields both inside and outside the academy. Generally, in many countries STEM and professional fields such as business studies, have eclipsed the humanities; the fate of the social sciences has tended to wax and wane between the 'two cultures'.

Second, there have been remarkable shifts in global knowledge hegemonies and hierarchies. The dominance of the developed countries of Europe, North America, and Japan has progressively declined while that of the emerging economies especially in Asia has grown. North America's share of global research and development (R&D) declined from 37.9% in 1994 to 28.9% in 2013, while Europe's fell from 31.4% to 22.7%. In the meantime, it rose for Asia from

26.6% to 42.2%, and to much smaller extent for Latin America and the Caribbean from 1.9% to 3.5%. The proportions of the developed countries in the growth and distribution of researchers and publications also fell relative to the emerging economies, especially China. The latter more than doubled its share of world publications from 9.9 % in 2008 to 20.2 % in 2014. Asia as a whole raised its share from 24.2% in 2002 to 39.5% in 2014. For North America the decline was from 34.2% to 28.6%, and for Europe 45.5 % to 39.3% between 2002 and 2014. Thus, Asia is now the global leader both in the volume of knowledge production and number of researchers.

Third, in the midst of these transformations the modes of scholarly knowledge production, dissemination, and consumption are also undergoing changes, facilitated by the rise of new information and communication technologies. ICTs have become increasingly pervasive in higher education because of growing student demand, rising evidence of their benefits, and institutional strategies for revenue growth and branding. Technology-enhanced learning has brought new pedagogical opportunities and challenges. Some have welcomed the innovative capacities of ICT in the processes of learning and teaching, research and scholarship, professional service and public engagement. But others dread its disruptive potential for the business model of on-campus education.

ICT has also transformed the role of libraries and dynamics of academic publishing. The explosion of information is reconfiguring the role of libraries as repositories of information into nerve centers for digitized information communication and raising the need information literacy. Similarly, academic publishing is being transformed by the acceleration, commercialization, and digitization of scholarly communication. Technology simultaneously opens new opportunities for researchers to collaborate and disseminate their output more widely, while at the same time it strengthens the role of powerful gatekeepers outside the academy as evident in the growth of global firms that dominated the academic publishing and database industry.

Fourth, the academic profession is itself undergoing disruptions. On the whole, there has been a progressive shift towards more top-down institutional governance, and the ranks of professional managers and even presidents, rectors, or vice chancellors without academic backgrounds are swelling in several parts of the world. The edicts of managerialism are increasingly undermining academic autonomy and freedom. It is clear that the decreasing influence of academics on institutional decision making combined with deteriorating conditions of work have led to declining institutional loyalty. The growing disempowerment of academics, as well as casualization of academics, constitutes key factors in the apparent declining educational quality of higher education institutions around the world.

Both academics and academic work are also becoming more fragmented. This is a product of the institutional, professional, and instructional unbundling of faculty roles. Significant changes have taken place in the social composition of academics, including the rising proportion of female academics, although gender disparities in terms of disciplines, conditions of work, remuneration, and status persist. The academic workforce has also become more casualized and stratified as institutions seek to cut costs by reducing the number of permanent faculty and expand the ranks of part-time, or adjunct faculty. In United States, for example, adjunct faculty now make nearly 80% of the professoriate a reversal from a generation ago.

Africa's research profile remains weak. In 2013 the continent's only accounted for 1.3% of global R&D. Its gross domestic expenditure as a share of GDP was 0.5% compared to a world average of 1.7%, and 2.7 % for North America, 1.8% for Europe, 1.6% for Asia, and 0.7 % for Latin America. In 2013, Africa accounted for a mere 2.3% of world researchers. As for researchers per million inhabitants, Africa had 169, compared to 786 in Asia, 416 Latin America,

and 3219 for Europe and 4034 for North America. In 2014, Africa claimed 2.6% of world scholarly publications.

But Africa enjoys one dubious distinction. In 2014, 64.6% of publications by African authors were with international authors, up from 52.3% in 2008, compared to 23.7% to 26.1% for Asia, 34.8% to 42.1% for Europe, and 29.7% to 38.2% for the Americas. In nearly 30 African countries authors published more than 90% of their articles in collaboration with other countries, especially the United States, France and the United Kingdom. Clearly, African academic knowledge systems, like our economies, suffer from limited regional integration and high levels of external dependency. That is a challenge we must overcome if our higher education systems are to contribute to integrated, inclusive, and innovative sustainable development.

Conclusion

The struggles for the transformation of higher education that we are witnessing across the continent encompass many dimensions. It is imperative that the various key stakeholders in African higher education from governments to the general public to parents, and to students, faculty, staff, and administrators in the academic institutions themselves raise the value proposition of African higher education for 21st century African societies, economies, and polities. This requires commitment to what I call the 4As, 4Cs, 4Is, and 4Rs.

The 4As refer to **availability** (of institutions), **access** (to institutions), **affordability** (in institutions), and **accountability** (by institutions). The 4Cs refer to **comprehensiveness** (provision of holistic education that develops the whole person), **curiosity** (cultivation of lifelong learning), **community** (fostering civic values), **capabilities** (developing soft skills and attributes beyond technical, job specific, and generic cognitive skills, especially communication and critical thinking skills, problem solving, empathy, creativity, self-confidence, and intercultural, international, interdisciplinary and information literacies).

The 4Is refer to **inclusion** (valuing institutional diversity—class, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexuality, etc.); **innovation** (cultivating creative and entrepreneurial mindsets); **integration** (building cohesive teaching, learning and research communities); and **impact** (fostering cultures of continuous assessment). The 4Rs refer **relevance** (of scholarly knowledges for the economy, society, and times); **retention** (ensuring development and success for students, faculty and staff); **research** (unwavering commitment to both basic and applied knowledge production and evidence based decision making); and **rigor** (in all activities to ensure academic excellence, operational excellence, and service excellence).

Only then will our universities fully contribute to the ‘Africa rising’ narrative turning it from the fluctuating fortunes of primary commodity prices into sustainable knowledge driven economies and societies; from fleeting bliss among the wealthy few into reality for the well-being of the many. Higher education is a powerful engine for building the kind of Africa we all wish to live in and can be proud of. It is indispensable for fulfilling the dreams of generations of struggles against imperial and neo-colonial exploitation and marginalization and realizing the enduring aspirations of our peoples’, in all their splendid diversities, for emancipation, empowerment, and advancement. With that the continent may finally realize Kwame Nkrumah’s vision, expressed prematurely at the height of decolonization that the late 20th century would be Africa's, and turn the 21st century into one that is truly ours. **Thank You!**